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Responsibility and Responsiveness in the Novels of Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley

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Responsibility and Responsiveness in the Novels of Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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Abstract

My dissertation looks at the ways in which humans interact with and respond to other humans and nonhumans in Ann Radcliffe's and Mary Shelley's novels. I argue that in light of the social and political turmoil surrounding the French Revolution, Radcliffe and Shelley call not so much for Revolution or drastic reform but for a change in the ways in which individuals respond to the needs of others, both human and nonhuman, and take responsibility for each other. The ways in which humans interact with the nonhuman inform the positive and negative practices that they should use to interact with other humans and vice versa.

Critics debate whether or not Radcliffe supported an overturn of the social order. I argue that Radcliffe calls for a continuation of the established social order, but she also calls for compassion of all human beings no matter their social standing. Chapter One considers the connection between nature and culture in Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*, *The Romance of the Forest*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *The Italian* through the mode of Gothic literature. Specifically, I argue that Radcliffe's "explained supernatural" occupies a liminal space between nature and culture. Furthermore, some of the upper class are able to discern that the "real," or material, supernatural (e.g. ghosts and monsters) do not exist while still acknowledging that some form of spiritual supernatural presence is possible, thus reflecting a heightened awareness of the existence of entities and concepts beyond the material.

Chapter Two looks at Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian* to argue that characters who are able to appreciate nature, particularly landscape, are more admirable than

those who ignore it. Specifically, these characters indicate an openness to forming reciprocal relationships with the landscapes, allowing the views offered by the landscapes to offer them peace or comfort while simultaneously respecting the power the landscapes hold. In fact, these characters aid in constructing these landscapes' significance, thus granting agency to both the landscape and to the perceiver, including female perceivers who are able to find power within the patriarchal system. Drawing from the theories of place theorists such as Tim Cresswell and Yi-Fu Tuan, I argue that because the landscapes hold significance and characters are able to form meaningful relationships with them, landscapes can be classified as being on the verge of place.

The last two chapters turn to Mary Shelley, who published her first novel, *Frankenstein*, almost twenty years after the official end of the French Revolution, but when the struggle for and debate about equal rights amongst the classes was still active in both France and England. Because of her relationships with radicals, Shelley herself is generally termed radical, with a few scholars arguing that she is actually more conservative than is commonly believed. I align myself with those who find that Shelley cares more about smaller communal relationships than the larger political system; while Shelley may have been fairly radical politically, her books suggest that for her it is more important to be compassionate on a local level. Only through learning to be caring and responsible individuals can a society create a caring political system.

Chapter Three looks at *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* to argue that Shelley demonstrates the types of reciprocal relationships people should form with both humans and nonhumans. Donna Haraway's idea (taken from Mary Louise Pratt) of "contact zones"—places where the human and nonhuman can communicate—inform my reading of the relationships between the human and nonhuman in these two novels. As part of my discussion on *Frankenstein*, I investigate how Victor Frankenstein and the creature define "human." From

those definitions, I then assert that in *Frankenstein*, the creature cannot form a place for communication with any of the humans whose acceptance and companionship he seeks, because no one is willing to do so. *The Last Man*'s Lionel Verney, on the other hand, is able to form reciprocal relationships with both the human and the nonhuman, thus enabling him to ultimately become the "last man" mentioned in the novel's title. In this novel, Verney establishes an ability to envelop both his human and animal sides, allowing him to relate to both species.

The fourth and final chapter looks at Shelley's *Valperga*, *Lodore*, and *The Last Man*, set in the past, present, and future, respectively, arguing that Shelley uses these different time settings in order to demonstrate that many of the struggles people have are similar to ones that others had in the past and will continue to have in the future if people do not adjust the ways in which they respond to disaster. Through her characters' reactions to political and natural disasters, Shelley suggests that catastrophe may be unavoidable; however, by working together and supporting each other, bad times can become more tolerable. If readers also develop their capacity to seek human and nonhuman companionship that does not involve domination, then their own difficulties can be more tolerable as well. By presenting readers with specifics about location and environment, Shelley creates settings that readers can connect to and then entertain the idea that these characters' struggles are like their own and learn that working together, supporting each other, and being responsible for one another makes life's hardships endurable.

Introduction

It is not possible for me not to anthropomorphize, since I am a human. – Timothy Morton

Literature is one way to help us understand the relationship we have with the nonhuman; it can allow us to realize our own anthropocentric views and place ourselves in a position of awe in relation to landscapes and other types of nature. Once realizing how we currently view the nonhuman, we can begin to transform our perspective into one of respect and responsibility. My project posits that Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley are two novelists who can help identify anthropocentric views and recapture the sublimity of nature by evoking both the power nature has over people as well as the power people can receive[1] from it. Furthermore, this investigation of Radcliffe and Shelley that reconsiders nature's power and the line between human and nonhuman allows us to see that these two identifying roles are part of potential reciprocal relationships. By seeing how nature and culture interact with each other—relying on each other to survive and thrive—we can begin to see that all beings have a responsibility to be aware of the needs of others and respond to those needs as far as their own abilities allow, I argue. Through acknowledging the nonhuman's role in our lives, we can reduce that divide between the human and nonhuman and thus acknowledge that seemingly different beings can form reciprocal relationships that allow them to take responsibility for each other and identify and respond to each other's needs.

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[1] For instance, in my second chapter, I argue that sensible characters are able to draw comfort from the landscape and that female characters in particular are able to gain agency by creating landscapes as places.

Morton's claim from *Hyperobjects* depicts the crux of ecocritical readings of texts. Ecocritics want to break down the divide between the human and the nonhuman, but this divide might never be eliminated completely because those of us writing these critiques are human beings who cannot separate ourselves from that identity. However, we can aim to reduce that divide as much as possible through the realization that the nonhuman has a voice and a power that demands our attention. In parallel, Christopher Hitt grapples with the disconnect between ecocriticism and the sublime. He indicates that ecocritics have not discussed the sublime extensively enough (604) and laments that many discussions of sublime nature have forgotten that the sublime experience includes an intense feeling of inferiority to nature (606). "Part of the sublime experience," he writes, "is the realization that we are mortal creatures . . . whose lives are entirely dependent on forces greater than we are" (607). However, current readings of the sublime require the viewing subject to be superior to the viewing object; these readings focus more on the empowerment the viewing subject receives rather than the belittling experience that must precede it (606). A consideration of an ecological sublime might alleviate this disconnect, he claims, because it "would remind us [that our reason can never master nature] by restoring the wonder, the inaccessibility of wild nature. In an age of exploitation, commodification, and domination we need awe, envelopment, and transcendence. We need, at least occasionally, to be confronted with the wild otherness of nature and to be astonished, enchanted, humbled by it" (619-20).

I approach this project with the belief that the ways in which we perceive and interact with nature parallels the ways in which we perceive and interact with other people, either as individuals or collectives. These collectives can be groups based on social, economic, ethnic, or other identifying circles; some of these groups, such as patriarchies, hold some members as

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dominant over others while others, such as democracies, are more collaborative. While Radcliffe's novels demonstrate a way to re-think the former type, Shelley's novels offer positive examples of the latter. I am interested in how these authors' perspectives, particularly Shelley's, can help identify ways in which we can take responsibility for the nature and people immediately around us in order to understand how we can or are willing to take responsibility for the world as a whole. In order to investigate these interactions, I look at Radcliffe's and Shelley's novels through the lenses of ecocriticism and social criticism. Specifically, I use the political and social events and ideologies surrounding the French Revolution to argue that Radcliffe and Shelley are not necessarily against the existence of hierarchical government or social structure. They do, however, critique it as it exists in their time. In the strictest sense, these systems placed the monarchy and upper class above other people and all people above nonhuman nature. Furthermore, it allowed for men to be held above women. Many people were calling for less hierarchical relations; Radcliffe and Shelley comment on that call by critiquing the current relations and offering alternatives. Throughout this study, I will occasionally blur the terms "patriarchy" and "hierarchy" in order to allude to the fact that these authors critique or comment upon both. While hierarchies are not necessarily male-dominated, they do represent some of the issues Radcliffe and Shelley have with society. Emily St. Aubert's relationship with her servant, Annette, represents a responsible hierarchical relationship while Emily's relationship with her self-serving Aunt Cheron/Montoni represents an irresponsible one.

Ecological criticism, or "ecocriticism," which seeks "a synthesis of environmental and social concerns" (Garrard 3) provides twenty-first century readers a vocabulary and lens through which to interpret Radcliffe's and Shelley's circumstances by defining relationships apart from political structures. In its broadest sense, according to Greg Garrard, ecocriticism "is the study

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of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (5). In her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty indicates that "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). Scholars in various areas of study have integrated such ideologies in their works: in overviews of the field of ecocriticism, Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*, which demonstrates the negative effects of DDT and other pesticides on the environment, is often cited as an important background work. Another book of note is Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*; first published in 1971, this book/pamphlet identifies problems related to population growth, evidence it exists, and ways to control it. Eminent scholars in the field of literary ecocriticism include Jonathan Bate (*Romantic Ecology* and *The Song of the Earth*), Lawrence Buell (*Writing for an Endangered World*), Karl Kroeber (*Ecological Literary Criticism*), and Timothy Morton (*The Poetics of Spice*, *Ecology without Nature*, and *Hyperobjects*). The earlier, non-literary studies lay some of the intellectual groundwork for questioning of human/nonhuman relationships while the literary studies offer some of the theoretical background for my dissertation.

The twenty-first century questioning of the separation between nature and culture, the human and nonhuman, parallels the Romantic-era questioning of rank and hierarchy. Some of these questions include: To what extent should humans be held "above" the nonhuman? What is our responsibility to the nonhuman and vice versa? What will happen if we continue to use the nonhuman as we currently do? This dissertation joins those who posit that the relationship between the human and nonhuman is reciprocal, and none can be held above the other. Because Radcliffe and Shelley deal with these questions of hierarchy long before ecocritics began to question them, they can serve as models for ways to read situations ecocritically even though

they that are not directly environmental. This consideration thus offers ecocritics a way not to shut themselves away from the past, which could result in setting up a new intellectual hierarchy that separates ecocritics from those who read texts through different lenses.

Finally, this study offers a way in which we can use literature to make us more empathic individuals. Many literary scholars question whether or not reading literature can make us more empathic beings. Ann Jurecic, for instance, outlines a conversation between literary and medical humanists and post-humanist affect theorists: literary and medical humanists believe that reading makes people more aware of what happens to people outside of their own experiences and feel for the plight of the characters, thus making readers more empathic towards people in the real world, or that an increased imagination results in an increase in compassion. Post-humanist affect theorists, however, believe that even though we can feel for the characters we cannot apply that feeling to people we meet outside of books or use that empathy for any type of actual change (Jurecic 10-11). Another issue at stake for them is that feeling empathy leads us away from thinking rationally and reinforces existing power structures (Jurecic 11). Although ecocriticism does not generally ask this question of literature's ability to generate empathy, it is certainly an issue that it can—and probably *should*—address. By questioning our relationship with the environment, we question our relationship with those around us, especially those who do not have the ability to speak for themselves and who have a background we cannot directly relate to.

Radcliffe, Shelley, and the French Revolution

Up until the Estates-General met in 1789, France was an absolute monarchy (Doyle 36). Made up of "clergy, nobility, and the third estate – meaning everybody else" (38), the Estates-General was meant to solve the financial and political crisis developing in France; however, it was unsuccessful. The third estate convinced some of the clergy to join them, and they formed

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the National Assembly, claiming sovereignty over France (34-40). French citizens subsequently

stormed Paris and the Bastille, successfully overthrowing the King (42). According to Sara E.

Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine, the French Revolution occurred "for the sake of forming a

homogenous [sic] public and symbolic space while establishing a doctrine of universal rights and

liberties" (9-10).

Radcliffe and Shelley wrote at different ends of the Revolutionary timeline. Radcliffe's

career, from *Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* in 1789 to *The Italian* in 1797,[2] was situated in the

midst of the Revolution while Shelley's works, beginning with *Frankenstein* in 1818, were

written in the aftermath when England had seen the devastating effects of the Revolution. Both

authors suggest, through their fiction, that human beings have a responsibility for one another,

and they both demonstrate this call for compassion[3] towards fellow human beings, at least in

part, by giving their readers heroes and heroines that are admirable not only in their treatment of

other humans but also their treatment of nonhumans—animals, landscape, and other beings that

blur the line of human (I speak particularly of the creature in Shelley's *Frankenstein*). Radcliffe

is normally considered more conservative while Shelley is considered more radical; however, I

contend that both writers were anti-Revolution and share a common message of understanding

one's role in the world at large, which includes a responsibility for others, no matter their social

status or species.

There are other significant reasons for pairing Radcliffe and Shelley. While the two

women have been studied together as parts of groups[4], they rarely are studied as a pairing.

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[2] Radcliffe wrote a final novel, *Gaston de Blondeville*, that was published posthumously in 1826.
[3] I will occasionally use "responsibility" and "compassion" interchangeably for the sake of variety; however, this switch also nods toward the idea that responsibility can connote a sense of obligation whereas compassion is voluntary, and, in my opinion, a greater end goal.
[4] See, for instance, Elizabeth Bohls's *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics* and George G. Dekker's *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism: Radcliffe, Scott, and Mary Shelley*.

Politically, they both make their statements metaphorically but differ in their messages in that Radcliffe asks those in authority to uphold their responsibilities to those beneath them while Shelley asks them to see others as part of a community and treat them as equals. Aesthetically, they both emphasize descriptions of nature and landscape, particularly the sublime aspects. Additionally, they both have lasting cultural impact, particularly through the Gothic. Radcliffe's descriptions of landscape and use of the explained supernatural influenced the mode, including Shelley's adaptation of it.

Nature, Culture, and Culturalization

Adeline St. Pierre, the heroine of Radcliffe's 1791 novel *The Romance of the Forest*, looks upon a romantic sunset scene that presents the snow-capped Alps beyond a smooth lake. The narrator informs us, "As she listened to the mellow and enchanting tones of the horn, which gradually sunk away in [the] distance, the scene appeared more lovely than before, and finding it impossible to forbear attempting to paint in language what was so beautiful in reality, she composed" a few stanzas describing the scene and its effects on her (262-63). According to ecocritical theories, by writing about the nature that she sees, Adeline has placed it within the realm of culture. Indeed, there has been much debate as to what "nature" and "culture" mean as well as where the divide between the two lies, if that divide exists at all. Furthermore, modern scholarship is increasingly aware of the human impact on the environment and the ways in which people assert control over it, whether that be through pollution, use of resources, or any act that demonstrates superiority over it. Of particular note is the idea that in writing about the nonhuman environment, we assert control or superiority over it, in part because it makes that environment about us, the human, rather than about the environment itself; this is an issue that Timothy Morton addresses in *Ecology Without Nature*, which I will address shortly.

In later chapters, I will predominately use the terms "human" and "nonhuman" rather than "nature" and "culture" because I ultimately want to focus on the ways in which the *Homo sapiens* species impacts everything else around it. However, it is important to consider first the conversation involving the definitions of nature and culture in order to fully grasp the theoretical discussion as well as understand why I am ending with human/nonhuman over nature/culture terminology. Certainly, nature and culture are themselves difficult concepts to define. It would be easy to make a list of objects in our world that one might consider to be part of nature: trees, grass, rivers, the sun; however, much of the trees and other growth that exist around us are there because human beings have planted them. And yet many people would identify their self-planted trees, gardens, and lawns as part of "nature." Kate Soper argues, "In its commonest and most fundamental sense, the term 'nature' refers to everything which is not human and *distinguished from the work of humanity*. Thus 'nature' is opposed to culture, to history, to convention, to what is artificially worked or produced, in short, to everything which is defining of the order of humanity" (15, emphasis added). Soper's definition thus puts the naturalness of human-planted trees and plants into question. Bill McKibben defines nature as "a certain set of human ideas about the world and our place in it" (8). His definition relies on the concept that "nature" is a human, culturally-generated idea. He further addresses the idea that we desire *unaltered* (55) nature, but that type of nature does not exist; our pollution has changed the atmosphere, which has changed the weather, which has changed every spot on earth (58). He adds, "Nature's independence *is* its meaning; without it there is nothing but us" (58). As the title of McKibben's study, *The End of Nature*, indicates, "nature," as we want to define it, does not and cannot exist. Thus for Soper, McKibben, and other scholars, the aforementioned planted trees cannot be considered part of nature because they are where they are by human design; even

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the trees that were not specifically planted by humans have been affected by our lifestyle, just as the rivers and lakes have been. Human actions have thus placed all of these naturally-occurring entities into the realm of culture.

Sherry Ortner defines culture, broadly, as "the notion of human consciousness . . ., by means of which humanity attempts to rise above and assert control, however minimally, over nature" (10). It is this concept that humans attempt to (and often succeed at) control(ling) nature rather than existing within it that leads me to align my own understanding with Soper's that humans' impact on nature is not natural but cultural. Ortner further indicates that the division of "nature" and "culture" is a human construct (10); not only is what we think of as "nature" a human construct, but the supposed division between nature and culture is itself a human-imposed binary. Additionally, culture is able to hold power over nature in that it can "socialize" and "culturalize" it (Ortner 11); I will borrow the term "culturalize" from Ortner to discuss landscapes and other forms of nature that have been placed in the realm of culture because of human action or will. Humans have long been taking something that exists naturally (e.g. seeds for crops) and putting their will upon it (i.e. planting) to create something for personal use or consumption or pleasure (e.g. food, cotton, or flower gardens). According to Jonathan Bate, the very idea of culture stems from nature. In a brief overview of the etymology of the word "culture," Bate indicates that in Middle English, "culture" referred to cultivated land, and in late Middle English, the denotation shifted to the idea of the actual act of cultivating the land; by the seventeenth century, the idea of the word shifted to other aspects of farming (3-4). Thus even the word "culture" derives from an act that would not exist without "nature" existing to begin with.

I agree that in many ways anything that human beings see, touch, or interact with cannot fully be considered "nature." For the purposes of this study, I will use the term "nature" to mean anything that either exists or could exist without human intervention and has had as little human impact as possible. When I discuss "culture," I will use the term to mean something that has been impacted by human beings, particularly those things over which human beings have consciously asserted their power. However, what is crucial to ecocriticsm as a whole and to this study in particular is the interaction between nature and culture. Specifically, I am concerned with the relationships and interactions between the human and the nonhuman.

When I refer to "the human" rather than culture, it is because I want to reflect on the species itself and how we interact with things that are not there by our design. The term "nonhuman," then, serves not only as a more apt parallel to human than does "nature" since, as scholars recognize, humans are technically just as much part of nature as nonhuman animals are. I also make this rhetorical choice based on my earlier quote from Soper that "the term 'nature' refers to everything which is not human and *distinguished from the work of humanity*." For Soper, that which is not human or part of humanity's work is "nonhuman."

Another issue at stake is where humans lie within the nature and culture dichotomy. While we exist just as naturally as nonhuman animals do, our impact on the environment is much greater. One problem Soper contemplates is the idea that when animals impact nature, it is natural, but when humans do so, it is not (19). She later indicates that green arguments "credit us with powers to monitor and transform our impact on the environment that are denied to other forms of being. For although other creatures certainly change their ways of living, . . . this is deemed to be adaptive behaviour very different in kind from that which humanity is called upon consciously and pre-emptively to undertake" (40-41). McKibben alludes to this same idea,

asserting that one could argue that people cannot destroy nature because we are a part of nature; however, that is not a point he appears to believe (64).

While neither Radcliffe nor Shelley would have been environmentally conscious in the way that many are today, I do believe that they saw humans' relationship with nature and environment as one not totally characterized by domination. I argue that Radcliffe does not necessarily call for humans to become closer to being considered nature; however, she does appear to be concerned with our relationship with nature. Her works suggest that people should have an awareness of their responsibilities towards not just other human beings but also towards their surrounding environment. For Mary Shelley, the question of what is to be human is central, as is seen most particularly in *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* (1826). Shelley seems to advocate that people look at how they define "humanity" and how that definition prevents them from being truly compassionate.

A movement within ecological criticism explores the blurred lines between nature and culture. The opening chapter of Timothy Morton's 2007 study *Ecology without Nature* indicates, "The more the narrator evokes a surrounding world, the more the reader consumes a potentially interminable stream of opaque scribbles" (30). Throughout the study, he "takes nature out of the equation by exploring the ways in which literary writing tries to conjure it up" (19); his argument implies that by writing about nature, we culturalize it. Throughout this study, I will use the term culturalize to discuss the idea that humans assert some form of control over nature, even if that control does not intend harm. Particularly, when humans attempt to understand nature, we must put something of our own concepts of what it should be into what it actually is. Thus I do not find that culturalizing nature is always harmful; if it enables humans to understand the nonhuman, then the practice is a positive one. Siobahn Craft Brownson addresses

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the issue of investigating nature in the poetry of John Clare. In her study of the poet, she

indicates that Clare realized that when he investigated nature, he was, in a sense, intruding upon

it. He touches birds' nests in order to understand them; furthermore, people who eat from the

mulberry bushes "leave their imprint on the land" even though those eating from the mulberry

bushes act "in unity with, as opposed to in tyranny over, them" (n. pag.). However, Clare does

appear to believe that the imprints humans make on nature are equal with the imprints nature

makes on humans (Brownson 56).

Ashton Nichols grapples with a similar idea; he opens his 2011 monograph by discussing

the term "urbanature," which describes the idea "that nature and urban life are not as distinct as

human beings have long supposed" (xiii). He asserts "that human beings are never cut off from

wild nature by human culture;" they are, in and of themselves, natural beings (xv). Ultimately,

he argues,

> Romantic ecocriticism should now give way to a more socially aware version of
>
> environmentalism, one less tightly linked to narrowly Western ideas about the
>
> self, the "Other," and the relationship between human beings and the natural
>
> world. Urbanatural roosting[5] says that, if all humans are linked to each other and
>
> to their surroundings, then those same humans have clear obligations to each
>
> other and to the world they share. (xvii)

Certainly, we need to be more socially aware of our environment—how we treat it and what we

expect from it in return. In other words, we need to consider how we act responsibly towards it

and how we respond to it. And I think that we can see this call much earlier than Nichols's 2011

study. Radcliffe and Shelley both appear to be concerned with the roles that humans play in the

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[5] Nichols uses the term "urbanatural roosting" to indicate that people, like birds on a tree branch, should consider the earth as a place that they live on and consume resources from without harming the place upon which they roost (xvii-xviii).

world, with nature, the nonhuman, and their fellow human beings. In fact, Radcliffe and Shelley appear to advocate lessening the distance between "human" and "nonhuman." These two authors bring the nonhuman and human closer together through characters' responsibility and responsiveness. Human characters help nonhumans become characters by showing a willingness to be responsible for the nonhuman and responding to its needs and offerings. This identification as "character" also serves as a way to bridge the gap between human and nonhuman since both entities can serve as characters. For instance, the use of personification and giving human-like emotions to landscapes in Radcliffe's novels allows the landscapes to act as characters. Furthermore, this identification of character can be used to discuss the development of sensibility in humans in novels, a point I will address in relation to Lionel Verney in Chapter Three. Additionally, the eighteenth-century convention of the sublime gives power to the nonhuman; Radcliffe's "explained supernatural" provides a way to think of the supernatural as being "beyond nature;" landscape plays a significant role in literature and in life; literature such as *Frankenstein* offers a way to investigate how "human" is defined; finally, literature can focus on experiencing places rather than simply visiting or reading about them. These particular topics provide the foci for my chapter investigations.

Chapter Overviews

Rictor Norton's biography of Radcliffe offers a "'cultural history' of a writing woman" and aims "to clearly establish the Dissenting – and specifically Unitarian – background to Radcliffe's life and work" (ix). He further shows that "Ann Radcliffe was fully aware of the radical politics of her time and sympathized with them" (x) and asserts "that she fully merits consideration as part of that circle of radical Dissenters" (xi). While Norton and subsequent Radcliffe critics make valid points that Radcliffe is not as conservative as earlier scholars

suggest, she does maintain throughout her fiction a more conservative approach to the division of

social class, with the hero and heroine only being allowed to marry once it has been established

that the two are of equal class status.[6] According to Norton, "One of [Radcliffe's] subversive

revolutionary messages is that the sublime landscape is a liberating force even for peasants. . . .

The lower classes are far more sympathetically treated in her works than in contemporary

domestic novels" (11). I do not think that sympathetic treatment is the same as equality; thus, I

will argue that Radcliffe calls for a continuation of the established social order, but she also calls

for compassion of all human beings no matter their social standing. The heroes and heroines

treat their servants well while still maintaining the servant/master relationship. Furthermore, the

heroes and heroines treat criminals and people who have mistreated them with the same respect

they treat other people; Emily St. Aubert, on seeing that Montoni was drinking with friends after

he has placed Madame Montoni in a position of misery, exclaims, "O! whatever are my own

sufferings, may my heart never, never be hardened against those of others!" (Radcliffe, *Mysteries*

336). While she does her best to stand up for herself and what she sees as legally and morally

right, such as when Montoni tries to force her to sign over her property at La Valee (393-94), she

also is willing to forgive those who have wronged her; after Morano tries to steal her away from

Montoni and force her into marriage and subsequently is attacked by Montoni, she grants

Morano forgiveness and wishes for his recovery (269).

Chapter One considers the connection between nature and culture in Radcliffe's *A*

Sicilian Romance (1790), *The Romance of the Forest*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The*

Italian (1797) through the mode of Gothic literature. Specifically, Radcliffe's "explained

supernatural" occupies a liminal space between nature and culture. Furthermore, some of the

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[6] Radcliffe also allows servants to marry each other. The end of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* includes the marriage of
Annette and Ludovico (672).

upper class are able to discern that the "real," or material, supernatural (e.g. ghosts and monsters) do not exist while still acknowledging that some form of spiritual supernatural presence is possible, thus reflecting a heightened awareness of the existence of entities and concepts beyond the material. The lower class, on the other hand, is quick to believe in the material supernatural and does not demonstrate an understanding of the spiritual supernatural. The heightened awareness of the select upper class individuals demonstrates an ability to see beyond what others deem to be obvious (i.e. that the lower class are merely servants with no intrinsic value) in order to see the value of the lower class and thus respecting the role that they play in society and accepting their responsibility to care for them and treat them with respect. This chapter uses this idea to establish that, for Radcliffe, the hierarchical system is not necessarily a negative structure; however, the system only holds up properly if the upper class takes true responsibility for the lower class. Characters such as M. St. Aubert and his daughter Emily as well as Valancourt provide strong examples of patriarchs and upper class individuals who practice responsibility towards those beneath them in the social hierarchy.

Chapter Two looks at Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian* to argue that characters such as Emily St. Aubert and Ellena di Rosalba who are able to appreciate nature, particularly landscape, are more admirable than those such as *The Italian*'s Marchesa who ignore it. Specifically, these characters indicate an openness to forming reciprocal relationships with the landscapes, allowing the views offered by the landscapes to offer them peace or comfort while simultaneously respecting the power they hold. In fact, these characters aid in constructing these landscapes, thus granting agency to both the landscape and to the perceiver, including female perceivers who are able to find power within the patriarchal system. Drawing from the agency female characters are able to gain through their construction of landscape, I propose that

landscape in Radcliffe's novels occupies a liminal position between "place" and non-place. Drawing from the theories of place theorists such as Tim Cresswell and Yi-Fu Tuan, I argue that because the landscapes hold significance and characters are able to form meaningful relationships with them, landscapes can be classified as being on the verge of place.

The last two chapters turn to Mary Shelley, who published her first novel, *Frankenstein*, in 1818, almost twenty years after the official end of the French Revolution in 1799, but when the struggle for and debate about equal rights amongst the classes was still alive and well in both France and England. Shelley's parents, husband, and philosophical circle were among the many who advocated an English revolution. Because of her relationships with radicals, Shelley herself is generally termed radical, with a few scholars arguing that she is actually more conservative than is commonly believed. Mellor, for instance, argues, "Mary Shelley was by temperament a conservative who endorsed a cultural and social tradition based on a model of monarchical democracy, class stability, and organic evolutionary growth" (211). Shelley's books certainly straddle the line of what women were expected to write in that she wrote predominantly about men and included more descriptive scenes of violence than most acceptable female authors did. In this sense she is less conservative than Radcliffe. However, in *Frankenstein*, the title character marries the woman his parents want him to, and Elizabeth is a paradigm of virtue and devotion, which indicates an adherence to patriarchal order. Furthermore, several scholars agree that Shelley was more concerned with the treatment of individuals than she was about politics. James P. Carson, for instance, indicates that in *Valperga* Shelley critiques contemporary politics through her novel about fourteenth century politics; however, she also "suggests that love and compassion might create superior specimens of humanity" (168). I align myself with those who find that Shelley cares more about smaller communal relationships than the larger political

system; while Shelley may have been fairly liberal politically, her books suggest that for her it is more important to be compassionate on a local level. Only through learning to be caring and responsible individuals can a society create a caring political system.

Chapter Three looks at *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* (1826) to argue that Shelley demonstrates the types of reciprocal relationships people should form with both humans and nonhumans. Donna Haraway's idea of "contact zones"[7]—places where the human and nonhuman can communicate—inform my reading of the relationships between the human and nonhuman in these two novels. As part of my discussion on *Frankenstein*, I look not at the idea of "To what extent is the creature human?" as many have done; instead, I investigate how Victor Frankenstein and the creature define "human." From those definitions, I then assert that in *Frankenstein*, the creature cannot form a place for communication with any of the humans whose acceptance and companionship he seeks, including the compassionate De Laceys and his own creator, because no one is willing to attempt to create a contact zone. *The Last Man*'s Lionel Verney, on the other hand, is able to form reciprocal relationships with both the human and the nonhuman, thus enabling him to ultimately become the "last man" mentioned in the novel's title. In this novel, Verney establishes an ability to envelop both his human and animal sides, allowing him to relate to both species, thus enabling the creation of a contact zone.

The fourth and final chapter looks at Shelley's *Valperga* (1823), *Lodore* (1835), and *The Last Man*, set in the past, present, and future, respectively, and argues that Shelley uses these different time settings in order to demonstrate that many of the struggles people have are similar to ones that others had in the past and will continue to have in the future if people do not adjust the ways in which they respond to disaster. Through her characters' reactions to political and natural disasters, Shelley suggests that catastrophe may be unavoidable; however, by working

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[7] She adopts this idea from Mary Louise Pratt.

together and supporting each other, bad times can become more tolerable. *Valperga*'s

Euthanasia, for instance, becomes a victim of her former lover's climb to power, but since she is

willing to continue to care for others, her sufferings are more tolerable. *Lodore* provides

contrasting couples; Lady and Lord Lodore's relationship falls apart under strain because they do

not communicate with or support each other whereas Ethel and Edward Villiers are able to

endure and ultimately overcome their hardships by supporting one another. Finally, *The Last*

Man leaves readers with a small sense of hope that the human race will endure because Lionel

Verney has a companion; Lionel himself will have a bearable existence for the remainder of his

life, and since he was able to find the dog to befriend, there is also a small hope that there is

other human life out there as well. Furthermore, the novel shows the various ways in which

characters suffer when they separate themselves from others rather than remaining with and

supporting them. If readers also develop their capacity to seek human and nonhuman

companionship that does not involve domination, then their difficulties can be more tolerable as

well. Through her descriptions of nature, particularly the weather, Shelley enables readers to

experience the historical moments she describes. By presenting readers with specifics about

location and environment, Shelley creates settings that readers can connect to and then entertain

the idea that these characters' struggles are like their own and learn that working together,

supporting each other, and being responsible for one another makes life's hardships endurable.

Chapter One:

Ecocriticism and the Explained Supernatural

> [Adeline] asked [the surgeon] a few more questions, concerning the state of
> Theodore's wound, and was told it was much as it had been, but that some degree
> of fever had come on. . . . [The surgeon said], '[T]hey must be careful to keep
> from him every liquid, except some cordial draughts, which I shall send. He will
> naturally ask for drink, but it must, on no account, be given to him.'
>
> 'You do not approve, then, of the method, which I have somewhere heard of,'
> said Adeline, 'of attending to nature in these cases.'
>
> 'Nature, Madam!' pursued he, 'Nature is the most improper guide in the world. I
> always adopt a method directly contrary to what she would suggest; for what can
> be the use of Art, if she is only to follow Nature? This was my first opinion on
> setting out in life, and I have ever since strictly adhered to it. From what I have
> said, indeed, Madam, you may, perhaps, perceive that my opinions may be
> depended on; what they once are they always are, for my mind is not of that
> frivolous kind to be affected by circumstances.' (*The Romance of the Forest* 185-
> 86)

This excerpt from Ann Radcliffe's novel, *The Romance of the Forest*, presents a

conversation between the heroine, Adeline St. Pierre, and an incompetent surgeon who makes a

habit not only of ignoring nature but convincing his patients that they will most certainly die[1].

Through the rational heroine, Radcliffe presents the surgeon as inept and closed-minded. This

conversation in which he denies the wisdom of nature is representative of his ineptitudes and the

moment that ultimately makes Adeline decide that he is unworthy of treating Theodore's

wounds. The passage implies a respect for the power and wisdom of nature combined with a

need for the human ability to interpret it in order to advance in intellect, science, and medicine.

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[1] The landlady tells Adeline "that [Theodore] believes he is going to die; yet the doctor told him so himself, or, at
least as good" (183).

A sensitivity towards what the human body is trying to communicate would enable the surgeon

to better treat his patients. Similarly, a sensitivity towards nature in general allows humans to

make informed decisions.   Alternatively, ignoring what people or nature is trying to

communicate because of pre-conceived notions of how things should work results in disaster.

This passage serves as a metaphor to Radcliffe's perception of the hierarchical system. If

the hierarchy ignores the needs of the lower class because they see them as "improper guide[s]"

or because the upper class "strictly adhere[s]" to their "first opinion[s] on setting out in life,"

then it is impossible for society to thrive. Thus my central argument in this chapter is that

Radcliffe maintains that the hierarchical system, while flawed, should not be eliminated[2];

instead, the upper class should be more aware of the needs of the lower class in order to respond

to those needs. She demonstrates this ideology through upper class characters who know that

ghosts and monsters do not exist but demonstrate an awareness that some greater form of the

supernatural *can* exist. This heightened awareness in some upper class characters parallels those

characters' abilities to value the lower and servant class and respond to their needs, thus

demonstrating themselves to be responsible patriarchs or leaders. Radcliffe's novels indicate a

valid separation of class while simultaneously reminding readers that those of the upper class are

responsible for those of the lower class; this idea is further reflected in the treatment of nature

when Radcliffe's characters are reminded of its power, particularly through her use of the

sublime. In my introduction, I elucidate the idea that the main, upper class characters in

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[2] A philosophical debate concerning the hierarchical system occurred in the late eighteenth century. Thomas Paine's book *The Rights of Man* (1791-1792), for instance, argues against Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) to say that governments must adapt with each new generation (5). Other political nonfiction such as William Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Rights of Woman* (1792) advocated change in the monarchy or strict patriarchal or hierarchical system. Works of fiction took the same tone. The Preface to Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, which was removed after the first edition, indicates that the narrative demonstrates "a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism, by which man becomes the destroyer of man" (312). Among others, according to Allene Gregory, are Elizabeth Inchbald, Amelia Alderson Opie, Charlotte Smith, and Mary Hays (191-230).

Radcliffe's novels "culturalize"[3] nature by writing about it and that through this process, they assert their own power and control over it; however, these same characters also realize that they depend upon nature and are at times subordinate to its power. In so doing, Radcliffe diverges from the eighteenth-century philosophy of people holding a place above nature; these characters realize their role as a part of a greater system rather than fully in control of or subordinate to nature and are consequently willing to take responsibility for it when necessary as well as allow for it to take care of them. I find that this understanding of their relationship to nature is parallel to Radcliffe's ideas about what the people's relationship to each other should be.[4] Thus this chapter contributes to the ongoing conversation concerning Radcliffe's political views; some argue that she supports the current hierarchical system while others indicate that she favors an overturning of the system.

Furthermore, I argue that Radcliffe's much-criticized explained supernatural occupies a liminal space between nature and culture. Throughout this chapter I will parallel the nature/culture dichotomy with the matter/spirit dichotomy. What I mean by matter/spirit is that there are different types of supernatural: the first type is the supernatural that gets truly explained away in Radcliffe's novels; this type is comprised of ghosts, monsters, and physically-present spirits. The other type of supernatural that exists in Radcliffe's novels is the physically-absent spirit, an idea that Terry Castle posits in *The Female Thermometer*, that an absent, living individual haunts the present individual (123-24). Drawing from Timothy Morton's claim that

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[3] This idea is based in part on Sherry Ortner, who "equate[s] culture with the notion of human consciousness, or with the products of human consciousness . . . by means of which humanity attempts to assert control over nature" (26). This culturalization is not necessarily a product of human attempt to control or manipulate nature for personal gain. The process can result from gazing upon and interpreting nature in an attempt to understand it. When people attempt to understand nature, they put something of their own concepts of what it should be into what it actually is.

[4] Even Edmund Burke, known for being conservative and in favor of a strict hierarchical structure, acknowledges that a relationship exists between the human and the nonhuman. In *A Philosophical Enquiry*, he writes that *general society* is that "which we have with men and with other animals, and which we may in some sort be said to have even with the inanimate world" (40).

the supernatural is something that is "beyond" nature, that it is a presence that transcends physical being (*Ecology* 18-19), I argue that the upper class characters entertain the possibility of the spiritual supernatural while the lower class believes in the material supernatural. This reading demonstrates that there is a way to read the Gothic ecocritically. Furthermore, this different way of understanding the explained supernatural gives the trope literary value. While Radcliffe's contemporary readers and current scholars often criticize her methods, the explained supernatural actually offers a truer understanding of the supernatural: it is more than just ghosts and monsters; it has a spiritual component that haunts and affects characters and readers on a deeper level than a demon or vampire can.

Nature, Culture, and Supernatural

Radcliffe balances nature and culture through the supernatural, thus keeping her readers engaged while still maintaining her reputation as an author who can think rationally. Radcliffe uses the supernatural aspect of the Gothic in natural settings as well as the cultural settings such as the Castle Udolpho. Stephen Ahern concisely states that in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe uses Emily to "[come] to the necessary if unsettling conclusion that the logics of passion and reason must continually inform one another if the competing demands of desire and duty are to be reconciled in any livable way" (152). Similarly, the characters in the novel must reconcile nature with culture. For the "explained" spectres of Radcliffe's fiction, humans oftentimes construct the ghosts in their minds when they hear odd sounds that are discovered to be banditti in secret passageways[5] or the wind (nature) blowing through buildings (culture).

To understand the supernatural and the explained supernatural requires interpreting the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. The surgeon depicted in the epigraph to this

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[5] I use the term "nature" to refer to things that exist without human influence and "culture" to refer to things that exist because of human influence.

chapter was inadequate because he did not allow nature to inform his treatments. In parallel, Radcliffe invites her readers to allow nature to inform their interpretations of her novels, thus enabling nature to show how characters relate to their physical and spiritual environments. Looking at Radcliffe's explained supernatural through an ecocritical lens allows scholars to entertain the idea that the supernatural occupies a place between nature and culture. In fact, as its definition implies, it is beyond nature. Readers and characters alike must look beyond that which is physically present in order to understand the relationship between the human and the nonhuman.

Centuries before ecological criticism, or "ecocriticism," posited that the line between the human and nonhuman, the divide between nature and culture, writers played with the interactions between the two. Essayists such as Thomas Malthus, Paul Ehrlich, and Rachel Carson have indicated the impact that humans have made on the environment. Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population*, first published in 1798, draws attention to the fact that the world population is increasing rapidly, perhaps at a pace that would mean that the food the world can produce could no longer sustain people. More recently, Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, first published in 1971, grapples with the existence of and solutions for population growth. Carson's 1962 *Silent Spring*, often credited to be the beginning of the environmental movement, indicates the negative effects of DDT, a commonly-used pesticide, on humans and nonhuman animals.

Even before these critical essays philosophically and scientifically considered human impact on the earth, literature already acknowledged this influence. For instance, John Dryden's 1682 poem "Mac Flecknoe" calls attention to the waste being dumped into the streets and rivers in stating that the celebratory sound of the people "Echoes from Pissing Alley Sh---- call, / And Sh---- they resound from Aston Hall. / About thy boat the little fishes throng, / As at the morning

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toast that floats along" (47-50). The fact that late seventeenth century Londoners have a street

called "Pissing Alley" indicates their awareness of their impact on their surroundings. Another

instance of eighteenth century literary awareness of effect on environment lies in Mary Leapor's

"Crumble Hall" (1751), which draws attention to the cutting down of trees to build a parlor hall,

pointing specifically to the fact that cutting down the trees to further the building itself affects the

lives of the animals that lived there (121).[6]

Through understanding our impact on the environment, we are able to then discern the

responsibilities we have towards it, and in order to understand why we should be responsible for

it and how to become responsible for it, it is perhaps necessary to understand how the divide

between nature and culture is not so wide as we often believe. Furthermore, an understanding of

nature allows for better understanding of the nonhuman. To take for example the excerpt from *A

Romance of the Forest*, Adeline indicates that they could rely on nature's advice when treating

Theodore; this remedy proves better than the surgeon's when a physician arrives, gives Theodore

medicine, and allows him "to drink freely of some diluting liquids" (188). This circumstance

offers an example of how people can learn from nature when they respond to her. In return,

people need to act responsibly toward nature, alleviating the strain that we place upon her. A

heightened awareness of one's nonhuman surroundings allows a person to also be more

conscious of the needs of the people around them, for as Ashton Nichols states, "if all humans

are linked to each other and to their surroundings, then those same humans have clear obligations

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[6] To quote from the poem:
And shall those Shades, where *Philomela's* Strain
Has oft to Slumber lull'd the hapless Swain;
Where Turtles us'd to clap their silken Wings;
Whose rev'rend Oaks have known a hundred;
     Springs;
Shall these ignobly from their Roots be torn,
And perish shameful, as the abject Thorn;
While the slow Carr bears off their aged Limbs,
To clear the Way for Slopes, and modern Whims. (169-176)

to each other and to the world they share" (xvii). This claim enables readers to consider the idea that human beings need to be aware of the needs of their physical and social environment, understand the obligations they have for all aspects of their surroundings, and take responsibility for those obligations. Similarly, people need to learn to respond to and act responsibly for each other. Furthermore, the upper class, which has greater opportunity, should make greater strides to understand and respond to the needs of the lower class in order to be more responsible for them.

Radcliffe, Class, Patriarchy, and the French Revolution

In a recent study, Ellen Malenas Ledoux grapples with the role of the patriarchy in Radcliffe's career by looking at Radcliffe's contract for *Udolpho* and pointing out that her husband William being the dominant signer underscores Emily's need for Valancourt to dictate her properties. Ledoux writes, "Emily resists being bullied by the macho antics of Montoni only to cede, quite willingly, her substantial property to Valancourt" (69). Pointing to the scene at the end of *Udolpho* when Emily asks Valancourt to sign away Udolpho to M. Bonnac, Ledoux claims that "this short passage demonstrates that Emily must supplicate to her husband before disposing of the bequest, because she has forfeited its ownership in marriage" (69). However, this interpretation oversimplifies the characters of Montoni and Valancourt, who are vastly different patriarchal figures. While Montoni is self-serving, Valancourt acts according to Emily's wishes. Radcliffe thus does not necessarily critique the existence of the patriarchal (and parallel hierarchical system) so much as she points out that it must act differently—it must be affective—in order to be effective.

This attitude towards the hierarchy applies on a national level as well. People in Great Britain had differing opinions on the French Revolution. Jennifer Mori indicates that at the

beginning of the Revolution, Britons overall supported the French peasants' plight, but as the movement progressed and became more violent, they "polarised into two camps, whose members either admired France and its achievements or defended a British *status quo* now perceived to be threatened by French arms and principles" (31); furthermore, "Attractive as the French Revolution had been in the first instance, most British radical and liberal intellectuals remained faithful to British ideals of polite and prescriptive liberty" (36). Based on Mori's claims, it is valid to suggest that Radcliffe was probably not a strong supporter of all aspects of the Revolution, if she supported it at all. Looking at the ways in which Radcliffe treats the supernatural, particularly through her use of the explained supernatural, illuminates her ideologies that the hierarchical system is not negative in and of itself but that it must maintain an awareness of the needs of its citizens in order to care for them responsibly.

One of the purposes of literature is for the writer and reader to have a medium in which to grapple with their emotions and anxieties, and as I mentioned earlier, the Gothic mode of fiction focuses particularly on the sentiment of fear. In the politically-charged late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain, some of those fears and anxieties centered on the political and social turmoil happening in France. Edmund Burke's 1790 *Reflections on the Revolution in France* "saw in the ideas, actors and policies of the revolution a bourgeois Enlightenment conspiracy against all social order in its assaults upon the institutions of the *ancien régime* through which social order, both literal and metaphysical, was maintained in France" (Mori 7). Initially, most of Britain supported the plight of those revolting in France, equating it to their own Glorious Revolution (31). However, as time passed and the revolution became more violent, more conservative Britons began to oppose it, and by 1792, after "the outbreak of war in Europe, the emergence of popular radicalism in Britain and the overthrow of the monarchy in

France[, the] British opinion, in collective terms, [began] to reject the revolution," and the nation separated into two groups, one continuing to support and one opposing the revolution because it might influence a British revolt against the monarchy (31).

Critics debate Radcliffe's political and religious beliefs, which appear entwined in relation to showing how she perceives social structures. The problem with some of these claims is that they are based on her associations with other people, including alignments of her beliefs with her husband's. To assume that Radcliffe shares her husband's political beliefs while stating that she herself is reform-minded establishes a paradox. Additionally, some claim that her characters are liberal-minded. For instance, Rictor Norton claims, "The egalitarian individualism of her Dissenting background and her husband's politics can be detected in many of her characters" such as when "Ellena and Vivaldi celebrate their marriage by throwing open their estate to persons of all ranks" (166). This claim is certainly valid; however, those same instances from the novels that scholars cite as proof that she believed in eliminating hierarchical structures or supporting the Revolution can also be interpreted as her supporting shifts in the ways the upper class treat the lower class. This example in particular can demonstrate either radicalism or a smaller shift in treatment of other classes. One scholar who finds Radcliffe not to be radical is Deborah Rogers, who indicates that "Ann was brought up in and remained faithful to the Established Church," implying that the author was conservative. Robert Miles, on the other hand, acknowledges that Radcliffe attended the Anglican church on a regular basis; however, he states that this doesn't prove religious beliefs. He claims, "Like the 150 Anglican [clergymen] who subscribed to John Jebb's collected works, dissenting sympathizers who stopped short of breaking cover, she appears to have taken a liberal view of doctrinal matters" ("Radcliffe, Ann (1764-1823)"). Furthermore, she associated with liberal-minded people such as Thomas

Bentley, a prominent dissenter; Elizabeth Montagu, Hester Piozzi, Mrs. Ord, and Athenian Stuart ("Radcliffe, Ann (1764-1823)"). Rictor Norton also argues that Radcliffe was a Dissenter. "William Radcliffe in his contribution to [his wife, Ann's,] obituary is careful to note that her parents, 'though in trade, were nearly the only persons of their two families not living in handsome, or at least easy independence'. Neither the French Revolution nor the Romantic poets had much impact upon the British conviction that pedigree was at least as important as talent," writes Norton (13). Very little is known about "Mrs. Radcliffe," but Norton draws from the few facts and documents available as well as extensive knowledge of her writings in his attempt to pen Ann Radcliffe's biography. One point he makes in particular is that her "politics were democratic; the trappings of feudalism in her romances only lightly disguise the rebellion necessary for a new order free of the tyrants of the *ancien régime* (9). He cites Emily St. Aubert's insistence upon equal property rights and Adeline St. Pierre's lamentations over the few having privileges while the many starve (Norton 9-10) in order to argue that Radcliffe favored "liberty, democracy and reform" (9). While Norton and others align Radcliffe with supporters of the Revolution, I do not find her to be as liberal as he implies, a view Diane Hoeveler appears to share. She writes,

> I would not attempt to claim that Radcliffe was even vaguely Jacobin in her
> political sympathies. . . . [However,] [s]he seems to be suggesting that the
> aristocratic family lives like a cancer, a parasite on the growing mercantile and
> middle class. Feeding on the innocent and unsuspecting, it produces nothing but
> exists by endlessly consuming the blood and sexual energy of those unfortunate
> enough to come within its domain. (97)

Hoeveler thus describes graphically what I will refer to as the "selfish" or "self-serving" hierarchy. Radcliffe's treatment of the patriarchy on the family level (i.e. the relationships between fathers and daughters, uncles and nieces, husbands and wives) serves as a point of comparison for her opinions of the national hierarchical construction.

In keeping with eighteenth-century norms and expectations, Radcliffe separates the common people from the titled and upper classes who are capable of rationality and reason. While Radcliffe demonstrates that people should be aware of their impact on the environment, including their obligations to other human beings, she still maintains an affirmation of social status expectations. However, those expectations include the upper class being called to respond to the needs of the lower class and take responsibility for them. Furthermore, the upper class has the opportunity to demonstrate and practice a heightened awareness of their surroundings through their openness to the idea that some form of the supernatural exists. While the upper class understands that spectres and monsters do not exist, some of them are cognizant of the existence of something beyond the natural entities in front of them. This awareness of the possibility of certain types of the supernatural seems to be inherently connected to their awareness of the needs of the lower class. In other words, Radcliffe uses character awareness of the supernatural to demonstrate potential for the type of responsibility and responsiveness she would have the upper class practice towards the lower class. Scholars generally agree that there is a distinct class separation throughout Radcliffe's novels: Sandro Jung's analysis of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for instance, points out that "Radcliffe's notion of sensibility is class-specific in that the privileged are seen to possess the emotional refinement and sensitivity that enables them to offer sympathy to others and understand suffering. The servant class, on the other hand, is characterized by a loquacious belief in superstition which resists disenchantment

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and rationalist questioning" (1). His assessment of Emily and Annette in *Udolpho* is valid; in fact, this trend regarding the servant class's penchant for "loquacious belief in superstition" extends to Radcliffe's other novels. On the other hand, in this and Radcliffe's other novels, the privileged are just as likely to ignore opportunities for sympathy and are as unable to understand suffering as those of the lower classes. We are reminded throughout her novels that the titled class is often the place from which we receive our villains. While the common class produces the banditti[7] that provide a physical threat to travelers, each novel also gives us a marquis, duke, count, or marchioness who provides a physical, psychological, spiritual, or sexual threat to the heroes and heroines. Although the titled are generally more sensible, not all of them share this trait.

That a valid break exists between classes is further evident in the fact that in Radcliffe's novels it is the servants who are more likely to believe adamantly in material supernatural ghosts and monsters without questioning that belief or expecting an alternate explanation.[8] The servants are usually the ones who go to their masters with stories of murder that result in the imagining of haunting specters. For instance, when the group first comes to the abbey in *The Romance of the Forest*, the servant Peter brings tales of the supernatural to the La Mottes and Adeline, which Monsieur La Motte tries to devalue. Within Peter's story, the narrator indicates "that strange appearances had been observed at the abbey, and uncommon noises heard; and though this report had been ridiculed by sensible persons as the idle superstition of ignorance, it had fastened so strongly upon the minds of the common people, that for the last seventeen years none of the peasantry had ventured to approach the spot" (31). One of the central concepts of Radcliffe's novels is that the heroines must learn to sustain hardships with rationality; the heroines develop

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[7] An exception to this rule occurs in *A Sicilian Romance*, in which the Duke's son leads a group of banditti.
[8] There is a scene in *Mysteries* in which Annette rejects Emily's claims of the supernatural, asserting instead that the haunting sound they hear is merely the wind (433-34). This instance is an exception, not the norm.

and grow in their reasoning capacity while the servants remain stagnant. Shortly after hearing

Peter's narration, for instance, Adeline had difficulty sleeping; "[s]he remembered the narrative

of Peter, several circumstances of which had impressed her imagination in spite of her reason,

and she found it difficult wholly to subdue apprehension;" however, ultimately, "the absurdity of

her fears struck her forcibly; she blushed that she had for a moment submitted to them" (33).

While Adeline recognizes that her fears of the material supernatural are unsubstantiated, Peter

continues to dwell on his beliefs in specters.

Furthermore, the novel never allows Peter, nor any of the servants in other novels, to

fully narrate a story about the supernatural. When servants narrate any story in Radcliffe's

novels, they digress, causing their masters or mistresses to become frustrated and cut them off, so

they do not get to tell the full story. Alternatively, the narrator must take over in order for the

readers to receive the entire narrative of how the spectre came to be or the murder happened.

However, when Louis La Motte has a story of haunting he learned from people in a nearby

village, he is allowed to tell the entire tale in his own words (69-70). These circumstances

further solidify Radcliffe's identification of a separation of classes, affirming that the titled class

is able to discuss silly superstitions rationally while the servant and peasant class cannot be

trusted to do so. On the one hand, the servants' inabilities to tell stories succinctly adds a touch

of comedy to the story; it also draws upon reader expectations of servants lacking intelligence

(due, in part, certainly, to their lack of education). However, at the same time it affirms the

servants' role as the voice that cannot be trusted to speak rationally.

Although Radcliffe validates class separation, she critiques hierarchies and patriarchies

when they act selfishly. When I discuss the idea of selfishness, I will draw from the Oxford

English Dictionary's first definition of "selfish," which states, "Devoted to or concerned with

one's own advantage or welfare *to the exclusion of regard for others*" (emphasis added). This exclusion of regard for others can take various forms and be shown at various levels. In other words, a mere concern for one's own wellbeing is not selfish in and of itself; however, that concern demands critique when it has the potential to harm others.

For instance, in *A Sicilian Romance*, Louisa and her father have an affective relationship[9]; the Marquis, Louisa's husband, on the other hand, serves as a strong contrast to show that patriarchal tyranny is appalling. Madame de Menon's relation of Louisa de Bernini's history highlights the responsible patriarchal figure and father-daughter relationship. The Count de Bernini took in Madame de Menon and her brother when they were orphaned as children and treated them as if they were his own (28-29). He educated Orlando, Madame's brother, as well as Louisa and Madame de Menon.[10] When the Chevalier de Menon asked for Madame's hand, the Count "consulted [her] heart" concerning the connection (31). Likewise, when Louisa seemed averse to marrying the Marquis, he did not "press the connection" (32). Louisa only agreed to marry the Marquis after Orlando died and she felt she owed her father the duty when her prospect of happiness was taken from her (32-33). While the father had a voice in choosing the young women's life partners, Louisa and Madame were allowed the final decision. The Count listened to the needs and wants of the women for whom he was responsible and maintained their respect and admiration, demonstrating that a patriarchal figure can have authority over people's actions without being selfish or self-serving.

The Marquis in *A Sicilian Romance*, on the other hand, represents patriarchal tyranny when he locks Louisa in a small, hidden room of the castle for many years. Furthermore, he orders Julia against her will to marry the duke and goes so far as to attack her lover physically

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[9] A relationship in which each party pays attention to and responds to the needs of the other.
[10] Neither Madame de Menon's maiden name nor first name is ever mentioned, so even when I discuss her pre-married life, I will refer to her as "Madame" or "Madame de Menon."

and lock her away in order to make sure the marriage to the duke comes to fruition. Signor Montoni of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* demonstrates a similarly selfish patriarchal figure. He marries Madame Cheron for her property and banishes her to an isolated turret for refusing to sign the property over to him (307). Furthermore, he offers no sense of compassion towards his wife when he is informed of her imminent death, nor does he grieve her passing (366, 371, 375). Both of these patriarchs' self-serving actions result in the suffering of those for whom they are supposed to care. Although Louisa and Julia live, Louisa endures over a decade of solitude, and Julia must briefly face poverty, banditti, and other dangers of the outdoors. Radcliffe thus shows the consequences of patriarchs with self-serving agendas. When read in context of the responsible and responsive patriarchs, we can see that Radcliffe does not negate the value of having a patriarchal society, only that a patriarchal society should still have the interests of all citizens in mind. This same acceptance of and expectation for this type of social structure can apply to the hierarchy as well because it is a similar system that allows one entity or group of entities to control or lead others.

Gothic and Ecocriticism

The role of the patriarchy is a major theme of Gothic fiction. The mode often parallels eighteenth-century critiques of the system with the earlier centuries in order to demonstrate that their modern system is not as developed as they may think. This theme makes it, perhaps, unusual to combine Gothic criticism with ecocriticism. However, the Gothic's obsession with the sublime indicates a respect for nature's power and human beings' relationship to and with it.

The Gothic trend in fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain began with the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castles of Otranto* in 1764 and arguably ended

with Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* in 1820.[11] On the surface, the mode of literature

presents thrilling tales of ghosts, monsters, kidnapped heroines who faint constantly[12], and

crumbling castles and monasteries that all contain secret passageways. However, Gothic fiction

has stronger theoretical backgrounds, implications, and significances than its critics may believe.

The Gothic allows its readers and writers to cope with contemporary fears by placing those fears

in another time or place in order to look at them from a distance, examine them, and understand

them. The physically crumbling buildings represent the metaphorically crumbling societal

constructs, the tyrannical patriarchal figures represent the fear of tyrannical governments, and

dangerous mob scenes parallel contemporary fears of mob rule and reactions to the tyrannical

governments; thus allowing writers such as Radcliffe to give their readers a thrill, earn a

substantial amount of money,[13] and comment on the problems they see in society.

While the novels are usually set in the past, the castle or other building has to have been

built even earlier in order for it to be crumbling when the characters live or visit there.[14] By

setting the novel in the past, the authors are also able to exaggerate the tyranny of the father or

father figure in order to point out the problems that arise with it in their own societies as well as

suggest that such patriarchal order is as barbaric as any other action that occurs within the text of

the novel. Particularly in fictions written during the time of the French Revolution, Gothic

writers often suggest that patriarchal, and by extension, hierarchical, systems are in themselves

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[11] Most overviews of the Gothic point to Maturin's novel as marking the end of the era. Robert D. Mayo indicates that some scholars cite that the popularity of Gothic fiction ended as early as 1797 when Radcliffe stopped publishing (58); Mayo himself claims, "The popular vogue for romances of terror was over in 1814" (64).
[12] Nelson C. Smith points out that Mary in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, for example "faints nine times in forty pages, including twice in one paragraph" (581).
[13] Although Radcliffe earned a considerable amount of money with her novels, particularly *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (£500) and *The Italian* (£800), she was the exception, not the norm; most Gothic novels did not provide their authors that much income.
[14] Ann Racliffe's 1791 novel *A Sicilian Romance*, for example, is set in the 16th century and depicts the downfall of the fifth marquis of Mazzini; portions of his castle have fallen to ruin. For instance, when the marquis tries to prove there is nothing supernatural in the castle, he and the servants come across "[a] part of the decayed roof [that was] fallen in, and the stones and rubbish of the ruin falling against the gallery door, obstructed the passage" (78).

tyrannical, and the crumbling of buildings that are built upon patriarchal systems reflect the idea

that the cultural system, like the physical building, cannot sustain itself. This is not to say that all

"Gothic" texts seek to overturn the patriarchal or hierarchical systems. Walpole's *The Castle of*

Otranto, for instance, resembles thematically other non-Gothic eighteenth-century texts; the

character of Theodore, at first believed to be a peasant, is ultimately revealed to be Jerome's son

and the heir of Alfonso (112). The text condones the idea that nobility is reflected by the

person's actions and demeanor even when the person does not know that he was noble, thereby

affirming the hierarchical system.   However, some texts, such as William Godwin's *Caleb*

Williams, use the Gothic mode to critique the hierarchical system. The novel shows the

problems that can result from placing too much emphasis on social class: the title character is

doomed to a life of hiding because his previous employer, Falkland, does not want him telling

anyone that Falkland is guilty of Tyrrel's murder and thus the undeserved deaths of Hawkins and

his son. Because Falkland is of higher class, his word will be taken over that of Williams.

Godwin draws out the persecution that Williams undergoes whenever his disguises are unearthed

in order to bring out the travesty of unbalanced rights between the upper and lower class. In the

views of writers and thinkers such as Godwin, just as human culturalization of nature has

impacted the environment so greatly that unaltered nature no longer exists[15] and

environmentalists have to push for as much preservation as possible, hierarchical systems

asserted force over those not in power, and people had to step up to attempt to overthrow the

system. It is this investigation of what people should do in response to these tensions that

interests me.

David Collings indicates that "Gothic tales make visible the potential consequences of

modern political stances and thereby construct an innovative political critique in their own right"

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[15] I mention in my introduction Bill McKibben's claim that unaltered nature does not and cannot exist (55-58).

(21). He focuses one chapter of *Monstrous Society* on the mob scene at the end of Matthew

Lewis's *The Monk*, in which a crowd of people discover that the Prioress has poisoned a woman

for violating her vow of celibacy (Lewis 351) and subsequently destroy the Prioress and the

Convent of St. Clare (354-58). Collings points out that the mob's actions are a form of rape and

that Lewis has sexualized the mob, concluding that

> the novel ultimately interprets the crowd's mutilation of all that is sacred not as
>
> the product of collective activity or of a purely irrational frenzy but as a response
>
> to illegitimate power. The novel at once condemns the mob and explains its
>
> activity as the product of a mystifying system to which it is subject, suggesting
>
> that . . . such madness resulted from the overweening power of the French
>
> absolutist state. (Collings 146)

Thus this scene demonstrates the problems that arise because of tyranny as well as the power that

the mob can have, especially in light of the mob violence in France.

I would argue that Radcliffe uses the Gothic mode in order to construct a critique of both

the public and the private sphere—what the government should do for people and what people

should do for other people. Even the most liberal of Gothic writers do not seem to suggest that

the hierarchical system should be eradicated entirely; rather, most imply that some sort of system

must remain in place and that it should be governed by rationality, sensibility, and compassion

rather than by love of power, money, and prestige. Radcliffe is arguably one of the more

conservative of Gothic writers, and through her narratives she demonstrates some of the ways in

which patriarchal or hierarchical authority can be harmless as well as ways in which that same

culturally-given authority can be harmful. *A Sicilian Romance*, *The Romance of the Forest*, *The*

Mysteries of Udolpho, and *The Italian* all depict heroines who are positively supported by at least

one father figure but also ruled over by another father figure who is self-serving and tyrannical. While the ways in which the heroine moves from one authority figure to another changes from novel to novel, the opportunity for comparison of positive and negative patriarchal authorities remains.

These aspects of the Gothic mode indicate a strong alignment with culture; however, it is also quite concerned with nature. While the past setting of Gothic fiction allows for a cultural critique of the patriarchy, and by extension their current hierarchical system, it also allows the characters and readers to return to a time in which human impact on the environment was not as apparent as it was following the Industrial Revolution[16]. Radcliffe's heroines and heroes travel through famous landscapes of beauty such as the Alps, and she dwells on her landscape descriptions in order to allow her readers to imagine the picturesque beauty and thus travel with the heroine. Furthermore, the landscape itself is significant in Gothic fiction. In the Gothic of Radcliffe and other Female Gothic writers, it provides a source for the sublime and terror; for Male Gothic writers, it provides a source of horror and a means for destruction.[17] Landscape allows for the heroines in some tales to connect with and show awe for God and helps to emphasize the isolation that characters experience and the lack of control they have as they travel across the country.

For her descriptions of sublime landscapes, Radcliffe draws primarily from Burke's ideas of the concept as outlined in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) [18]. According to Burke, a sublime object is something that dwells in one's mind, but the perceiver of the object still cannot understand it and that the sublime object

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[16] The Industrial Revolution began around 1750.
[17] Ellen Moers coined the term "Female Gothic" in *Literary Women* in 1977; since then, scholars such as Anne Williams have expanded on this concept, defining both Female Gothic and Male Gothic.
[18] I will reference the 1759 edition in this study.

produces "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (39). This inability to understand the object creates a sense of obscurity. Furthermore, sublime objects are often powerful, so the perceiver assumes they can cause pain; they are also vast, infinite, and produce terror (39, 57, 72-73). The sublime allows the perceivers to enter into an experience that they cannot achieve without viewing the sublime. In essence, the sublime creates a sense of awe for the perceivers, demonstrating to them that they possess little power in the grand scheme of life. For instance, Emily looks out from the convent near the Alps that she stays at with her father and Valancourt:

> It was a still and beautiful night, the sky was unobscured by any cloud, and scarce leaf of the woods beneath trembled in the air. As she listened, the mid-night hymn of the monks rose softly from a chapel, that stood on one of the lower cliffs, an holy strain, that seemed to ascend through the silence of night to heaven, and their thoughts ascended with it. 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 it 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. (Radcliffe, *Mysteries* 47-48)

In this passage, we see the landscape's sublime characteristics allowing Emily's soul and mind to expand beyond the mortal realm of Earth.

Criticism of the Explained Supernatural

Another major aspect of the Gothic, and one that many casual readers of the mode would most associate with it, is the supernatural, and among the many criticisms Radcliffe's writing received was a critique of her use of the "explained supernatural."[19] Assumed ghosts are revealed to be banditti hiding in secret passageways; skeletons turn out to be made of wax. E. J. Clery credits Samuel Taylor Coleridge as the first to critique Radcliffe for her explained supernatural: "'[C]uriosity is raised oftener than it is gratified; or rather, it is raised so high that no adequate gratification can be given it; the interest is completely dissolved when once the adventure is finished, and the reader, when he is got to the end of the work, looks about in vain for the spell which had bound him so strongly to it'" (qtd. in Clery 108). In other words, readers who disliked Radcliffe's method of ending with rational explanations felt tricked; they had suspended their disbelief as Coleridge would have them do or simply looked for a thrilling tale and instead received conventions of Enlightenment in the end. According to Clery, Sir Walter Scott categorized Radcliffean Gothic as a subgenre of Gothic and claimed that the unexplained supernatural of authors such as Lewis, Maturin, and Walpole were true Gothic (109-110).

Recent scholars, however, have attempted to justify Radcliffe's use of the explained supernatural. Although he does not defend her use of the explained supernatural, George E. Haggerty does offer alternative reasons for Radcliffe's use of the trope. He describes the

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[19] Other criticisms, many of which are at least partially related to her explained supernatural, include Sir Walter Scott's critique of the "Radcliffe school" and its explanations and its stereotyped lower class characters (Norton 154), William Wordsworth's claim of the "'want of taste'" of the Radcliffe school (Norton 154), Charlotte Smith's suggestions that Radcliffe is guilty of "madness and plagiarism" (Norton 155), Mary Wollstonecraft's implied critique of Radcliffe's "unsubstantial sounds of whistling winds, or startled birds, modulated by a romantic fancy (*The Wrongs of Women, or Maria* qtd. in Norton 156), an anonymous critic who claimed the novel of terror required no skill (157), and journalists attacking her for corrupting young minds (4).

technique as "a measure of [Radcliffe's] refusal to take the formal implications of her material seriously. She insists on a kind of 'novelistic' resolution that dispels the ghosts and returns us to the real world. Our impulse to laugh at her attempt to regularize this material suggests that this kind of resolution may be formally antagonistic to its affective nature" (22). Furthermore, he claims that Radcliffe "is testing the possibility of ontological confusion and deciding that the implications of her Gothic fantasy are too harrowing to be followed to their logical conclusions. If she 'represses' threatening desire, she also succumbs to the fear of a world beyond the power of explanation" (22).

Clery, along with Terry Castle, seeks to demonstrate that the supernatural that is explained away is supplanted by other types of supernatural. Castle, for instance, demonstrates that the supernatural still exists in Radcliffe's novels, arguing that "The supernatural is not so much explained in *Udolpho* as it is displaced. It is diverted—rerouted, so to speak, into the realm of the everyday. Even as the old-time spirit world is demystified, the supposedly ordinary secular world is metaphorically suffused with a new spiritual aura" (124). In particular, she explains that specters appear when someone mourns the loss of a loved one or thinks of a lover (123-24). Clery points out that initially Radcliffe was praised for her use of the explained supernatural (108). Coleridge's review of *Udolpho* was the first to indicate dissatisfaction with the technique, more complained about it following *The Italian*, and Scott is credited with "properly launch[ing] a critique [in his review of Charles Maturin's *Fatal Revenge*] of the 'explained supernatural' that was so persistent it could almost be called a campaign" (108). Clery goes on to say that it is "misleading" "to read the supernatural in Radcliffe through Scott" because "[t]here are dimensions of ghostliness in the work of Radcliffe and her followers that exceed and complicate the opposition of natural and supernatural, imitative and purely

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imaginary, presupposed by Romantic criticism of the 'explained supernatural'" (111). Clery indicates that the "invisible hand" that was common at the time as well as the intertwining plot elements operate supernaturally, claiming, "Prosaic chance is discovered to be no less of an illusion than the suggestions of superstition; it is the other main casualty of the novels. The endings, far from being the confirmation of a common-sense, disenchanted reality, reveal the world to be a transparent medium of divinity; material existence is suffused by religion" (113). Furthermore, the descriptions of nature provide metaphorical supernatural: "In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* Emily St Aubert's psyche is presented as a phantasmagoria of memory, living people 'haunt' the scenes of former happiness and are mistaken for ghosts, while the dead perpetually appear to the mind's eye and cast their shadow on current events" (113).

More recently, Katherine Ding looks at Radcliffe's explained supernatural through the lens of eighteenth century philosophy, specifically the ideas of George Berkeley, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. She argues that Radcliffe offers a unique type of fiction that must be evaluated independent of other fiction of the time (544) and that

> the popularity of Gothic fiction in general—and of Radcliffe's writings in particular—nevertheless shaped the desires and expectations that governed the reading public's encounter with fictional prose. Radcliffe's enduring legacy is that her works illustrate and elevate the potency of affect in the absence of causal objects that justify such responses. They demonstrate that fictional power resides in the effects produced within the mind, rather than in a stable correspondence between the experience and the object of perception. (546)

Specifically, she uses Hume's theories that experience and reflection create knowledge and meaning to explain that Radcliffe's heroines do not have the opportunity to reflect on what they

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see in order to truly comprehend what it is that they perceive (551). She ultimately claims that "Although most commentators predominantly register their disappointment, Radcliffe's disenchanting revelations also serve to elevate, by contrast, the imaginative space which had permitted the reader to muster sufficient belief—despite their post-reading protests—to enjoy the impressions of terror that her obscure descriptions provoke" (562). Ding does well in calling attention to the greater purpose behind the explained supernatural. However, I posit that the heroines' ability to entertain the idea of a spiritual supernatural presence while maintaining an awareness that material ghosts do not exist indicates their greater abilities for understanding other people.

Finally, Ledoux draws from Steven Bruhm to claim that "In Gothic writing, the reader is asked to not just experience suffering by proxy and sympathize with it; he or she is asked to feel distress" (12). She then argues:

> Gothic texts' particular appeal to emotion has the power to influence politics. The very psychological and physical violence that makes Gothic writing sensational, alluring, and profitable is also what empowers it to challenge its broad audience to imagine a world changed for the better. Gothic scenes of suffering, especially those depicting abused women and children, appeal to reader sympathy in ways similar to the verisimilar novel of sensibility. However, the emotional impact of Gothic writing goes beyond the realistic novel, because it couples this appeal to sympathy with the linguistic sublime, creating a heightened emotional effect. (12-13)

Drawing from Ledoux's claim that Gothic elements help readers sympathize in a manner more intense than non-Gothic novels can, I suggest that Radcliffe's supernatural enables readers to

understand the extent of characters' awareness. The characters who represent responsible leaders are open to the idea of the supernatural. Furthermore, characters who represent responsible citizens are also allowed to demonstrate that heightened awareness of the existence of presences beyond the physically present. Those who are oblivious to or deny such presences are unable to sense or respond to the needs of those in their care. Immediately jumping to the conclusion of supernatural causes, on the other hand, demonstrates a lack of rationality that would guide decision making, thereby separating the superstitious servants from the supernaturally-aware upper class.

Radcliffe's characters need to understand nature in order to understand the spiritual supernatural. Those characters who are selfish patriarchs cannot entertain the idea of supernatural because they disregard anything that does not directly benefit their goals for money, power, or status and thus have difficulty conceiving of anything beyond what is physically present. Monsieur De La Motte in *The Romance of the Forest*, for instance, claims, "'Stories of ghosts and hobgoblins have always been admired and cherished by the vulgar. . . . I am inclined to rely upon my own experience, at least as much as upon the accounts of these peasants'" (98). Responsible patriarchs, on the other hand, indicate an awareness that something beyond that which is physically real and present can exist. For example, while *Udolpho*'s M. St. Aubert denies the presence of ghosts, he acknowledges that other types of haunting exist. As Emily, her father, and their servant, Michael, wind through the woods as it grows dark, "a voice was heard among the trees on the left. It was not the voice of command, or distress, but a deep hollow tone, which seemed to be scarcely human" (63-4). Soon after, La Voison says of music heard in the woods: "'It is an echo, monsieur, I fancy. That guitar is often heard at night, when all is still, but nobody knows who touches it, and it is sometimes accompanied by a voice so sweet, and so

sad, one would almost think the woods were haunted.' 'They certainly are haunted,' said St.

Aubert with a smile, 'but I believe it is by mortals'" (68). Here Radcliffe presents the mere

unknown as supernatural; her preference for Gothic terror over horror allows for a ghostly

presence without ridding the romance of rationality.[20] In her definition of "Male" and "Female"

versions of the Gothic, Anne Williams indicates that Female Gothic narratives depict imagined

threats and supernatural while Male Gothic narratives ultimately reveal the supernatural to be

real. Furthermore, in Male Gothic, one person must convince everyone else that the supernatural

exists, while Female Gothic narratives depict the characters learning that it does not (103-104).

For instance, in *A Sicilian Romance*, the inhabitants of the castle ultimately learn that the

mysterious lights they saw in an "uninhabited" portion of the castle were related to Louisa's

presence. However, it is important to note that in many such instances, it is a patriarch who

encourages the belief in the supernatural in order to control those whom he is trying to

manipulate. The Marquis tells Ferdinand that the mysteriously-lighted apartments are haunted

by Henry della Campo, whom the Marquis's grandfather had imprisoned and executed in an

unmentionable manner years ago (Radcliffe, *Sicilian* 53). In encouraging fear of that wing of the

castle, the Marquis delays the discovery of Louisa and her captivity.

Defining the Supernatural

Despite dedicating an entire monograph to its rise in the genre of fiction, Clery never

fully defines what she means by "supernatural," but she appears to align the concept with ghosts

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[20] Radcliffe famously writes in "On the Supernatural in Fiction," "Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. . . . [N]either Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil?" (150).

and the fantastic.[21] Anne Williams references "ghosts (whether these turn out to be 'real' or imagined), bleeding portraits, and animated statues and skeletons" (70) as elements of the supernatural. Jerrold E. Hogle opposes the supernatural with "the earthly laws of conventional reality" (2). Fred Botting indicates that "in blurring the boundaries between supernatural and illusory dimensions and natural and real worlds, romances and illusory dimensions and natural and real worlds, romances loosened the moral and rational structures that ordered everyday life" (28). Botting thus places the supernatural and natural in opposition with one another. I, however, want to consider the supernatural in an ecocritical sense—that it is something that is *super*natural or something beyond nature. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first definition of supernatural reads, "Belonging to a realm or system that transcends nature, as that of divine, magical, or ghostly beings; attributed to or thought to reveal some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature; occult, paranormal." The supernatural is thereby beyond what mortals consider "nature." When Radcliffe explains away the supernatural, she not only returns it to the mortal realm but also culturalizes it so that it can exist between mortal nature and culture. The practice of culturalization involves the perceiver projecting his or her own understanding onto the perceived natural object, so through describing the situation in natural terms, Radcliffe is participating in this process. Readers still have the otherworldly impressions in mind, keeping them in a state between that of nature and culture.

An ecocritical consideration of Radcliffe's practice can add an emphasis to the "supernatural" aspect of the explained supernatural, illuminating the significance of combining the power of the nature and the cultural power of the human mind. In *Ecology without Nature*, Morton pontificates:

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[21] Her introduction states that "[a] 'rise of supernatural fiction' . . . appears paradoxical" and indicates her purpose as demonstrating how "spectres, sorcerers, demons and vampires" made their way into fiction (1).

Nature becomes supernatural. . . . Or nature dissolves and we are left with sheer

matter, and a sequence of ideas with numerous high points in radical materialist

philosophy, such as Spinoza. We want there to be something in between. But

would that be natural? Would it not be supernatural? Would that be supernatural

like a spirit—more of a refined essence—or a ghost—something more substantial,

maybe made of ectoplasm? (18-19)

Thus Morton entertains the idea that the supernatural could occupy a liminal space between

nature and culture, or at least that the supernatural is neither nature nor culture. More recently,

Morton has dedicated a study to the idea of *hyperobjects*, "things that are massively distributed

in time and space relative to humans" (*Hyperobjects* 1). Furthermore, "Hyperobjects occupy a

high-dimensional phase space that results in their being invisible to humans for stretches of time.

And they exhibit their effects *interobjectively*; that is, they can be detected in a space that

consists of interrelationships between aesthetic properties of objects. The hyperobject is not a

function of our knowledge" (1). If we consider the supernatural in Radcliffe's texts as

hyperobjects, we can further entertain the idea that there are things that we cannot see that are

still quite real.

Looking at the scenes that Castle examines (124), we can see that what she considers to

be the "real" supernatural presences, the imagined specters of loved ones, appear when one is

closest to nature. As Emily dwells upon missing Valancourt, she is looking upon a "moon-light

landscape, shadowy and soft; its groves and plains extending gradually and indistinctly to the

eye; its distant mountains catching a stronger gleam, and the nearer river reflecting the moon,

and trembling to her rays" (Radcliffe *Mysteries* 152). Similarly, when Valancourt misses Emily,

he wanders through the gardens they visited together (627). Both of them associate the memory

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of the other with nature and thus have to be gazing upon or wandering through it in order to be closest to that memory and form that supernatural presence.

Radcliffe demonstrates throughout her novels that a heightened intellect and awareness of surroundings guided by interpretation enables an understanding of the supernatural that demonstrates both rationality and an awareness of one's place in the world and how to be responsible for others. In *A Sicilian Romance*, the idea of the supernatural is addressed near the beginning of the novel, when Emilia and Julia are concerned with whether or not "disembodied spirits" could exist. Madame de Menon, their governess, philosophically explains that it is not impossible for such spirits to exist and that if they *do* exist, their presence must be due to God's permission (36). Madame's explanation of the possibility of the supernatural at the beginning of the novel demonstrates an openness to the idea of supernatural presences rather than a stubborn insistence that such manifestations cannot exist. Furthermore, it allows readers to be comforted that any spirits the characters encounter are from God and thus will not cause any harm to the heroine.

Radcliffe also provides instances that explain how artificial mysteries and supernatural events could occur. For instance, in *The Romance of the Forest*, La Motte inscribes a message over a doorframe at Saint Clair's Abbey. He engraves the words "P— L— M— a wretched exile, sought within these walls a refuge from persecution, on the 27th of April 1658, and quitted them on the 12th of July in the same year, in search of a more convenient asylum" (56) in an attempt to elude his pursuers. At the same time, readers are given a reason to believe that not all inscriptions or other writings depict legitimate occurrences. In a further attempt to throw off his pursuers, La Motte orders his son, Louis, to "describe some dreadful apparition" to those at

Auboine who had asked about him (70). Thus again Radcliffe makes reference to the idea that

many, if not all, stories of supernatural occurrences in her novels are merely rumors.

Other themes in Radcliffe's novels are those of encountering or avoiding actual terrors in

an attempt to evade supernatural ones. An example of this encountering occurs in *The Romance

of the Forest*; Adeline has three dreams[22] that feature secret passageways that ultimately lead her

to view the death of a phantom Chevalier (108-110). Not wanting any more nightmares, the next

night Adeline refuses to go to sleep until she would be too exhausted to dream, and she ends up

exploring her apartment's surroundings. In so doing, she unearths a dagger along with a

manuscript that tells the story of a man's death (this man is ultimately revealed to be Adeline's

father) (114-16). In contrast, Emily St. Aubert in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* successfully avoids

a greater terror through her attempt to avoid supernatural ones. Emily's fear of what lay behind

the veil fuels her apprehension of the chamber adjoining hers, and the night following the

morning she lifted the veil, she "lay down to sleep in her clothes" (260). Emily thereby

successfully avoids appearing indecent when Count Morano sneaks into her room (261). These

two scenes offer contrasting ideas: that the perceived supernatural leads the heroine to danger or

greater mystery versus the perceived supernatural minimizes the danger of a situation that

threatens her virtue. However, both circumstances ultimately help the heroine, for Adeline's

discovery of the manuscript provides context for the end of the novel when she finds out the

truth of her father (*Romance* 341). Thus both of these instances demonstrate that an awareness

of supernatural potential creates opportunity.

In many instances of the imagined supernatural, nature plays a key role. Specifically,

nature often helps create the terror the characters (and readers) feel and even mimics or brings

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[22] Milbank points out that Adeline's third dream is reminiscent of a scene in Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (Radcliffe, *Romance* 377).

about the thought of the supernatural. For example, towards the beginning of *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline, the La Mottes, and Peter come across the ruins of a monastery; as Peter leads the way with a torch, "[t]he partial gleams thrown across the fabric seemed to make its desolation more solemn, while the obscurity of the greater part of the pile heightened its sublimity, and led fancy on to scenes of horror. Adeline . . . now uttered an exclamation of mingled admiration and fear. A kind of pleasing dread thrilled her bosom, and filled her soul" (17-18), thereby signaling her sensitivity to the potential supernatural. The group in *Romance* hears "an uncommon noise (18)," which "sounded down the passage, at whose entrance they stood, and sunk gradually away. Every heart palpitated, and they remained listening in silence. A new subject of apprehension seized La Motte:—the noise might proceed from banditti" (19). Peter enhances the group's fear when he goes to investigate and does not respond to La Motte's calls, returns "pale with fear," and claims, "'I've done for them, I believe, but I've had a hard bout. I thought I was fighting the devil'" (19). The mysterious noise and "devil" Peter had to fight turned out to be owls and rooks beating their wings. Peter's experience with the material supernatural provides an example of that type of supernatural not actually existing.

The power of nature in creating the supernatural and terror in *Romance* is also seen in a later scene: the wind fuels Adeline's fears of the potential of the supernatural and leads her to the place of one of the novel's mysteries and reasons for fear of physical threat. During a storm at the abbey, "[t]he wind was high and as it whistled through the desolate apartment, and shook the feeble doors, she often started, and sometimes even she thought she heard sighs between the pauses of the gust" (114). Thus the wind creates or adds to already present fears. The breeze then moves a tapestry that leads Adeline to discover the rusted dagger and manuscript, which is the scene of one of the novel's central mysteries (116).

Furthermore, the explained supernatural gives readers both what they want (the thrill) and what they need (rationality, closure, explanations, and reassurance about the heroine's safety). For example, the mystery of the black silk veil hiding something horrific is first introduced in Chapter V of Volume II (Radcliffe, *Mysteries* 233) of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and not revealed to be hiding a skeleton made of wax until the end of the novel (662). Like Catherine Moreland's in *Northanger Abbey*, readers' suspense is built up for 400 pages, allowing them to suspect and assume, hoping for something creepy and gruesome. Certainly, in some ways readers are disappointed to discover that it is a wax skeleton, but Radcliffe provides one last gory description to sate appetites: "on lifting [the veil], there appeared, instead of the picture [Emily] expected, within a recess of the wall, a human figure of ghastly paleness, stretched at its length, and dressed in the habiliments of the grave. What added to the horror of the spectacle, was, that the face appeared partly decayed and disfigured by worms, which were visible on the features and hands" (662). Thus the readers finally get to know what had horrified Emily while simultaneously receiving the assurance that she was safe the entire time.

While the image Emily has in her mind drives her suspicions of haunting throughout her stay at Udolpho, the naïve and even silly servant, Annette, acts as the voice of reason: "'Hark!' cried Emily, 'we are pursued; that was the echo of steps!' 'No, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'it was the echo of a door shutting; sound runs along these vaulted passages so, that one is continually deceived by it; if one does but speak, or cough, it makes a noise as loud as a cannon'" (Radcliffe, *Mysteries* 433) and "'Surely, Annette,' said Emily starting, 'I heard a noise: listen.' After a long pause, 'No, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'it was only the wind in the gallery; I often heard it, when it shakes the old doors, at the other end'" (434). Radcliffe does not fully deceive her readers with her hints of the supernatural and danger; she places at least one character as the voice of

reason throughout, reminding the characters and the readers that there are rational explanations for all mysterious noises and apparitions; perhaps in part because the rational explanation comes from the silly servant rather than an educated governess, the readers choose the supernatural explanation because that is the story they want to read.

In conclusion, Ann Radcliffe uses the characters' perceptions of the supernatural to demonstrate class and ability to create meaningful relationships between classes and with the nonhuman. The lower class perceives supernatural entities such as ghosts that do not exist while the upper class knows that ghosts cannot exist but are open to the idea that some form of supernatural can exist. Those of the upper class who are open to the idea of the spiritual supernatural are those who are able to respond sympathetically to the needs of the lower class and are furthermore capable of developing meaningful relationships with the servants and peasants around them as well as with the nonhumans they interact with. My next chapter will look specifically at how the upper class, including the female heroines who are thus able to gain agency within a patriarchal system, can create meaningful relationships with the landscape.

Chapter Two:

Landscape on the Verge of "Place" in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*

Throughout her novels, Ann Radcliffe suggests that sensible characters are able to form meaningful relationships both with humans and with nonhuman nature (nonhuman animals and other entities that exist without the aid of human beings)[1], particularly landscape. Radcliffe's commentary about what a responsible hierarchy looks like includes the leaders' ability to listen to and respond to their citizens' needs. She therefore uses her characters' ability to respond to and take responsibility for nature to model how the leaders should respond to and take responsibility for their citizens. My previous chapter argues that a responsible member of the upper class has an open mind in considering the possibility of supernatural presences while also possessing the rationality that material ghosts and monsters do not exist. This heightened awareness is then projected into their understanding of the value of the lower class. The lower class, like nature in Radcliffe's novels, should be valued for their contributions to society and encouraged to continue those contributions. In the novels, nature is valued by the responsible nobility for its ability to put them at ease. The lower class, in turn, in both the novels and in Radcliffe's contemporary society, should be valued for their dedicated service and role they play in their society.

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[1] I provide a more thorough discussion of my use of "nature" and "culture" in my introduction. When I use the term "nature," I largely draw from what Kate Soper calls the most common sense of the term—"everything which is not human and distinguished from the work of humanity" (15). However, I use the term to aid in the discussion that ecocritics such as Soper and Timothy Morton propagate, that the idea of nature is more complex than is commonly thought—that it is a concept that is culturally constructed.

Eighteenth century fiction often invested nature and the landscape with human emotions,[2] a trope that Radcliffe used effectively to show that nature, especially landscape, is capable of being responsible for humans and providing them with something to respond to. Characters who are viewed as the heroes, heroines, or otherwise admirable characters demonstrate an ability to value both nature and culture (physical and social constructs created by human beings)[3] by acting responsibly towards other people as well as towards their natural surroundings; furthermore, they demonstrate an ability to respond to the feelings and needs of both the human and nonhuman nature. In particular, they demonstrate an understanding that they have a role in both nature and culture that does not involve self-serving domination of either, that the human and the nonhuman have a reciprocal relationship. The villains, on the other hand, demonstrate a desire to dominate others rather than a willingness to responsibly care for those of lower class. This aspiration to dominate people is further paired with an inability to respond to nature; they are oblivious to its potential for support. In *The Italian* (1797)[4], Ellena's ability to appreciate and respect landscape parallels her ability to be compassionate towards others and respect them for the role that they play in society. Because Ellena treats others as part of a greater system that requires her to rely on them and vice versa rather than as people she has control over, she is able to benefit from what they have to offer. Furthermore, she respects the landscape for its physical power and dangers and as an emotional companion. This realization of her position in relation to both

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[2] John Ruskin would later critique this practice; he dedicates a portion of *Modern Painters* to what he terms the "pathetic fallacy," arguing that, while giving human emotions to nonhuman objects may be "beautiful," it is also "untrue", thus only weak writers rely on this particular form of personification (64).

[3] Culture is a human construct and includes human attempts to control or dominate nature.

[4] Published in 1797, *The Italian* is Ann Radcliffe's last novel issued during her lifetime. It presents the story of Ellena Rosalba, a young woman who is courted by and falls in love with Vincentio di Vivaldi, a man of higher rank. His mother, the Marchesa Vivaldi, disagrees with the relationship, and when her son refuses to listen to her, she plots with her confessor, the monk Schedoni, to have Ellena killed. Schedoni fails to do so, however, and discovers that he is her blood relative. He believes at first that he is her father, but it is later revealed that he is her uncle. Eventually, the Marchesa dies, and Ellena is revealed to be of higher status than previously thought, so she and Vivaldi are allowed to marry.

people and nature, the responsibility she has for them and the power they have for good or ill, ultimately allows her to develop a meaningful relationship with them. The Marchesa, on the other hand, represents the selfish[5] nobility, refusing to entertain the idea of a relationship with the landscape or act responsibly or responsively towards others. She converses with Schedoni solely because of what he can offer her, and she treats others such as Ellena as pawns in her social climb. The Marchesa regards people only in terms of what they can do for her, not what she should do for them as someone with the means and power to help. Similarly, she is oblivious to the landscapes. She refuses to develop any sort of relationship with them. Because she selfishly controls people and ignores landscapes, humans are quickly willing to betray her, and landscapes cannot provide her with emotional support.

Radcliffe's characters test and develop their capacity to care for others through the experience of constructing meaningful landscapes. The female characters in particular gain agency (i.e. the ability to act for their own benefit and that of others, in contrast to the passivity imposed on them through some Gothic tropes and patriarchal narratives[6]). Because landscape is able to reflect or respond to human emotions in Radcliffe's novels, landscape itself has agency, an argument that I formulate by drawing on and subsequently diverging from Tim Cresswell's definitions of "place" and "space," along with other works in ecocriticism. When I refer to the "agency" of landscapes, I mean that they (albeit unconsciously) affect the lives of human and

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[5] In my previous chapter, I briefly defined "selfish" as acting in concern for oneself whilst disregarding others ("selfish"). To this I will add that the one acting selfishly seeks to control situations for personal gain but end up not only not gaining what they sought but losing what they had in the beginning. The Marchesa, for instance, temporarily feels as though she has power over the situation as she manipulates Schedoni, Vivaldi, and Ellena, but she ultimately is unable to prevent her son from marrying Ellena. While she lives long enough to know that Ellena is of noble blood and thus is worthy of Vivaldi, the Marchesa does not live to see the (presumably positive) effects of this marriage.

[6] In my first chapter, I argue that Radcliffe approves of patriarchal or hierarchical order, provided that those in charge act responsibly toward and in response to the needs of the people it rules over and serves. Part of this responsibility and responsiveness includes women having a voice in their lives. Although Radcliffe's novels demonstrate an acceptance of the male control over decisions, they also advocate women getting to tell the men their opinion in the situation. For instance, in *A Sicilian Romance*, the Count de Bernini consults Louisa and his adopted daughter concerning whether or not they wished to marry their suitors (31-3).

other nonhuman animals in either positive or negative ways. For instance, landscapes have the ability to soothe the emotions of characters who possess a heightened awareness of their surroundings. In contrast, they can incite a feeling of sublime[7] terror or offer a physical threat to the perceiver. Looking through this lens at Radcliffe's presentation of human-environmental interactions in her novels adds to scholarship on Radcliffe's use of landscape, which has been treated from many angles but not from an ecocritical one that can entertain the idea of landscape forming reciprocal relationships with human characters.

The lens of ecocriticism furthermore provides a means to give agency to the female within a patriarchal system and thus allows us to reconsider the scholarly understanding of landscape and "place" as theorists such as Cresswell define these concepts. In Radcliffe's novels, the act of investing landscape with emotion serves as a means to construct "place" and give agency to the female perceiver. Through the landscapes, Radcliffe's female characters are simultaneously informed by place and actively engaged in place-making. In other words, the female characters play a role in the construction of these landscapes as place, one of the few moments in the novels that they truly have power. By reconsidering the landscape as place, we validate the female characters' authority. Since there are valid arguments against landscapes fully being places, I propose that landscape occupies a liminal position between "space" and "place"—that it lies on the verge of "place." This redefinition of landscape opens up further considerations of landscape in other eighteenth-century novels as well as the role other marginalized or non-human entities possess in Radcliffe's and others' novels[8]. Furthermore, it lends itself toward establishing the role culture and nature play in constructing each other.

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[7] Chapter One outlines, in brief, Edmund Burke's concept of the sublime, which incites the strongest emotion a human is capable of feeling (Burke 39).
[8] I will continue this discussion in my third chapter, which considers the meaning of human and non-human in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*.

Radcliffe and the Nonhuman

To begin with, Radcliffe herself acted responsibly to nonhumans, thereby foregrounding

a reading of her novels as pieces that advocate responsibility to more than just human beings. In

his biography of the author, Rictor Norton demonstrates Radcliffe's love of dogs by relating two

anecdotes. In the first, a story he takes from John Thomas Smith's *Nollekens and His Times*,

Radcliffe rescues a mangy dog from being killed: Radcliffe came across a weeping boy and his

dog. When she asked him what the trouble was, he told her his mother had ordered him to hang

the dog, Fanny, because she was mangy. Radcliffe replied, "'Well, my little fellow, if you will

walk back with me, I will not only give you half-a-crown, but will keep your dog, and you shall

come and see it.' Given proper care and attention, Fanny soon regained a fine coat, and was

admired for her great beauty" as well as her good breeding (qtd. in Norton 226). The second

anecdote relates an instance when she and her husband were out for a walk along the Strand:

"'[T]hey saw a poor half-starved dog that had just been drawn upon the pavement, a coach-wheel

having broken one of its legs.' Mrs. Radcliffe, 'with her accustomed humanity,' asked her

husband to procure a coach, which took them and the dog 'to Stafford-row,' where her careful

attention restored the dog to perfect health" (234).[9]

Radcliffe's love and concern for dogs and other animals is also portrayed, at least

minimally, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*[10]. In this novel, Emily, her father, and her lover act

responsibility towards animals; furthermore, Radcliffe grants a human role to the nonhuman. M.

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[9] See Talfourd for the full story.

[10] Known as the novel that earned Radcliffe £500 and the story with the mysterious object behind a black veil, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was published Thursday, May 8, 1794 (Norton 93). Emily St. Aubert loses her mother at the beginning of the novel; after a trip through the French countryside to revive Monsieur St. Aubert's health, in which the pair meet Emily's future lover, Valancourt, her father dies as well. Emily is left in the care of her aunt, Madame Cheron, who soon after becomes Madame Montoni, wife of an Italian Count. Count and Madame Montoni impede the relationship between Emily and Valancourt, moving her to Italy, to Castle Udolpho, and demand she marry Count Morano. Through a series of unfortunate and fortunate events, Emily's aunt and uncle both die, leaving her free to marry Valancourt and live happily ever after.

St. Aubert refuses to fish, "for he never could find amusement in torturing or destroying" (8);

Valancourt resolves a conflict between Michael (the muleteer) and their hostess on their travels

by offering to sleep outside so that the mules could sleep indoors (34-5); Radcliffe includes

Manchon's (St. Aubert's dog's) desire to see his master and Manchon's sadness at perceiving

that he is not there (93); and Manchon and Emily bond over their loss (119). Radcliffe's

inclusion of compassion for animals and depiction of animals as loving in return sets up the

novel to be read as a text that displays an understanding and care for both humans and

nonhumans. Moreover, the inclusion of Manchon's feelings establishes the dog as having

human characteristics, further opening up Radcliffe's novels for consideration of blurring the

line between the human and the nonhuman.

Landscape and Sensibility

Picturesque nature was a common trope amongst eighteenth century writers, particularly

women writers. William C. Snyder indicates, "Perhaps because their message tends to privilege

intimacy over spectacle, domesticity over transcendence, women artists of the late eighteenth and

early nineteenth centuries find more compatible the understatement, subtlety and integrative

qualities of the picturesque" (145) over the "egotistical sublime," which "needs to value

profusion, intensity, power, transcendence" (144). Snyder argues specifically that Radcliffe,

along with Dorothy Wordsworth and Jane Austen, "appropriate[d] the picturesque to re-gender

Nature by focusing on themes that we might call 'pre-transcendent,' themes directed toward

reciprocity, inclusiveness, and sustained rather than transitory fulfillment" (145). While Snyder

demonstrates that female writers preferred picturesque, it is important to note that Radcliffe was

able to master both the sublime and the picturesque in her writing and that both concepts

demonstrate the characters' sensibilities. The ability to be inspired by the sublime as well as appreciate the picturesque shows the characters' abilities to respond to nature.

Scholarship has well established that landscape is an important aspect of Radcliffe's Gothic, plot, and aesthetic style,[11] but it has failed to look at her landscapes through an ecocritical lens, which allows us to examine and understand the relationships the landscapes are able to form with human characters. For the purposes of this study, I will define landscape as nature that is viewed at a distance. During the time of the Renaissance, "[l]andscape referred to a portion of the earth's surface that can be viewed from one spot" (Cresswell, *Place* 10), and when spoken of today, both in casual conversation and in scholarship, it maintains the same basic definition. Cresswell explains that landscape is the shape of the land that is viewed, and it can be "natural" such as the mountains, lakes, or trees; or it can be "cultural"—the lights or buildings of a city viewed from afar (11). In Radcliffe's novels, the natural landscapes most often involve the mountain scenery that the characters view; these landscapes generally depict unaltered[12] nature. The most powerful landscapes in Radcliffe's novels are unaltered not because all humans do not wish to touch and maintain them but because they are too dangerous to touch. Humans' inability to touch or comprehend the landscape enhances the Gothic sublime and makes it more terrifying. Radcliffe balances the sublime by occasionally painting a scene of

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[11] A few examples include: Elizabeth Bohls, who argues that Radcliffe, along with other eighteenth century women writers attempted to take control of and develop their own aesthetic language within genres that were already accessible to women, such as travel writing and novels, by "positioning themselves as aesthetic subjects" (7) and ultimately helping to shape what we now understand as aesthetic discourse. Of Radcliffe in particular, she looks "in detail how the language of aesthetics structures Radcliffe's treatment of women's relation to knowledge as cultural power in . . . *The Mysteries of Udolpho*" (213). Furthermore, while many, including Snyder, align Radcliffe's use of the sublime with Edmund Burke's definition, Charlie Bondhus iterates that "Ann Radcliffe's treatment of her heroines' relationships to the sublime has a stronger echo of Kant, whose formulation of sublimity is more concerned with the perceiving individual's ability to draw empowerment from the spectacle, as we saw in Emily and Ellena's viewing of overwhelming mountains" (14). Jayne Lewis interesting argues that while many people praise Radcliffe's ability to paint a picture with her words, Radcliffe's descriptions are actually quite hazy (384).
[12] Bill McKibben indicates that when we think of idealized nature, what we mean is "unaltered" nature but that this type of nature does not exist because we have affected even the most remote areas of Earth with pollution (55-58).

peasants in a distant field or on a lake, providing a cultural landscape that maintains a sense of the pastoral.[13]

The characters' perceptions of and interactions with landscape indicate their capacities for sensibility. Although there are many definitions of "sensibility," there are two that are most relevant to Radcliffe's treatment of the concept and its connection to ecocriticism. The first is that sensibility requires one to be sensitive to one's environment (Ahern 12). The second is that sensibility involves compassion and benevolence towards others (18).[14] Radcliffe's heroines are able to apply their sensibility to their natural and cultural environments, demonstrating compassion and benevolence to both the human and the nonhuman. In order to respond to what the nonhuman communicates, it is necessary to be sensitive towards it. However, if someone is excessively sensitive to their surroundings, their imagination becomes dangerous, a problem that Radcliffe and others critique.[15] Radcliffe uses the Gothic mode to demonstrate the negative effects of an excess of sensibility such as the perception or amplification of mysterious or supernatural dangers. Emily St. Aubert, for instance, imagines the wax skeleton in Castle Udolpho to be real because she is vulnerable to the mysterious powers of the castle. On her first full day at Udolpho, Emily tries to read, but, throwing her book aside, decides to explore her

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[13] The pastoral is a literary tradition that "involve[es] a retreat from the city to the countryside," contrasting the countryside with the urban (Garrard 33). In Radcliffe's novels, the peasants working in the field demonstrate the simplicity of the life of those for whom the upper class is responsible.

[14] Stephen Ahern offers a succinct overview of the different ways in which the term "sensibility" can be used. Literature of sensibility was eminently popular in the eighteenth century, particularly from 1750 to 1800, and the second half of the century has been read by some "as constituting a transitional period between an Augustan age concerned with reason and decorum and a Romantic age concerned with imagination and feeling" (11). He further indicates that "[f]ictional sensibility narratives are distinguished by a penchant for emotional and rhetorical excess that in both form and content derives from the tradition of chivalric romance" (12). In my study of the sensibility of characters in Radcliffe's novels, I draw upon Ahern's understanding of sensibility, beginning with his basic definition: "a capacity for living intensely that is demonstrated in a heightened sensitivity to one's environment" (12).

[15] Perhaps most famous is Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, in which Elinor Dashwood must learn to temper her sense in favor of sensibility, and her sister Marianne must control her sensibility. Elinor and Marianne are said to be based on Radcliffe's earlier Emilia and Julia (Radcliffe, *Sicilian*, n. 202). Moreover, Radcliffe demonstrates a need to combine sensibility with rationality when in *A Sicilian Romance*, Madame de Menon philosophically explains the possibility of the existence of supernatural (36).

surroundings. The narrator indicates, "Her imagination was pleased with the view of ancient grandeur, and an emotion of melancholy awe awakened all its powers, as she walked through rooms, obscure and desolate, where no footsteps had passed probably for many years, and remembered the strange history of the former possessor of the edifice" (Radcliffe, *Mysteries* 248). With these feelings consuming her, Emily approaches the black veil, lifts it, and faints in response to what she sees (249). Her sensitivity to her surroundings prevents her from fully focusing on the object behind the veil, disallowing her from realizing it is made of wax. This perceived vision she has then forces her to imagine that Udolpho holds more mysteries than it actually does[16]. In my previous chapter, I indicated that an awareness of the possibility of the spiritual supernatural is a positive trait; however, here Emily is responding solely to her senses rather than her reason.

The second definition of sensibility involves compassion towards others. Ahern notes that in early eighteenth-century France the term "sensibilité" came to mean "'every kind of benevolent feeling toward one's fellow human beings'" (Frank Baasner, qtd. in Ahern 18). Benevolence towards others is also important for an ecocritical study when, once again, that benevolence is extended to the nonhuman as well as the human. Like her treatment of sensitivity to one's environment, Radcliffe treats this aspect of sensibility as positive when it is not possessed in excess. However, when a character's benevolence towards others causes them to fail to be responsible for or responsive to their own needs, there is a problem once again. For instance, when the St. Auberts and Valancourt meets a shepherd's wife who tells them that their masters' sheep were stolen and they must either give him their own sheep or pay for the lost ones, Valancourt gives all but a little of the money he possesses to them, which shows his

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[16] In my previous chapter, I referenced Katherine Ding's argument "that fictional power resides in the effects produced within the mind, rather than in a stable correspondence between the experience and the object of perception" (546).

awareness of the need to be responsible for others, not just those he loves (52). However, his charity towards others in this particular instance puts him in a potentially dangerous position in that he may not have enough money for his own needs. This particular scene thus demonstrates that benevolence towards others makes one admirable, but it should be tempered with an awareness of one's own needs.

Characters such as M. and Emily St. Aubert demonstrate a sensibility that is characterized both by sensitivity to their environment and a benevolence towards people and nature. The narrator establishes M. St. Aubert as having an appreciation for nature and compassion for others. As indicated earlier, he refuses to harm animals for sport (8) and demonstrates compassion for his pensioners: he "distribut[es] to his pensioners their weekly stipends, listen[s] patiently to the complaints of some, redress[es] the grievances of others, and soften[s] the discontents of all, by the look of sympathy, and the smile of benevolence" (15). Throughout *Udolpho*, Emily similarly demonstrates a sensibility towards both the human and nonhuman; however, she must learn to balance her sensibility with rationality. Although Emily is compassionate and appreciative of nature, she is also more than commonly affected by sad occurrences and is susceptible to an overactive imagination. When the reader meets Emily, she is described as having "uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence" (5). Stuart Sim declares,

> The steady growth of [Emily's] sensibility is revealed over the course of the narrative by Emily's ability to commune with nature, expressed in Radcliffe's famous, and numerous, descriptions of the sublime landscapes of the mountainous regions of France and Italy. During their travels in the south of France after her

mother's death, their shared love of the sublime landscape is very apparent, and

forms a bond between the two as her father's health rapidly declines. (109)

While I agree that Emily's ability to commune with nature is important and that it develops

throughout the course of the narrative, I do not find that these scenes demonstrate the

development of her sensibility. Instead, she already possesses the ability to appreciate and

connect with nature; however, she does develop that appreciation and connection into a

relationship that offers her comfort during her hardships. Emily's development of a balance

between sensibility and rationality is instead proven via a combination of compassion,

obedience, steadfastness, and strength of mind. Throughout the novel, she refuses to

compromise her morals or her feelings for Valancourt; thus by continually rejects Montoni's

advances. For example, after her aunt's death, Montoni attempts to trick Emily into signing

away her property, to which she responds, "'I am not so ignorant, Signor, of the laws on this

subject, as to be misled by the assertion of any person. The law, in the present instance, gives

me the estates in question, and my own hand shall never betray my right'" (380-81); she cites

Valancourt as the reason she is able to oppose Montoni (381). Ultimately, she develops a

stronger rationality proven by her refusal to marry Valancourt until she has a stable future, both

through freedom from selfish authority figures and through financial stability for both her and

Valancourt.[17] The novel ends "with the prospect of *rational* happiness" (672, emphasis added)

for the couple.

The idea that Radcliffe's characters' perceptions of or interactions with landscape reflects

their emotional capabilities or current condition is not new; for example, in 1995, Elizabeth

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[17] In my previous chapter, I referenced Ellen Malenas Ledoux's argument that Emily's having to get Valancourt's approval for actions related to her property indicates a critique of the patriarchal system (69). However, Emily's insistence on whom she marries and when indicates that she does possess some power. In this instance, Emily makes certain that if a man is going to control her property, it must be one who can do so after listening to her wishes and acting rationally upon those wishes.

Bohls argued that in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* "[c]haracters' taste is bound up with their moral worth. Those who can appreciate scenery are good, while those who cannot, like Montoni, are obviously evil" (214-15). James Kirwan indicates that in *Udolpho* "we soon discover that a sensitivity to the sublime is, indeed, a clear index of moral feeling, the sure sign of a superior soul" (232). In parallel, William C. Snyder articulates, "Ann Radcliffe often refers to various kinds of landscape to reflect the situational plight or the emotional condition of her heroines" (156-57). However, critics have not accounted for the responsive relationship formed between the characters and the landscape.

The first few chapters of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* set the stage for how the characters' relationship with nature and landscape will be read. The admirable characters value the natural beauty of Gascony, and the less esteemed characters refuse to value nature. Rather, they see it as something that can be manipulated for self-serving purposes. Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert and their daughter Emily are all depicted as loving their home "[o]n the pleasant banks of the Garonne" (1) and from whose "windows were seen the pastoral landscapes of Guienne and Gascony, stretching along the river, gay with luxuriant woods and vines, and plantations of olives" (1). The castle is even constructed in such a way that they can enjoy nature while in their home. The library "opened upon a grove, which stood on the brow of a gentle declivity, that fell towards the river, and the tall trees gave it a melancholy and pleasing shade" (3), the greenhouse contained "scarce and beautiful plants" (3) that M. St. Aubert loved to study, and Emily's room "look[ed] towards the plains of Languedoc," affording a view of "groves of almond, palm-trees, flowering-ash, and myrtle" and the distant Garonne (3).

The first attributes the narrator indicates about the less than admirable characters, on the other hand, is their lack of responsibility for or responsiveness to either people, nature, or both.

In fact, sensibilities towards the human and nonhuman environment appear to be inherently intertwined. For instance, Monsieur Quesnel, Madame St. Aubert's brother, demonstrates a lack of sensibility towards the nonhuman, which parallels his lack of sensibility towards his sister. His treatment of both people and nature depends upon how the various entities can serve him. Quesnel is immediately identified as one who does not have a close relationship with or sense of responsibility for his sister and who values societal and monetary gain over true care for people and respect for nature. While Madame St. Aubert had married her husband knowing "that happiness and splendour were not the same," Quesnel "would readily have sacrificed his sister's peace to the gratification of his own ambition" (11). Similarly, he plans to cut down trees to make room for more popular ones. Monsieur Quesnel indicates that he will expand St. Aubert's familial chateau, which he had purchased years ago but little inhabited, in order to accommodate more servants and impress the Duke de Durefort and the Marquis Ramont. To accomplish this task, M. Quesnel plans to cut down several trees. When St. Aubert protests, Quesnel defends himself, saying they are ancient and not any good; furthermore, he claims "'I believe I shall plant some Lombardy poplars among the clumps of chesnut, that I shall leave of the avenue; Madame Quesnel is partial to the poplar, and tells me how much it adorns a villa of her uncle, not far from Venice" (13). Because he sees people and nature as things to help him advance in society through manipulation or mastery, he is incapable of taking responsibility for them. Instead of acting in response to his sister's needs or wants, he attempted to control her, just as he plans to control for social advancement the nature that surrounds him.

However, it is not good to be sensible only to nonhuman nature. In order to fully be sensible, one must be sympathetic and benevolent towards both the nonhuman and the human so that multiple types of fulfilling relationships can be established. In contrast to the Quesnels, we

are introduced to M. Barreaux, "an austere and seemingly unfeeling man," who comes to pay his condolences to M. St. Aubert (21) and demonstrates that isolating oneself in nature is no better than concentrating only on cultural advancement, for isolation in nature indicates a lack of responsibility to others. The narrator relates that "M. Barreaux had retired from the world, and almost from society, to live in a pleasant chateau, on the skirts of the woods, near La Vallée. He also had been disappointed in his opinion of mankind; but he did not, like St. Aubert, pity and mourn for them; he felt more indignation at their vices, than compassion for their weaknesses" (21). Barreaux, however, demonstrates care for his friend St. Aubert when he leaves his isolated paradise to pay his condolences. We are not meant to approve of Barreaux's isolation, but we are invited to admire his ultimate realization that people *do* matter. Barreaux's comprehension that his friend deserves his company and support demonstrates the need for a balance between society and solitude.[18]

Certainly, Radcliffe uses sensibility towards the human and the nonhuman as a way to demonstrate the way people should interact with others and with nature. Radcliffe furthermore critiques an excess of sensibility by demonstrating that it precludes characters from being responsible for or responsive to their own needs. To think only of one's own desires without regard to how one's actions will affect others is selfish; however, it is dangerous not to think of one's needs at all. For example, shortly after her father's death, Emily "remembered how often he had blamed her for indulging useless sorrow; how often he had pointed out to her the necessity of fortitude and patience, assuring her, that the faculties of the mind strengthen by exertion, till they finally unnerve affliction, and triumph over it" (*Mysteries* 119). Her sensibility

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[18] Radcliffe appears to draw from Edmund Burke, who, in his *Philosophical Enquiry the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* indicates that indicates that general society does not provide pleasure and that absolute solitude results in pain (43). However, "the strongest sensation, relative to the habitudes of *particular society*, are sensations of pleasure. Good company, lively conversations, and the endearments of friendship, fill the mind with great pleasure" (43).

is not bad in and of itself; however, it needs to be tempered by rationality so that she can be responsible towards her own emotional wellbeing as well as the wellbeing of others.

Just as Emily must learn to temper her sensibility with rationality, so must Valancourt. Through Valancourt, Radcliffe critiques the idea of the "man of feeling," a trope that is perhaps best showcased in Henry Mackenzie's 1771 *The Man of Feeling*, in which the main character, Harley, hears others' tales and gives them money, sympathy, and tears in excess. His sensibility is so great that he dies of overwhelming emotion when he is faced with the fact that Miss Walton, the woman he loves, is not set to marry another man and that he might have a chance to be with her. Radcliffe critiques the amount of sentiment the heroes of such novels portray; in being responsible to other people, characters such as Harley ignore the responsibility they have for themselves, which is also important. Thus Radcliffe's novels set themselves apart from novels of sentiment, which show sensibility in excess, through the main characters' struggle with the balance between emotion and rationality.

Valancourt is initially established as possessing "a manly frankness, simplicity, and keen susceptibility to the grandeur of nature" (*Mysteries* 34). Accompanied by his dogs, he "was in a hunter's dress. His gun was slung across his shoulders, the hunter's horn hung from his belt, and in his hand was a small pike, which, as he held it, added to the manly grace of his figure, and assisted the agility of his steps" (31). However, he soon after admits that the hunter's dress is for show. Furthermore, he has his dogs with him for companionship rather than to help him hunt (32). Valancourt is thus established as a man who appreciates scenery and is willing to be responsible for the nonhuman.

However, Valancourt must learn to balance his sentimentalism, which occasionally presents itself as selfishness, with a type of sensibility that allows him to care for others. Charlie

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Bondhus "argue[s] that sensibility is actually being interrogated in men in Radcliffe's novels, as it is the heroes, the men of feeling, who are ultimately weakened by their embracement of this philosophy" (19-20). Valancourt is an excellent example of this character flaw; he thinks first of his own despair at being separated from Emily before he reflects on the consequences of contacting her (*Mysteries* 145-47). Furthermore, Valancourt's insistence upon contacting Emily when she has told him he should not and when he knows that such contact will cause difficulties for her with her aunt shows that the type of sensibility that Valancourt possesses at the beginning of the novel is selfish.

Throughout the novel, Valancourt learns a type of sensibility that is outwardly demonstrated through care for others rather than selfish ambition, showing that he has learned to hold responsibility for all, not just those he loves. Furthermore, he is set up as one who is flawed because he cares more for nature than society. When he leaves Emily and her father only to return shortly after (and be shot by St. Aubert), Valancourt tells St. Aubert, "'You, Sir, renewed my taste for society; when you left the hamlet, it did indeed appear a solitude'" (39). Like M. Barreaux, Valancourt prefers nature over culture and must learn to balance the two. He begins to create this balance when he meets the St. Auberts, as is evidenced when he gives most of his money to the wife of the poor shepherd discussed earlier, but when he becomes separated from the St. Auberts through M. St. Aubert's death and then Emily's removal by her aunt and new uncle, he must relearn the balance. His love for society is limited to Emily, so if she is removed, he has no outlet for his emotions except for nature, and he must relearn to value society before the two can be together. In the end, Valancourt proves that he has learned to be sensible towards humans through his support of Theresa when Quesnel fires her (594-95). This change is brought about during and following his time in debtor's prison. He was imprisoned for gambling debts;

however, upon his release he gambled away the money his brother gave to set him free in order to free another man (651-53). His love of Emily allowed him to then turn from gambling, demonstrating his developed rationality. It remains that Valancourt gives excessively to the extent that he harms himself. However, his rejection of the vice of gambling shows his turn to rationality, and his potential excess of sensibility concerning others' needs is accepted because he is no longer acting upon his own desires in such a way that it could reflect negatively upon Emily, as he did when he begged her to marry him without her aunt's permission.

Valancourt's initially caring only for Emily but learning to care for others as well demonstrates that it is essential to be responsible for all human beings, not just those who one loves. As the novel continues, the minor antagonists continue to present themselves as above others rather than part of a balanced system of responsibility and responsiveness. When Emily addresses M. Quesnel about the fate of La Vallée, "[h]is answers to her enquiries were concise, and delivered with the air of a man, who is conscious of possessing absolute power and impatient of hearing it questioned" (213). In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, we see an example of what I outlined in Chapter One—that the hierarchical social structure is appropriate, provided that those of higher authority assume responsibility for those of lower social status. While Emily does not treat Annette or Theresa as equals, she does treat them with respect, recognizes her need for them, and does her best to respond to their needs. When Annette refuses to obey Emily's request to remove the mysterious black veil on their first night in castle Udolpho, Emily does not reprimand her harshly for disobedience (233), thus showing her sensitivity to Annette's fears; furthermore, she tries her best to control her own emotions so as not to disturb her servant (234-35). At the end of the novel, she provides Annette with a marriage portion so that she and Ludovico can marry (672), thus indicating Emily's ability to care for those of lesser social status

and affirming Emily's compassion even after she has been mistreated by those who were supposed to take care of her.

Importance of Landscape

As outlined in the previous chapter, landscape contributes to Radcliffe's Gothic terror through its sublime elements; its distance, vastness, and awfulness terrify and inspire characters. Moreover, Radcliffe invests those landscapes with emotions, thereby providing a means for characters to connect to themselves and others. Certainly, landscape is an important aspect of Radcliffe's craft. In fact, Radcliffe is considered by some, such as Samuel Monk, to be "the landscape novelist of all time" (qtd. in Kirwan 225). James Kirwan claims, "The very notion of nature's having a significance, in the sense of standing over against and thus offering, in the possibility of our communion with it, a way beyond the limitations of our individual humanity, is an essentially literary notion" (225), a notion that Radcliffe aptly demonstrates.

Landscape is a nonhuman that can connect to the human, and, like the supernatural I discuss in Chapter One, holds a liminal space between nature and culture. In my first chapter, I point out that the appearance of the supernatural in Radcliffe's novels is often the result of nature, such as the wind, and culture, such as a castle, interacting with each other to create a noise that characters interpret as a supernatural presence. Moreover, it takes the human mind's power to create this appearance of the supernatural; without human interpretation, wind blowing through a castle is just nature interacting with culture. In this chapter, I posit that the landscape holds a liminal space between nature and culture because it is a nonhuman that possesses human characteristics. In *The Italian*, when Ellena looks at landscape, she perceives that it is responding to her; she possesses a greater understanding of her overall surroundings and is thus able to endure her trials while the Marchesa's close-minded comprehension of her surroundings

limits her ability to be compassionate and inhibits her ability to experience joy as she seeks her son's social advancement.

Furthermore, the human and the nonhuman interact frequently, advancing the connection between the two entities. For instance, during one of the excursions that Ellena and Vivaldi go on after she accepts him as her lover, the scenery is described:

> Frequently as they glided round a promontory, whose shaggy masses impended far over the sea, such magic scenes of beauty unfolded, adorned by these dancing groups on the bay beyond, as no pencil could do justice to. The deep clear waters reflected every image of the landscape, the cliffs, branching into wild forms, crowned with groves, whose rough foliage often spread down their steeps in picturesque luxuriance; the ruined villa on some bold point, peeping through the trees; peasants' cabins hanging on the precipices, and the dancing figures on the strand – all touched with the silvery tint and soft shadows of moon-light. On the other hand, the sea trembling with a long line of radiance, and shewing in the clear distance the sails of vessels stealing in every direction along its surface, presented a prospect as grand as the landscape was beautiful. (37)

While Ellena and Vivaldi have the opportunity to see the landscape directly, Radcliffe only allows her readers to see it as it is reflected off of the water. This image temporarily places the landscape in the role of narrator, effectively increasing the role the landscape plays while decreasing the role that humans play. This role thus gives the landscape power within the novel because it is participating in the process of culturalization. When characters write about nature, they culturalize that nature by putting their own human understanding upon it—by interpreting it.

In this passage, in essence, the landscape is allowed to interpret the scene that contains human interaction.

The significance of this landscape is its liminality between nature and culture in that it presents an integration of landscape and people. The relationships developed among these entities give credence to the scholarly idea that the divide between nature and culture may not be as wide as many have believed. Ashton Nichols, for instance, argues that each individual person is "linked to every living creature, and every material object, that surrounds" them (xv-xvi). In the passage from *The Italian*, the peasants become a part of the landscape as they dance beside the water. The ships in the background, too, contribute to the dancing imagery. Water plays the dominant role in the nonhuman part of this scene. The water itself is described in two different ways: The "deep clear waters" must be still in order to create such a detailed reflection; however, the water is also "trembling," adding a sense of disorder to the image. Yet it takes all of these aspects to create this scene. We need the human and the nonhuman, the peasants, the water, and the ships in order to have a complete image. While all of these entities can exist without the other, they rely on each other to bring them significance. The peasants need the water so that their ships can carry them and their cargo, and the water needs the people and the ships to validate its beauty and utility.

Radcliffe furthermore establishes relationships between specific people and specific landscapes. The characters who are able to accept the positive relationship the landscape has to offer benefit from it whereas the characters who ignore the landscape cannot benefit from what it offers. Ellena listens to what the landscape has to tell her, while the Marchesa ignores it. Moreover, the eighteenth-century convention of investing landscape with emotion allows Radcliffe to make the landscape capable of participating in that relationship and thus occupying

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that liminal space between human and nonhuman. In *The Italian*, as Ellena and Vivaldi prepare to elope in San Sebastian, "The scene appeared to sympathize with the spirits of Ellena. It was a gloomy evening, and the lake which broke in dark waves upon the shore, mingled its hollow sounds with those of the wind, that bowed the lofty pines, and swept in gusts among the rocks" (183). Ellena's natural surroundings—the lake, trees, rocks, and weather all combine in order to mirror her feelings of apprehension; however, Radcliffe does not stop at this mirroring. This collection of natural phenomenon becomes an entity that *relates* to Ellena's feelings. This relation or responsiveness is a sensibility normally attributed to humans, so attributing the quality to the surrounding nature brings it closer to being human.

We can compare this landscape's emotional capabilities to those of Olivia, who aptly responds to Ellena's need for emotional support while at San Stefano. Emily is confined in San Stefano because the Marchesa had ordered her to be kidnapped and taken there. Olivia is there to hide: Schedoni, her second husband, had attempted to murder her, but when she survived his attack, she faked her death and joined the convent (381-82). Olivia is the human in the novel who best relates to Ellena's plight and grants her access to the landscape in her abbey prison even though she could have been punished for doing so. Ultimately revealed to be Ellena's mother, Olivia serves as Ellena's only friend in the monastery of San Stefano. The abbess of the monastery sides with the Marchesa, urging Ellena to be grateful for her situation (83). Margaritone, who conducts Ellena to her chamber following vespers one evening, is curt with her for describing Olivia as "very handsome" (87). At first, Olivia seems closed off to everyone around her, absorbed only in her songs and prayers (86-7). However, when she is elected to bring Ellena her supper, Olivia offers the first kindness that she had received since entering the monastery by offering Ellena empathy and proclaiming, "[S]ince it consoles you to know that

you have a friend near you, believe me that friend" (89). In a community that offers Ellena nothing but hostility, prejudice, and resentment, Olivia offers compassion, understanding, and friendship.

Furthermore, on the evening of their first verbal exchange, Olivia leaves Ellena's chamber unlocked, allowing Ellena to see a beautiful landscape from the monastery: "an horizon, and a landscape spread below, whose grandeur awakened all her heart. The consciousness of her prison was lost, while her eyes ranged over the wide and freely-sublime scene without" (90). The other nuns and the abbess enhance the misery of Ellena's prison while Olivia not only offers friendship but also enables Ellena to discover beauty and another companion to divert her from her difficulties and misery in the landscape she can view from the turret near her cell. The narrator dictates, "Hither she could come, and her soul, refreshed by the views it afforded, would acquire strength to bear her, with equanimity, thro' the persecutions that might await her" (90). This scene thus provides Ellena a means of emotional escape.

Later in the same scene, Ellena demonstrates her ability to respond to the landscape as it attempts to communicate to and be responsible for her as she gazes upon the precipices below:

> These precipices were broken into cliffs, which, in some places, impended far
> above their base, and, in others, rose, in nearly perpendicular lines, to the walls of
> the monastery, which they supported. Ellena, with a dreadful pleasure, looked
> down them, shagged as they were with larch, and frequently darkened by lines of
> gigantic pine bending along the rocky ledges, till her eye rested on the thick
> chesnut woods that extended over their winding base, and which, softening to the
> plains, seemed to form a gradation between the variegated cultivation there, and
> the awful wildness of the rocks above. (90)

Thus as the same time as the grand, sublime landscape provides her with a means of mental escape, the scene that she sees from this window also reminds the readers and the heroine of the danger that lies between her and the peace and freedom that lie beyond.[19] The awe that the landscape inspires within Ellena frees her momentarily while simultaneously communicating to her the dangers of her situation. These characteristics of the landscape parallel those of Olivia, her only friend in the monastery; "My heart is not insensible to pity, nor to you, my child. You were designed for happier days than you can hope to find within these cloisters!," Olivia proclaims to Ellena (89). Like the landscape, Olivia offers Ellena comfort and a warning of the despair one can experience in the monastery of San Stefano.

At the same time, this landscape—the precipices—is part of the dangers Ellena must face. To quote Diego Saglia, "the landscape she is enthusing over is the very natural obstacle that keeps her imprisoned" (21). First of all, the precipices themselves support the walls of the monastery, the place of Ellena's captivity, thereby playing a role in her imprisonment. Furthermore, although Ellena is emotionally freed by the view of the landscape, the landscape prevents her from being physically free in that it provides a corporeal danger that stops her from escaping. The landscapes' power to be both freeing and threatening to the same individual demonstrates the strength of its agency within the narrative. Finally, this image also provides the reader with another way in which nature and culture interact; in this case, the monastery, constructed by man, depends upon nature for its base.

Additionally, female characters who have little or no agency are able to gain some through viewing landscapes: While Ellena has no control over the landscape itself, she does

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[19] In a 2006 article, Benjamin A. Brabon argues that throughout her works, Radcliffe uses a "Gothic cartography" by using her landscapes as a way of demonstrating the ways in which her heroines are both free and trapped physically and by the patriarchy (843). Although Brabon does not mention any specific scenes in his brief article, I imagine that it is to such passages that he alludes.

have control over the way in which she views it. When Ellena looks from her turret, she "looked down" the precipices until "her eye rested on the thick chesnut woods," demonstrating the movement of Ellena's eyes across the scene. She therefore controls the direction of her gaze. This control symbolizes the responsibility she has in deciding how she wants to treat it; likewise, she has control over the ways in which she views her situation as well as how she treats other people. In my first chapter, I argued that Radcliffe critiques not patriarch or hierarchical systems in general but those systems that act in their own interests without regard for others' wellbeing; here, the way in which Ellena draws agency from the landscape without taking anything away from it establishes what a responsible leader should look like. Her relationship to the landscape is reciprocal; she responds to what it offers her. In turn, she devotes her time and attention to it, validating it as a human-like entity.

The Marchesa, on the other hand, ignores the landscape, demonstrating her lack of awareness of her surrounding environment and consequent lack of benevolence for others, thus effectively representing the selfish nobility that refuses to respond to its citizens' needs. The following significant landscape is one that goes relatively unobserved:

> Lofty palms and plantains threw their green and refreshing tint over the windows, and on the lawn that sloped to the edge of the precipice, a shadowy perspective, beyond which appeared the ample waters of the gulf, where the light sails of feluccas, and the spreading canvas of larger vessels, glided upon the scene and passed away, as in a camera obscura. Vesuvius and the city of Naples were seen on the coast beyond, with many a bay and lofty cape of that long tract of bold and gaily-coloured scenery, which extends toward Cape Campanella, crowned by

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fading ranges of mountains, lighted up with all the magic of Italian sunshine.

(292)

This landscape is Radcliffe and Italy at their finest; however, although the description depicts beautiful images, the Marchesa is indifferent towards the scene, for "[t]he Marchesa reclined on a sofa before an open lattice; her eyes were fixed upon the prospect without, but her attention was wholly occupied by the visions that evil passions painted to her imagination" (292). The Marchesa cannot see the significance of the scene outside her window. She is so consumed with the "culture" of her ambitions to marry her son into a wealthy and prominent family that she sees in her mind's eye that she is blind to the nature aspect of the world that surrounds her, thus showing a lack of awareness of her environment. While Emily represents the nobility as it should be, responsible for and responsive to it subjects, the Marchesa is representative of the nobility that acts selfishly, ignoring its subjects and refusing to honor the role each should play. She cannot respond to the needs of something or someone she cannot truly see. Her lack of appreciation for the landscape thereby parallels her inability to respond to the needs of people.

Concerning the beauty of the landscape, the Marchesa is not simply failing to see the sublime scenery. Characters such as Ellena who appreciate the sublimity of the landscape are able to see the positive aspects of life, but the Marchesa's obsession with the cultural leads her to find happiness in wealth and title only. Because of Ellena's willingness to see the beauty around her, she is able to be happy despite her despair; in parallel, she is able to show compassion towards others despite all of the wicked acts done upon her. The Marchesa's inability to see beauty in the nonhuman, then, prevents her from being happy when she does not succeed and parallels her desire for destruction of the human. Focusing only on the "human," her own family, and ignoring the nonhuman landscape, limits her ability to be compassionate, and,

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ultimately, to succeed in achieving happiness for herself. Furthermore, since the Marchesa does

not have the empathic relationship with the landscape that others such as Ellena do, she is denied

empathy from others. For example, Schedoni fails to continue any responsibility towards her

once he decides to help Ellena. Ellena, however, continues to be caring towards all, including

the Marchesa.

On Landscape and Place

In denying landscape a position on the place continuum, place theorists deny landscape

the agency it deserves and has the power to disperse. The female characters are able to gain

agency by gazing upon landscapes and thus shaping them into places. In other words, the female

characters construct and are constructed by the landscapes. This consideration also affirms that

women can maintain agency within a patriarchal system. Furthermore, the landscapes help to

shape the characters by providing them with comfort or messages as well as highlighting

characters' traits for the readers.

Radcliffe's novels are quite concerned with place. First of all, one characteristic of the

Gothic is that it takes contemporary fears and puts them in a different time and/or place in order

for the writers and readers to better grapple with them. By displacing their fears, readers can

pretend that they belong to someone else and thus enjoy the fictional narrative. Therefore, these

British novels cannot take place in England. Furthermore, the St. Auberts of *Udolpho* are

French, and Emily is inherently connected with France, particularly her region of the country.

Similarly, the very title of *The Italian* cues us into the significance of Italy. According to Pam

Perkins, the Italians were notorious for offering sanctuary to murderers; thus *The Italian* had to

have been set in Italy in order for the British travelers to observe Schedoni, the protected

murderer, and ask about him (39). Radcliffe never saw the French or Italian landscapes she

describes; however, after her tour of the Continent in 1794, her descriptions show an awareness of the difference between British and continental landscapes (Gephardt 4-5). Finally, according to Katarina Gephardt, in *The Italian*, when the author "superimposes a British garden onto an Italian landscape" (3) at the end of the novel, she does so in order to address growing concerns about nationalism and taste—that Radcliffe had become increasingly aware that British readers were more concerned with nationalism than cosmopolitanism. In other words, the British were becoming more concerned with their own national identity than the identity of others.

Tim Cresswell defines "space" "as a realm without meaning" and "place" as a space to which we have given meaning or importance and form a sense of attachment—once it has been personalized (10). He specifically claims, "Landscape is an intensely visual idea. In most definitions of landscape the viewer is outside of it. This is the primary way in which it differs from place. Places are very much things to be inside of" (10). He concludes, "We do not live in landscapes – we look at them" (11). That we view landscapes from a distance and cannot be inside them is certainly true. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, distance is part of what separates "landscape" from "nature" in general. Landscapes are nature that is viewed from a distance. However, given the extent to which characters in Radcliffe's novels invest meaning in landscapes, while landscape may not be considered a "place," it is not quite a non-place either.

After claiming that landscapes are not places, Cresswell indicates that "place is . . . a way of understanding the world" (11). He later indicates, in describing the argument of Edward Relph, that "[t]he continuum which has place at one end and space at the other is simultaneously a continuum linking experience to abstraction. Places are experienced" (21). Cresswell's acknowledgement of a continuum of space and place combined with his emphasis of the significance of experience in constructing place opens up the opportunity to consider landscapes

as semi-place. Radcliffe's landscapes are experienced by both the character and the reader, and they hold much significance, lying somewhere on the verge of place.

Certainly, the characters draw great meaning from the landscapes. When Emily St. Aubert returns home to La Vallée after her father's death, she "[comes] within view of the plains in the neighborhood . . . , and the well-known objects of former times began to press upon her notice, and with them recollections, that awakened all her tenderness and grief" (*Mysteries* 92). While Emily is separated from the place itself, the distant view of it is able to arouse emotion in her; the landscape is not something she is emotionally distant from in the way place theorists such as Cresswell would say she should be separated from landscapes. Similarly, in the scene from *The Italian* I discussed previously, Ellena finds comfort in the sublime scenery she sees from the abbey of San Stefano.

On the one hand, landscapes in Radcliffe's novels cannot fully be "places" in the way that place theorists such as Cresswell and Yi-Fu Tuan define them because the characters cannot and do not live in them. No matter how much meaning Emily St. Aubert or Ellena di Rosalba draw from the landscapes they gaze upon, they cannot live in them. Because landscapes are things that are viewed from a distance, once the characters approach the mountain scenes, they are no longer landscapes but rather more general nature. Furthermore, Tuan indicates that vastness is a quality of spaces; he claims that in America, the idea of space is that of wide open spaces that offer freedom as well as danger because they make a person vulnerable. On the other hand, enclosed places offer established values and protection. "A healthy being," he claims, "welcomes constraint and freedom, the boundedness of place and the exposure of space" (54). Certainly, landscape would lie within this idea of dangerous openness and thus be associated with "space." Radcliffe's heroines at times certainly feel both freed by and vulnerable to the

sublime landscapes they perceive, and it is in their "home" that is surrounded by open nature that they feel the safest.[20] The passage I cited earlier of Ellena perceiving the precipices and knowing that there is danger ahead while she simultaneously draws a brief moment of comfort offers an apt example of the former idea. Emily's home in La Vallée, where the chateau opens up into nature, is an example of the latter (Radcliffe, *Mysteries* 3).

On the other hand, within the definitions of "place," that differentiate place from landscape, there is room to interpret Radcliffe's landscapes as places to particular characters in the novels. For instance, Tuan writes,

> Place can be defined in a variety of ways. Among them is this: place is whatever stable object catches our attention. As we look at a panoramic scene our eyes pause at points of interest. Each pause is time enough to create an image of place that looms large momentarily in our view. The pause may be of such short duration and the interest so fleeting that we may not be fully aware of having focused on any particular object; we believe we have simply been looking at the general scene. (161)

Again, a place theorist indicates that the definition of place is not stagnant. Furthermore, based on Tuan's claim that a pause on a point of interest can "create an image of place," I argue that when Emily and Ellena gaze upon landscapes, they turn at least a portion of that landscape into a place for that brief moment in time. For example, in the passage quoted earlier when Ellena first sees the landscape from the turret near her cell at the monastery of San Stefano, she establishes her physical relationship with the landscape when she recognizes her chamber hangs over "vast precipices of granite;" and "her eye *rested* on the thick chesnut woods that extended over their

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[20] In a 2006 article, Benjamin A. Brabon argues that throughout her works, Radcliffe uses a "Gothic cartography" by using her landscapes as a way of demonstrating the ways in which her heroines are both free and trapped physically and by the patriarchy (843).

winding base, and which, softening to the plains, seemed to form a gradation between the variegated cultivation there, and the awful wildness of the rocks above" (*Italian* 90, emphasis added). Through choosing to maintain her gaze upon a specific portion of the landscape, Ellena has momentarily made it into a place. Moreover, she has gained agency through constructing that landscape as "place."

For Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the landscape around La Vallée, as indicated earlier, serves as a sign that she is almost home. Furthermore, landscapes in Radcliffe's novels serve as connectors; they are a means of connecting father to daughter, father to potential lover, and daughter to lover. Returning to the scene when Emily returns to La Vallée after her father's death, she sees "the glowing beauty of St. Aubert's favourite landscape" (92), followed by "a nearer view of the chateau, the chimneys, tipped with light, rising from behind St. Aubert's favourite oaks," (92) during "his favourite hour" (93). Emily connects to her father, even posthumously, through the landscape. The night that the St. Auberts meet Valancourt, M. St. Aubert and Valancourt "passed an hour in intelligent conversation. St. Aubert was much pleased with the manly frankness, simplicity, and keen susceptibility to the grandeur of nature, which his new acquaintance discovered" (34). St. Aubert and Valancourt bond over landscape. Finally, as she voyages across the Alps towards Udolpho, Emily feels as though she is together with Valancourt in the Pyrenées: "With what emotions of sublimity, softened by tenderness, did she meet Valancourt in thought, at the customary hour of sun-set, when, wandering among the Alps, she watched the glorious orb sink amid their summits, his last tints die away on their snowy points, and a solemn obscurity steal over the scene!" (163-64). Emily connects to Valancourt in his physical absence by looking at the landscape.

The landscapes additionally offer the characters a way to understand the world, another characteristic Cresswell attributes to place. Through the investing of human emotion into the landscape and the sublime, Radcliffe establishes characters' emotional relationships to and with the landscapes as well as gives them an opportunity to draw power from them. For instance, in the scene mentioned earlier in which Ellena and Vivaldi prepare to elope in San Sebastian, Ellena finds a companion in the natural surroundings that relate to her feelings. There, the landscape's ability to relate to Ellena provides Radcliffe's readers with another way of understanding Ellena and thus the novel overall. We understand that a metaphorical storm is approaching and that Ellena can sense it through the nature she perceives (183).[21]

Finally, Cresswell claims that places are experienced (21), and Radcliffe's characters experience the landscapes both immediately and through history. In an article on *The Italian*, Perkins draws attention to the fact that Ellena and Vivaldi see the landscapes through tourists' eyes even though it is their home country[22]; specifically, Radcliffe allows the readers to experience the landscapes as the tourists that they would be if they were on these journeys (Perkins 41). This native-as-tourist perspective is also applicable to *Udolpho*, where readers are invited to experience Emily's tour of France and Italy. Several critics, including J. Andrew Hubbell and Stephen Cheeke, provide theories that offer a way to reconsider Radcliffe's landscapes. In a 2010 article, Hubbell makes a move to establish Lord Byron as a nature writer, albeit not in the same category as Wordsworth (14). He indicates that most critics who work with nature writers work with Heidegger's concept of "dwelling" and claims that to them dwelling has come to be synonymous with "rootedness" (14); he then attempts to deconstruct the

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[21] Parts of this scene—the wind blowing through the pines and the rocks—are general nature; however, other aspects—the "heavy thunder clouds that rolled along the sides of the mountains" are landscape (183).
[22] Perkins seems to imply that Radcliffe makes this move on purpose; however, I think that it is an oversight on her part. Radcliffe has her characters view landscape from a tourists' point of view because that is how she and her primary readers would view the scenes.

dwelling-rootedness binary in order to ultimately show that Byron's interest in Greece as a traveler "triggers his environmental unconscious so that he can become aware of how the Greek environment constructs and is constructed by Greek culture," allowing him to understand Greece just as well as others who have more permanently dwelled in their places understand theirs (16). Although Hubbell goes on to emphasize Byron's love for Greece, a love that *The Mysteries of Udolpho*'s Emily does not claim for Italy, he also specifies that Byron's understanding of Greece is shown in his poetry (Hubbell 17), something that Emily *does* produce during her travels.[23] "Storied Sonnet," the poem Emily pens as she crosses the Alps, demonstrates a respect for and sentiment of awful terror towards the landscape and the mountains they traverse. The subject of her poem approaches a bridge during his crossing and hesitates to pass over it. Emily writes,

> In dreadful silence, on the brink, forlorn
>
> He stands, and views in the faint rays
>
> Far, far below, the torrent's rising surge,
>
> And listens to the wild impetuous roar;
>
> Still eyes the depth, still shudders on the verge,
>
> Fears to return, nor dares to venture o'er.
>
> Desperate, at length the tottering plank he tries,
>
> His weak steps slide, he shrieks, he sinks – he dies! (165, 11-18)

Through this poem, Emily demonstrates her fears of the dangers of the Alps while she also asserts her ability to construct place. She shows a respect for the power the wind and rain have and the idea that the man-made bridge cannot compare to that power. The subject of the poem views the landscape below him with terror but ultimately attempts to traverse the bridge; his

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[23] See Ingrid Horrocks for one of the few in-depth looks at the poetry in *Udolpho*. "Her Ideas Arranged Themselves": Re-Membering Poetry in Radcliffe." *Studies in Romanticism* 47.4 (2008): 507-527. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 31 May 2012.

failed attempt to cross affirms his lesser power. Those who live in the Alps appear to have a different perspective: although Emily and her party are terrified by the Alps, the carriers who transport them "trotted lightly and swiftly" near the edge (166). The chairmen are native to and thus are familiar with the area whereas the travelers are terrified by the unknown. The poem indicates Emily's attempt to know the mountains in the way that the natives understand them. She grapples with her fears of their dangers by imaginatively creating another traveler's story. Through memorializing the place in the landscape where an imagined traveler died, she ascribes meaning to the landscape. Her creation involves imagining the sights ("the torrent's rising surge") and sounds ("the wild impetuous roar") of the scene below, demonstrating her desire to understand the full image of the landscape.

Furthermore, in writing about the mountains, Emily culturalizes[24] them, giving her a sort of ownership of them and, ultimately, solidifying the meaning she has ascribed to them. Through her writing, Emily asserts her ability to construct place. Certainly, Emily's poetry shows at least an attempt to understand and connect with the landscapes she sees, demonstrating an attempt to make them her temporary "place." Jonathan Bate comments on the relationship between the poet and place by citing Edward Thomas's discussion of William Wordsworth and noting that "Thomas's three reasons for associating Wordsworth with a specific place are inter-connected: there is the poet's rootedness, his *knowing* of place; his localness, his *naming* of places, by which I mean . . . a broader sense of naming that involves defining a place through its character; and his specificity, his *recording* of 'times and places of composition'" (87). It is this type of poet that Emily strives to be and through such poetry aims to identify with place.

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[24] Culturalization is a means for society to control nature (Ortner 11). With Emily, the intent is not to dominate, but to understand, remember, and connect.

Another critic who comments on the poet's relationship to place is Stephen Cheeke, who

grapples with Byron's definition of place in his 2003 monograph *Byron and Place*. Cheeke

indicates that "Byron wrote about historical places, about specific 'spots', as if they were sites in

which direct connection with the buried subjectivity of the lived experiences associated with

those places was somehow (supernaturally) possible" (13). By being in a place that holds

historical significance, one is able to retroactively experience that event and connect with the

place in a way similar to that which people did at the historical moment (18-19).[25] Regarding

The Mysteries of Udolpho, Emily memorializes the place that was important to Hannibal and his

men when she imaginatively experiences their crossing of the Alps. As Emily and her group

cross the Alps in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the various characters create meaning of the

landscape and their mountains. For Madame Montoni, the Alps are merely a stepping stone to

the grandiose habitations she believes she will be mistress of (166-67); for Montoni and Cavigni,

they are a place in which specific historical events occurred, for they spend a bit of time arguing

over which specific mountain Hannibal had passed (166). For Emily, however, that specific

historical event that Montoni and Cavigni debate is almost a memory; although she does not pen

Hannibal's story as a sonnet, her imagination still enables her to connect with the people who

had traversed the Alps with Hannibal; she imaginatively recreates Hannibal's experience, forging

a connection between her and a man who died over 1700 years earlier (the action of *Mysteries*

begins in 1584) (166). For Emily, the Alps are a place to which she can connect not only with

Valancourt, as I mentioned earlier, but also with people of the past. The characters do not live in

or near the Alps as their carriers do, and yet to each of them the Alps have a specific meaning.

To each of them, the Alps is a place; to Emily specifically, it is a place full of connections.

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[25] I will further address Cheeke in my fourth and final chapter, which will investigate the significance of history and futurity in Mary Shelley's *Valperga*, *Lodore*, and *The Last Man*.

Thus Radcliffe allows landscape and female characters agency in her novels while still maintaining systems of ranked order. Again, Radcliffe does not indicate that the systems should be eradicated but that they should be readjusted to be more responsible for all parties. Women, servants, and others who are not male or upper-class should remain in their proper place on the hierarchy; however, those in charge should treat those beneath them with care and respect because they, too, have a part to play in the society in order for the structure to hold together.

My next chapter will shift to an examination of the novels of Mary Shelley. While Radcliffe is conservative in her opinions, Shelley is slightly more liberal in her beliefs regarding the structure of the government. However, Shelley's works also indicate that positive, reciprocal relationships among families and smaller communities are more important—or perhaps more feasible—than a governmental overhaul. Writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Shelley can see the negative effects the Revolution caused; in this aftermath, she sees the need for true compassion between individuals and across communities and species.

Chapter Three:

Developing Reciprocal Relationships between the Human and the Nonhuman

In his overview of different theoretical approaches within ecological criticism, Greg

Garrard indicates that one of the central tenets of "ecocriticism" as a whole "is the study of the

relationship of the human and the non-human . . . entailing critical analysis of the term 'human'

itself" (5). In other words, "What does it mean to be human?" As Helena Feder points out,

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, for a text that asks people to look at their humanity and determine

how it differs from the nonhuman—that asks us consider what it means to be human—lacks the

wealth of ecocritical readings that it deserves (55-56). This chapter seeks to fill in that gap. By

pairing *Frankenstein* (first published in 1818 and revised and republished in 1824 and 1831)[1]

with Shelley's later novel *The Last Man*[2], the depth of her perspective on humanity's identity and

purpose becomes more apparent. The texts appear to define human beings by their capacities for

intellect and rationality as well as their abilities to be compassionate and to enjoy life. However,

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[1] I will draw from the 1818 edition of the novel.

[2] *The Last Man*, arguably the first apocalyptic novel, depicts the story of Lionel Verney, a man who ultimately becomes the sole survivor of a worldwide plague. Verney's father, although not of the title class, was a favorite of the king who enjoyed prosperity for a time; however, the king's new wife disliked him, and he was cast out. The father subsequently gambled away all of his money and died in debt. The mother died shortly after, leaving Lionel and his sister, Perdita. A bitter shepherd, Lionel eventually is befriended by Adrian, the former king's son (England had been transformed into a republic before the king died) and Earl of Windsor. Subsequently, Lionel, Adrian, Perdita, Adrian's sister Idris, and the ambitious Raymond form a close-knit community. Lionel marries Idris, and Perdita marries Raymond. Raymond dies while fighting for Greek independence, and Perdita commits suicide when Lionel tries to force her to return to England with them. The plague begins to appear and spreads across the world, inducing people to either turn against each other or band together. Lionel's and Idris's son, Alfred, contracts the plague, and Lionel rushes home to be with his family. During his hurry, a negro half-clad attempts to pause Lionel, but he pushes him away (336-37). Lionel thus contracts the disease but miraculously recovers from it while Idris dies of it. Lionel, Adrian, and Lionel's daughter Clara form a group that wanders the country looking for other survivors, but everyone dies off. Eventually, Lionel, Adrian, and Clara remain, but Adrian and Clara die in a shipwreck. Lionel then, accompanied by a dog, sets off to wander the earth looking for any other survivors.

nonhumans can also possess some of these traits. They also have the ability to be compassionate

and enjoy life; however, their intellect and rationality are circumvented by an innate desire for

survival. While humans also possess this desire, it is generally believed that their intellect and

rationality temper the desire, allowing them to react to life-threatening situations in a way that

allows for less selfishness; Shelley's novels, particularly *The Last Man*, indicate that this belief is

often false, for we see instances of people fighting for resources or preventing others from

immigrating (298-303) in order to survive rather than sharing those resources in order to allow

everyone to live. Science studies scholars such as Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour[3] refer to

separated categories such as human and nonhuman as "Great Divides," thus drawing attention to

the idea that these separations prevent us from being able to interact or communicate with each

other; finding a way to bridge that gap is important to understanding how important all beings

are to others. The ecocritical lens of the line between human and nonhuman furthermore relates

to Shelley's call, like Radcliffe's, for people to act responsibly for and in response to other

people—whether it be a group or an individual. Specifically, humans should take their capacity

for rationality and compassion and channel it into being responsible for others, which is my

central argument for this chapter. Humans' occasional inability or lack of attempt to channel

these attributes towards being responsible for others, particularly because of pride or fear, results

in a lack of reciprocal relationships between the human and the nonhuman.

  That people fail to act sympathetically and responsibly towards others is a problem that

Shelley indicates in several of her works. Jeanne M. Britton writes that Adam Smith's form of

sympathy fails in *Frankenstein* because the creature's[4] monstrous body precludes experiences of

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[3] See, for instance, *When Species Meet* and *We Have Never Been Modern*, respectively.
[4] There is debate concerning what to call Frankenstein's human-like creation. Helena Feder brings this dispute to
light in her 2010 article, "'A Blot Upon The Earth': Nature's 'Negative' And The Production Of Monstrosity In
Frankenstein." She claims that Jonathan Bate, by referring to the creature as "Creature" and nothing else,

sympathy (22).[5] She suggests that this sympathetic failure is overcome through a different form

of sympathy put forth by Shelley—one which allows the novel itself to bridge the gap between

imaginative experience and true sympathy (22). Another way to think about these sympathetic

failures is through the inability for the human and the nonhuman to form reciprocal relationships.

Considering Shelley's characters and their (in)ability to create or touch a "contact zone," a

phrase I borrow from Donna Haraway[6], between the human and the nonhuman opens up our

understanding of the relationship between the human and nonhuman and thus among individual

humans in *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* in that it provides a way to understand how a

reciprocal relationship can be formed across and amongst species that seem different. Haraway

contends, "To claim not to be able to communicate with and to know one another and other

critters, however imperfectly, is a denial of mortal entanglements (the open) for which we are

responsible and in which we respond" (226). Characters'—and in extent, people in general's—

inability to form a place in which different species or belief systems can communicate results in

greater issues such as the French Revolution. The monarchy's, National Assembly's, and other

governing bodies' inability to meet the people where they are, discover their needs, and provide

for them, resulted in the people revolting. The contact zone is the place that would allow for the

monarchy or government to communicate with the citizens to discover how they can respond to

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inadvertently takes away from the agency he attempts to give the character. Furthermore, she cites Warren Montag, who indicates that the character is more than just a creation; he is a product of his environment (Feder 57). Joshua Bernatchez draws attention to the semiotics of Victor calling the creature "devil, "daemon," and "monster" while the creature refers to himself as a "Creature." Bernatchez indicates that the terminology used to identify the creature further disassociates him from society (207). Throughout my argument, I will refer to the character as a "creature" because it best aligns with my discussion of him as a nonhuman entity that strives to be human, for "creature" is closely related to "nonhuman animal," which is the closest I can find to relate the creation to something that is semi-human.

[5] Suparna Banerjee and Joshua Bernatchez also address the effects of the creature's monstrous body. I will address their comments later in this chapter.

[6] Haraway borrows this term from Mary Louise Pratt; I will explain the reference more fully later in the chapter.

each other's needs; it allows them to formulate a reciprocal relationship between humans. This chapter argues that Shelley advocates just that type of reciprocal relationship.

Shelley and the French Revolution

Shelley often lived in the literary and intellectual shadow of her parents and husband. While she understood all of the political implications of the events around her, her writings suggest that her for Shelley, a person's responsibilities for individual people and communities are more important than a person's political stance. Her primary concern is thus not just the government's actions but also people's compassion for and understanding of each other, an argument that certainly is not new. James O'Rourke, for instance, reads *Frankenstein* as Shelley's critique of Rousseau as he depicts himself in his *Confessions*. "Despite the political ambiguity of the imagery of *Frankenstein*," O'Rourke writes, "the novel's critique of Rousseau, Godwin, and Percy Shelley is far more personal than political" (544).[7] As with Ann Radcliffe, who uses the characters' relationship with landscape and vegetation to reflect the characters' emotional capabilities and sensibilities, Shelley comments on human-human relationships through human-nonhuman interactions; she models the relationship that should exist among human beings through her depiction of the relationships between the human and the nonhuman. Furthermore, it is the job of both the human and the nonhuman to enable the other party to act responsibly toward and in response to its needs. Victor Frankenstein fails in this duty. The creature wants to be part of a reciprocal relationship with humans, but Frankenstein and other humans deny him this position.

As I indicated in Chapter One, many people in Britain applauded the French Revolution at first, likening it to their own Glorious Revolution of 1688 (Mori 31). However, "[b]y the end of 1792, the nation would be polarised into two camps, whose members either admired France

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[7] Rousseau had abandoned his five illegitimate children to the Parisian Foundling Hospital (O'Rourke 545).

and its achievements or defended a British *status quo* now perceived to be threatened by French arms and principles" (31). Shelley's parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, were among the supporters of the Revolution, although Wollstonecraft disagreed with the violence involved (Mellor "English Women" 259). Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* indicates that a simply-constructed government is desirable, an idea he did not realize fully until the French Revolution began (viii). Shelley biographer Miranda Seymour indicates that Godwin's piece advocated equality and independence and attacked "[m]arriage, organized religion[,] and centralized government" (Seymour 6). Furthermore, he was vocal in his support for friends who were on trial for supporting a revolution (7). However, he also advocated peaceful, gradual change in government rather than a violent revolution (8), and although he was no longer active in politics after the 1790s, his later children's books demonstrated his continued sympathies for radical thought (Seymour 74). Wollstonecraft, Janet Todd claims, "rallied against all forms of patriarchal power, whether of father over children, king over country, or of public schoolboy over fag, a form of tyranny she saw briefly at Eton" (viii). Likewise, Percy Shelley supported the French Revolution as well as other acts of nonviolent rebellion, composing works such as *The Cenci* (1819), a play that depicts a young woman tyrannized by her father; *The Mask of Anarchy* (written in 1819 and published in 1832), a poem "in which he strove to encourage in England the liberation movements that were rising in Naples and Spain and Greece" (Wroe 334); and *A Philosophical View of Reform* (not published until 1920), a political essay "in which [he imagined] the people would stand with folded arms in dauntless defiance of armed soldiers" (Wroe 334).

Some scholars such as Jeanne Moskal and Gary Kelly find Shelley to be liberal and supportive of the Revolution and its aims like her parents and husband were while others such as

Anne K. Mellor and Lee Sterrenburg find her to be anti-Revolution. Moskal looks at Shelley's

reaction to the Spanish uprisings of the early nineteenth century, demonstrating that Shelley was

"one of those quixotic liberals who looked forward to the restoration of the constitution" (27).

Kelly discusses Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley as a coterie, identifying the two women

as providing the necessary revolutionary leadership against the repressive government (149-50).

However, Moskal and Kelly fail to take into account Shelley's negative reactions to the violence

of revolution. According to Sterrenburg, Mary Shelley "takes her father's early rationalism and

utopianism to task in *The Last Man*" (333) and disagreed with Percy's support of revolution;

Sterrenburg claims, "For Mary, all revolutionary experiments breed monsters. The monsterlike

holocaust that descends upon the Greek revolution in *The Last Man* is a graphic fictional rebuttal

of Percy's political views" (345). Mellor similarly indicates that seeing the aftermath of the

Revolution led Shelley to realize that "the French Revolution that had originated in a democratic

vision propounded by the idealistic Girondists had not found the parental guidance, control, and

nurturance it required to develop into a rational and benevolent state" ("English Women" 267).

In her 1988 biography of Shelley, Mellor claims,

> Mary Shelley conceived of Victor Frankenstein's creature as an embodiment of
>
> the revolutionary French nation, a gigantic body politic originating in a desire to
>
> benefit all mankind but abandoned by its rightful guardians and so abused by its
>
> King, Church, and the corrupt leaders of the ancient régime that it is driven into
>
> an uncontrollable rage—manifested in the blood-thirsty leadership of the
>
> Montagnards . . . and the Terror. (*Mary Shelley* 82)

Thus scholars have already established the idea that the creature symbolizes the Revolution, an

act created by the need to overturn what the people saw as a self-serving hierarchy. The National

Assembly overthrew the monarchy but did not fix the problem of taxpayers not having a say in the government.[8] However, in their attempt to overthrow the monarchy, the people became violent, ignoring a responsibility they have for the country as a whole and to individual people—to keep everyone protected. In trying to overturn what was wrong, the revolutionaries became what was wrong. In parallel, the creature in *Frankenstein* attempts to become human, and in that attempt, he comes to represent the worst of what humanity has to offer.

In *Frankenstein*, one of the major scholarly questions that has been investigated thoroughly is "To what extent is the creature a human?" The creature strives to be, or at least have the privileges involved in being, human; he has the biological and intellectual makeup to be a human, but society denies him access to what it truly means to be "human" by their standards. This simultaneous desire for and denial of the right to be human enables him to see and represent both the best and worst in humanity. His deeper understanding of the emotional attributes of humanity along with his grasp of the philosophical understanding of what people think they are certainly makes him an excellent specimen for examination. The creature at first believes humans to be good and something to aim at being; however, he ultimately realizes he cannot be one and that they are not as gracious as he first perceived. Furthermore, it is the creature's attempt to embody the human when he is a hybrid of human and nonhuman that makes him incapable of embodying either. Ultimately, the problem is that humans are unwilling to communicate with him. The lack of communication and relationship results in destruction.

In *The Last Man*, we are left to ponder why Lionel was able to survive contact with the plague as well as other unfortunate events that killed everyone else on earth. Lionel, like Frankenstein's creature, straddles the line between human and nonhuman; his very name cues

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[8] Louis XVI allied with the Americans in their rebellion against England, a revolt that included protests against "taxation without representation." However, he did not demonstrate this support in his own country; the French lower class continued to be taxed despite having no say in the government (Doyle 33).

readers in to this idea. Because Lionel understands what it is like to live in nature and identifies

in his early years with animals, he possesses an understanding that other people do not have. It is

Lionel's ability to identify with both the human and the nonhuman, to occupy that liminal space

between the two, that enables him to survive the plague and the other natural disasters that

destroy the rest of the human race. Lionel is successfully able to embody both the human and

the nonhuman animal because he ultimately embraces both parts of his nature. Finally, unlike

Frankenstein's creature, Lionel is able to communicate and maintain reciprocal relationships

with the nonhuman, demonstrating that a place of communication can—and should—exist

between and among species.

Human/Nonhuman Relationships

In order to discuss the line between human and nonhuman, I will draw from the ideas of

Donna Haraway, a prominent science studies scholar, who investigates the relationship between

the human and the non-human animal in her 2008 study, *When Species Meet*. This book offers a

way for us to consider the idea that the relationship between the human and nonhuman can and

should be reciprocal and that a place for communication between the two is possible. Through

her observations of her relationship with her own dog, Cayenne Pepper, Haraway realizes the

connections between the human and the nonhuman. Her work in agility training with Cayenne

leads her to see that the human and the animal "are members of a cross-species team of skilled

adults" (225). The human and the animal learn from each other throughout their training and

rely on each other during competitions, thus she discusses training "with" Cayenne rather than

the training "of" Cayenne (222). She posits the idea of the contact zone as the place where

species "meet"—where the human and the nonhuman are able to converse and interact with each

other. Literally, contact zones in agility competitions are points on obstacles that the dog must

touch in order to avoid losing points (208-209). In agility competitions, then, the contact zone is

a place that relies on perfect communication between the human handler and the dog. Haraway

compares the idea of the contact zone to theories depicted in Mary Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*, which

indicates that a contact language is an improvised language that people of different languages

develop so that they can communicate with one another (Haraway 216). Pratt states, "'A

'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each

other. . . . It treats the relations . . . in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking

understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power'" (qtd. in

Haraway 216, ellipses Haraway's). Haraway opens *When Species Meet* with the concept that the

human body is made up of many nonhuman microbes that—for lack of a better term—colonize

her body. After she dies, those microbes will continue to colonize her remains (3-4). Thinking

more reflectively, Haraway admits that more than colonizing her, these microbes are beings that

she becomes one with; they also create a contact zone (4). Haraway likens the concept to her

inability to communicate effectively with her dog, although she laments overusing the

colonization to domestication analogy (216). Furthermore, she indicates that it is problematic to

believe that we can fully understand the language of another species. However, "[d]isarmed of

the fantasy of climbing into heads, one's own or others', to get the full story from the inside, we

can make some multispecies semiotic progress. To claim not to be able to communicate with

and to know one another and other critters, however imperfectly, is a denial of mortal

entanglements (the open) for which we are responsible and in which we respond" (226).

　　　Specifically, Haraway's idea of the "contact zone" can help us understand the connection

that could have existed between Frankenstein (and other humans) and his creature and that

Lionel Verney manages to create between himself and the nonhumans around him. Haraway is

able to form a reciprocal relationship—a team—with Cayenne through communication and responsiveness. The reciprocal relationship between Haraway and Cayenne demonstrates the potential of the human-nonhuman relationship when they have a mutual goal (of successfully completing the course)[9] and share the responsibility of doing so. Frankenstein's creature, however, is a being that no one attempted to understand or find a common goal with. Physically, the creature and human beings are capable of communicating; however, the human beings in the human/nonhuman relationship resist taking initiative to do so. Lionel Verney, alternatively, touches that contact zone in which the human and the animal meet through educating himself in the sciences, arts, and philosophies that humans developed while also maintaining—inwardly if not outwardly—the strong connection to nature that he had as a youth.

Frankenstein's creature and Lionel Verney and the surrounding characters have the potential to create a contact zone through a willingness to listen to and understand each other, thereby working toward a common goal, where the human and the nonhuman species can communicate and interact; in so doing, the contact zone would create a place in which the human and the nonhuman can respond to each other, enabling them to carry out their responsibilities for each other. However, neither Frankenstein, his creature, nor anyone else in the novel, is able to reach that zone. For most characters, this resistance is primarily prejudice based on appearance; however, one could certainly argue that Mr. De Lacey[10], in his blindness, may have been willing to attempt to reach that zone with the creature. Overall, since no one can discern if the creature is human or nonhuman, no one can form a way to communicate with him. In other words, they do not know how—or are unwilling—to create a contact zone. Verney, on the other hand,

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[9] It may be erroneous in general to say that the human and nonhuman can share a common goal because goal setting may be a human behavior. In the case of Haraway and Cayenne, it may be possible to state that they have a shared goal because Cayenne wants to complete the course even if she does not care about scores.
[10] Shelley is inconsistent in her spelling of De Lacey/De Lacy in the 1818 edition of the novel. I will use De Lacey because it is her initial spelling of the name.

strives for the majority of the novel to rid himself of his animal side by laboring towards

intellectual advancement and denying any natural instincts. However, his ability to maintain and

occasionally give into this animal side allows him to survive physically while his ability to create

contact zones with the nonhuman makes him capable of writing his prophetic narrative. We see

this acceptance in the scene in which he "embraces" the "negro half clad" only to run away as

well as in the final storm at sea, in which "energy beyond [his] human strength" enables him to

swim to shore (444).

Moving forward with the idea of creating contact zones that enable reciprocal

relationships, it is necessary to note that Frankenstein's creature wants to create relationships

with specific people or groups while Lionel is willing to create relationships with all humans and

nonhumans, Shelley's ultimate goal. In an article on political community in *Frankenstein*,

Colene Bentley claims that "the creature seeks membership in a particular group of people rather

than membership in the universe of humanity.[11] This is an important distinction to bear in mind

not only because the novel makes it, but because current scholarship on *Frankenstein* is often

bogged down by the question of whether Shelley intends the monster to be entirely or not quite

human" (331).[12] [13] For instance, as he studies the De Laceys' in their cottage, the creature

observes: "I saw few human beings beside them; and if any other happened to enter the cottage,

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[11] Bentley describes the various family groups that the creature desires to join but cannot as "closed communities" (332).

[12] Bentley cites several studies of the humanity of Frankenstien's creature, including Anne K. Mellor's claim that "Mary Shelley saw the creature as potentially monstrous, but she never suggested that he was other than fully human" (qtd. Bentley 331), Nancy Yousef's claim that the creature's hideous features differentiate him from the human (Bentley 331-32), and Maureen McLane's reading of *Frankenstein* through Godwin's argument that "literacy constitutes the dividing line between human and animal species" in order to state that his education failed to humanize him (Bentley 332). To Bentley's list I will add the following: Helena Feder indicates that language is what differentiates between human and nonhuman (59). Furthermore, the creature's ability to see, not just look, makes him more human because sight implies agency (62). Jeanne M. Britton further indicates that the breakdown of novelistic sympathy identifies the creature as a different species from the human (21-22).

[13] Bentley also indicates that the novel itself is concerned with community more than humanity (332), but I disagree with her in part. I think that Shelley comments on all human interactions, whether they be human-human or human-nonhuman, demonstrating that communities should not be closed and that humanity as a whole should allow for interaction between communities.

their harsh manners and rude gait only enhanced to me the superior accomplishments of my friends" (*Frankenstein* 77). The creature's preference for the De Laceys indicates that while he wants their approval and friendship, he would likely scorn the opinions of those he sees as more common human beings.

Because there is legitimacy to Bentley's claim that "the question of whether Shelley intends the monster to be entirely or not quite human" is a matter that has been looked at perhaps too extensively in scholarship, while I will touch on that question (I do not think I can avoid doing so), my central investigation will be the ways in which Victor Frankenstein and the creature define what it means to be human. While Frankenstein initially sets out to create a human being (33), as soon as his creature comes to life, he calls him a "wretch," a "miserable monster" (36). By looking at Frankenstein's vaguely-described methods of creation as well as his comments about his own way of living, I argue that Frankenstein does not fully comprehend what a "human being" is.

Frankenstein: Creation and Narrative

Frankenstein demonstrates that human nature leads people to seek companionship. Like Robert Walton, the novel's frame narrator, the creature seeks a friend with whom he can create a reciprocal relationship. In his search for such a companion, he observes various traits of human beings, ultimately determining that a place of communication and understanding, a "contact zone," so to speak, cannot exist between himself and the human species.

The novel presents a story told through an intricate frame narrative in which Robert Walton, a sea captain and explorer, corresponds with his sister, Mrs. Margaret Saville; Walton and his crew find Frankenstein cold and sick in the Arctic as he pursues his creature. Frankenstein tells Walton of the creation of the creature as well as the aftermath. Within

Frankenstein's story, we get the creature's story as he told it to Frankenstein at Mont Blanc; further within the creature's story appears his version of the background of the De Laceys, particularly Safie.[14] The novel ends after Frankenstein has completed his story and begged Walton to destroy the creature for him. Walton fails to do so, however, when the creature asserts that he will destroy himself.

The novel is further framed by the need for a contact zone via the idea of the necessity of true companionship; Walton's second and final letters to his sister indicate his desire for a true friend. On 28 March, Walton writes,

> I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. . . . I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. (10)

While there are other men on the ship, none of them supply Walton with the true intellectual and emotional connection he desires; he finds this connection, he believes, in Victor Frankenstein. On 26 August, as he looks towards Frankenstein's imminent death, he pens, "I have longed for a friend; I have sought one who would sympathize with and love me. Behold, on these desert seas I have found such a one; but, I fear, I have gained him only to know his value, and lose him" (152). Readers are left with the bookended ideas of the necessity of particular friendship, a philosophy that accords with that of Edmund Burke, who, in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into*

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[14] For a good discussion of the creature's telling of Safie's tale, see Britton's "Novelistic Sympathy in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." She argues that "[t]he process by which the monster can identify with Safie and, in the act of transcribing her letters, adopt her voice marks the limit of the simultaneous experience of sympathy and shift in perspective that allows Walton to speak for Frankenstein, and Frankenstein to speak for his creature" (5).

the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful indicates that general society does not

provide pleasure and that absolute solitude results in pain (43). However, "the strongest

sensation, relative to the habitudes of *particular society*, are sensations of pleasure. Good

company, lively conversations, and the endearments of friendship, fill the mind with great

pleasure" (43). *Frankenstein*'s narrative reinforces these philosophies. If we take into account

Haraway's idea of a contact zone in which two individuals—whether human or nonhuman—can

communicate fully and clearly, we can see the importance of this interaction in forming

reciprocal relationships. Walton is not the only one to seek a friend who truly understands him;

the creature does as well. Like Walton, the creature will not be satisfied by simply any society;

he longs for the particular society of Frankenstein or the De Laceys. When he realizes that such

companionship is impossible because he is not of their species, he becomes conscious that that

special, particular society can come only from a being like himself; thus he asks Frankenstein to

make him a companion of his own kind (101).

Both Frankenstein and his creature spend the entirety of the novel grappling to

understand what, exactly, a "human being" is. Frankenstein's initial true comprehension of

"human" comes when he realizes he cannot create one, and he becomes further enlightened after

he destroys the female creature; the creature, meanwhile, learns through observation. When

Frankenstein begins his studies, he proclaims that he wants to discover the elixir of life in order

to prolong human life, "banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to

any but a violent death!" and for the glory such a discovery would bring (23).[15] However, he is

also fascinated by "the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life"

(31). Frankenstein is fascinated with the scientific aspects of human and animal life, and this

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[15] Suparna Banerjee uses this portion of the text to refute a common reading. Some argue that Victor attempts to usurp woman's role as propagator of life; however, since he wants to reanimate rather than create, he is not trying to do usurp woman's role (4).

fascination drives him to attempt to create life. The creature, on the other hand, focuses on the emotional aspects of life, thus these two doppelgangers represent passion for "useful" knowledge versus passion for knowledge that betters the soul. In focusing purely on the scientific and ignoring the emotional, Frankenstein fails to create something that can be fully "human." Although he sets out to create a "human being" (33), once the creature comes to life, he proclaims that the creature is a "wretch whom with such infinite pains [he] had endeavoured to form" (35) and that he is a "miserable monster" (36). Furthermore, as he attempts to create, he realizes the limitations of his abilities: "As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large" (33). His inability to reproduce the proportions of a human being did not make him realize that he could not actually call that being a "human;" instead, it took the creature coming to life for him to realize this fact. Moreover, the creation of this being required experiments on animals—non-humans—in order to understand the creation of life (33). Certainly, the life of all mammals is relatively similar in that they all require blood to flow through a heart and veins; a brain and nerves to control kinetics; as well as many other similarities in function. However, Frankenstein's understanding of these connections between the human being and the nonhuman animal should have helped him to see that he could create "life" without creating "*human* life." He creates a being that could be both human and nonhuman animal; however, he attempts to create only the human, and the creature wishes to *be* human, so that liminal space is ignored. [16]

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[16] Suparna Banerjee touches on a related angle in stating, "While his persistence and scientific genius do actually enable him to produce a human *creature*, [Frankenstein's] real failure inheres in his inability to give that creature a human *life*" (7, emphasis added). Banerjee discusses what Shelley perceives as the limits of theoretical reason (7), but her underlying point is that there is a difference between existence and actual life.

Frankenstein additionally comes to the understanding that he has separated himself, particularly through his pride, from what can be termed "human," thus revealing Shelley's goal to return the government and citizens to a more human way of living based on responsibility and responsiveness rather than tyranny and repression. At the beginning of his story, Frankenstein believes that it is a human's duty to go out into the world, make a discovery, and earn glory. On his way to Ingolstadt, he laments, "I had often, when at home, thought it hard to remain during my youth cooped up in one place, and had longed to enter the world, and take my station among other human beings" (27). To him, staying with the family in Geneva and becoming a businessman was not his calling. This thought becomes more apparent when contrasted with the life of his dearest friend, Clerval, whose father believed "that learning was superfluous in the commerce of ordinary life" (26). Although Clerval "had a refined mind [and] . . .no desire to be idle, and was well pleased to become his father's partner, . . . he believed that a man might be a very good trader, and yet possess a cultivated understanding" (26). Clerval remains a pure character throughout the story; he is caring, satisfied, and full of life; his lack of advanced formal education did not affect his quality of life. After the creature awakens, Frankenstein realizes that tranquility is an essential part of human life. He claims, "A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility" (34). This aspect of being human is something that he has denied himself by isolating himself from his friends and family as well as neglecting his physical health, focusing solely on his experiments and scientific endeavors. It is only after destroying the second, female, creature, thus taking what to his mind is a necessary step in rectifying his transgressions, that he is able to temporarily find that peace that is necessary to existence. "The sleep into which I now sunk refreshed me;" he claims, "and when I awoke, I again felt as if I

belonged to a race of human beings like myself, and I began to reflect upon what had passed with greater composure" (122).

How he finally achieves this sense of composure, the destruction of the female creature, is another scene worth examining because it shows that Frankenstein knows that there is a difference between the type of life that he is able to generate and a purely human existence. While his destruction of the female demonstrates an attempt to take responsibility for his actions, the act simultaneously indicates an inability to respond to the needs of his already-living creature. His hubris in attempting to create a human prevents him from seeing that he has formed a creature with some human capabilities, and he refuses to attempt to form a positive, reciprocal relationship with the creature. By refusing to create a contact zone in which he could communicate with the creature of undetermined species, Frankenstein denies himself and the creature the ability to respond to each other. As Frankenstein constructs the second creature, he contemplates his creation of the current creature, saying "Three years before I was engaged in the same manner, and had created a fiend whose unparalleled barbarity had desolated my heart, and filled it for ever with the bitterest remorse. I was now about to form another being, of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant" (118). His feelings here appear selfish. He does not grieve the death of William or the distance he has created between himself and his father, Elizabeth, and Clerval; rather, he laments his own sense of unsettlement. However, these thoughts do reflect his aforementioned understanding that peace of mind is necessary for the human disposition. Later, as he looks at the mangled remains of the female creature, Frankenstein claims, "I *almost* felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being" (122, emphasis added). These words highlight the idea that Frankenstein now differentiates between his creations and real humans.

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While he still is aware that he has the ability to generate life, he no longer deludes himself into believing that he can replicate *human* life.

Furthermore, traveling from Strasbourg to England with Clerval helps Frankenstein to realize that his own existence has lacked something—joy. As they travel, Clerval "was alive to every new scene; joyful when he saw the beauties of the setting sun, and more happy when he beheld it rise, and recommence a new day. He pointed out . . . the shifting colours of the landscape, and the appearances of the sky. 'This is what it is to live;' he cried, 'now I enjoy existence!'" (110). Clerval sees the Rhine and claims it to be a place in which one can find more "harmony with man" than in the mountains of Switzerland (111), but shortly after he acclaims the Lake District, crying, "'I could pass my life here,' . . . 'and among these mountains I should scarcely regret Switzerland and the Rhine'" (115). To Clerval, each scene is more beautiful than the last; every sight brings some combination of joy, excitement, and peace to his very being. Clerval's ecstasy towards all aspects of life cues readers into what Frankenstein lacks in his own life and one of the aspects of life that he has also denied the creature.

The Creature and "Human"

While Frankenstein's lack of understanding of the compassionate and joyful side of human life renders him unable to create a contact zone with his creature, the creature's observations show what Shelley believes humans are capable of, both positive and negative, as demonstrated by the De Laceys' ability to show rationality and compassion in their education of Safie and treatment of Safie and travelers who come to their door. The negative aspects of what happens when humans forego channeling their rationality and compassion in order to give in to fear or pride are shown through the De Laceys' and William's reactions to the creature and Frankenstein's treatment of him. The creature learns all he knows about the species through

observations and brief, indirect interactions as well as the three books he finds and ultimately

reads: *Paradise Lost*, *Plutarch's Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werter* (89). Among the attributes

the creature ultimately determines about humans are that they lack true care and compassion,

they have power, they are to be feared, they are beautiful, and they are something that he can

never be.

The creature's initial experiences with human beings were instances of rejection and lack

of compassion; no one attempted to understand or respond to him. Frankenstein himself ran in

horror (36), refusing to take responsibility for him; after lying by a brook in the forest of

Ingolstadt for several days, the creature enters a hut from which another man flees; the creature

walks towards a village, and a woman faints at the sight of him; and the villagers throw stones at

him (70-73). "These bleak skies I hail," he proclaims to Frankenstein, "for they are kinder to me

than your fellow-beings" (68-69); while the rain, wind, or sun may be damaging, they wreak the

same damage upon him as they do all other living and non-living things. After he is attacked, the

creature finds a hovel, where he "lay down, happy to have found a shelter, however miserable,

from the inclemency of the season, and still more from the barbarity of man" (73). Of the utmost

significance in the creature's hard lessons involving the heartlessness of humans are his

experiences when he finally introduces himself to Mr. De Lacey and when he meets and finally

speaks to Victor Frankenstein. His meeting with Mr. De Lacey and the other members of the

family teaches the creature that even those humans who he has seen as beautiful and

compassionate are just as ugly and treacherous as all of the others, for these people who he had

watched for months and saw as kind and caring ultimately rejected him. He saw them take in

and care for Safie, teaching her their language and thus creating a contact zone and reciprocal

relationship with her, but when he approached them for the same care and protection, Agatha and

Safie reacted in disgust while Felix "darted forward, and with supernatural force tore [the creature] from [Mr. De Lacey], . . . dashed [him] to the ground, and struck [him] violently with a stick" (94). Whether or not this scene truly shows that the De Laceys are as horrid as other people is up for debate. The creature's lack of understanding of social norms certainly comes into play. He clearly has apt critical thinking skills because he was able to discern the use of various tools, learn what foods are good and bad and how to prepare them, and teach himself to speak and read by listening to others. However, he has had no opportunity to learn basic social norms of human interaction, that spying on others will be perceived as threatening and frightening, not an overture of friendship or desire for connection.

Perhaps the greatest reason for the creature's rejection was Frankenstein's initial denial of a contact zone, both through creating him with a monstrous structure and by refusing to teach him social norms. Suparna Banerjee indicates that "[t]he Creature's unjust rejection by society is also a function of Frankenstein's failure to factor into his scientific reason the value of the cultural; it is, moreover, a direct fall-out of his culpable parental failure to provide a cultural/relational ambience to the Creature" (15). As I will discuss shortly, the creature possesses the human quality for critical and rational thinking; however, he does not understand how to combine that rationality with his desire for a reciprocal relationship. His desire to give clouds his understanding for social norms. When the creature quickly grasps the blind Mr. De Lacey's hands, the man is understandably startled, and coming home to see a large man holding onto his father would make most young men attack. We have no way of knowing if the De Laceys would have accepted him if he had introduced himself in a different manner. Instead, Shelley presents us with humans' intuition in order to show the worst of what we can be. In so

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doing, she invites readers to look at themselves in the mirror and reflect on how they would have acted in that situation.

The creature's interactions with his creator drive home to him the idea that humans have power to create and destroy and that they are to be feared, effectively demonstrating Shelley's perspective on the relationship between the hierarchy and the people in the French Revolution, with "humans" as the dominating system. The creature knew from reading Frankenstein's journals that this one man, at least, had great knowledge and power in order to be able to create him. When he encounters Frankenstein at Mont Blanc, the creature acknowledges Frankenstein as his creator and implores him to love and provide for him as God had for Adam (68). The creature acknowledges that Frankenstein is a good man when he exclaims, "Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due" (68). The idea that humans are powerful is driven home when the creature describes his act of strangling young William Frankenstein. Gazing upon his victim, he cries out, "'I, too, can create desolation'" (100). Just as Frankenstein had instilled life into him and just as others have tried to destroy him, the creature is able to destroy a human life. Unfortunately, Frankenstein demonstrates his ultimate power by destroying the female creature. Not only does he confirm that he can replicate his formation of life, but he also verifies that he can take away that life. For the creature, this power over the female's physical life demonstrates the power he also has over his emotional and psychological life. Just as Frankenstein does with Elizabeth, the creature had placed all of his hopes for future happiness on the existence of a companion, and Frankenstein is able to snatch that hope away.

Ultimately, the creature cannot belong to any of the closed communities that make up humanity, nor can he pretend to be another nonhuman animal. "Every where I see bliss, from

which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend" (68), he tells Frankenstein. From observing the De Laceys, the creature resolves that humans are supposed to be beautiful, which leads him, in part, to his determination that "human" is something he can never be. First of all, he identifies the De Laceys as his "*human* neighbours," indicating an awareness of a difference between his species and theirs (75, emphasis added). He describes the De Laceys as "lovely" (76), and indicates that Felix "was slight and graceful in his figure, and his features . . . moulded with the finest symmetry" (75). When the creature reflects upon his own appearance and demeanor, however, he proclaims,

> I was . . . endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they, and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded their's. When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned? (83).

The creature, in many ways, is physically unlike human beings. He possesses the same fundamental parts—arms, legs, bodily organs—as humans, but the appearance of those parts are only a parody of what they were supposed to be. Although he has lustrous, black, flowing hair and pearly white teeth, he also has "yellow skin [that] scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath," "watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set," and "straight black lips" (35). The aspects of beauty contrast with the aspects of repulsiveness, making him seem to human eyes the monstrous wretch he ultimately believes himself to be. While his limbs and organs carry the same function as those of humans, the abilities of those limbs and organs differs from theirs. His physical and fundamental

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differences, to him, are a greater indicator than any other differences he possesses that he cannot enter into the closed communities that are reserved for human beings. Many scholars call attention to the creature's monstrous appearance as the cause of the breakdown of sympathy or willingness to communicate. Banerjee, for instance, claims that Frankenstein's use of gigantic proportions "betrays a criminal lack in Frankenstein of the necessary awareness that what he is working on will be an autonomous being capable of human feelings" (7), and Bernatchez further indicates that "The Creature, in the verbal forum, begins to be successful in achieving a sympathetic response [from Mr. De Lacey], but is ultimately denied it because of young De Lacey's rejection of the ugliness of his body. Over the course of events, Frankenstein's Creature explicitly describes a sense of his body as the root of his isolation" (208). Thus Frankenstein formed the creature to be different, and neither he nor any of the other characters are willing to look beyond that difference to create a place for communication and thus a reciprocal relationship.

And yet there are aspects of him that are quite human; he possesses an intellect and understanding greater than other living beings. When he first experiments with his physical and mental capacity, he deduces that he is not like some of the animals he observes. To Frankenstein, he indicates, "Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again" (71). Most animals have a way of communicating with others of their species, but the creature's body was made for human utterances. Furthermore, he is capable of thinking critically and understanding the consequences of his actions; like Adam and Eve after they eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in Genesis, the creature is able to discern that he "inflicted pain on" the De

Laceys by stealing food from their stores (77). This understanding is complemented by his ability to know how to hurt Victor Frankenstein. He also claims of himself that he was "benevolent and good" (68) before he was mistreated and turned wretched. He sees in himself the best of what mankind has shown him as he looked on from a chink in a wall. However, his lack of other attributes and values further alienates him from that species he observes. At first, he did not know his origin, and he never possesses any money, friends, or property (83). Based on his observations of the De Laceys, "the possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were, high and unsullied descent united with riches" (83). The creature's values differ from humans' in this sense; he lacks the aspiration for wealth and status. His contentment with his lack of possessions is made apparent when he tells Frankenstein, "My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion [and I] . . . shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food" (103). This diatribe demonstrates not only that his body does not need the same things as humans, thus further physically differentiating him from them; it also shows that he desires companionship over worldly possessions. Because he possesses neither the same physical needs nor the same desires as humans, he cannot be like them.

Ultimately, the species of humanity cannot be infiltrated; they are willing to create contact zones within their own species but not across species. Although Justine, Elizabeth, and Safie, who represent various nationalities and social statuses, can join various communities, the creature cannot. Elizabeth Lavenza Frankenstein is Italian; Safie is an Arab; and Justine is a servant. Shelley reinforces the equality with which Justine is treated though the voice of Elizabeth. In her letter to Frankenstein, she states, "A servant in Geneva does not mean the same

thing as a servant in France and England. Justine, thus received in our family, learned the duties

of a servant; a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include the idea of ignorance,

and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being" (41). The Frankenstein family does not

discriminate against Elizabeth for her nationality nor Justine for her social status; they are both

accepted as part of the family. Safie, furthermore, is an outsider amongst outsiders; the De

Laceys are not in their home country of France, thus giving them the potential of being rejected

by those around them, just as the creature is constantly rejected. Bentley observes that "outsiders

like travelers are cared for, and Safie, the beautiful foreigner and Felix's estranged lover, is

granted the very privileges of sanctuary and membership the monster so earnestly seeks.

Alienage is thus seen to operate chiefly in relation to communal—not species—belonging"

(332). Bentley emphasizes that community is based on belief systems (332); however, since the

creature leaned much of what he knows from the De Laceys, his beliefs are quite close to theirs;

thus that cannot be the cause of them rejecting him: it has to be appearance or species related.

According to Jonathan Bate, Frankenstein and others are guilty of the crime of 'speciesism':

"The blind old man De Lacy is prepared to help the unknown stranger, eliciting from him the

delighted reply, 'I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow creatures'.

But with the entrance of the sighted – the Enlightened – Felix, Safie, and Agatha, the Creature is

regarded as Other, as alien" (52-53). De Lacey was willing to create a contact zone. The

creature's inability to find anyone else willing to create one is problematic. While the creature

desires that place of communication and reciprocal relationship, such a state is impossible unless

both parties work towards the same goal. Just as Haraway and Cayenne cannot score well at

competition without communication and trust, the creature cannot find a place to be human.

Humanity in *The Last Man*

While *Frankenstein* uses the eyes of a nonhuman to illustrate a human society that is closed to all nonhumans, *The Last Man* depicts the story of a man who successfully blurs the line between human and nonhuman through being raised and living his early life like an animal. As a youth, Lionel is a shepherd and joins others in stealing game (17); he claims, "My life was like that of an animal, and my mind was in danger of degenerating into that which informs brute nature" (18). Furthermore, in order to get revenge on Adrian and his family, he attacked Adrian's park: "I crept along by the fern, on my hands and knees," he claims (25), thus describing his actions that mimic that of an animal, and killed birds that were supposed to be safe from harm so that he could eat them (25). Subsequently, Lionel Verney accepts and *is accepted by* both the human and the nonhuman, thus allowing him to successfully form reciprocal relationships with both humans and nonhumans alike. When Lionel and Adrian first meet, Lionel has just killed the birds in Adrian's preserve and is physically fighting Adrian's gamekeepers (24-5). However, rather than admonishing Lionel, Adrian exclaims, "Lionel Verney, do we meet thus for the first time? We were born to be friends to each other; and though ill fortune has divided us, will you not acknowledge the hereditary bond of friendship which I trust will hereafter unite us?" (26) and afterward takes in Lionel and educates him. Because he was raised as an animal but later is taught everything that an Enlightened human knows, Lionel can identify with both the nonhuman animal and the human. Hilary Strang indicates that "to be that last man means having to learn to be human in the first place, having to learn to participate in humanity, in a common life that is more than biological or animal" (425). Thus Strang hits on what I find to be the point Shelley makes repeatedly throughout her novels: people need to create open communities characterized by reciprocal relationships. Although he

attempts to separate himself from his animalistic side, he embraces it in times of trouble, thus keeping both parts of his being and enabling him to form reciprocal relationships with different species. For instance, in the much-analyzed scene with Lionel and the negro half clad, Lionel reacts "[w]ith mixed horror and impatience" and "[strives] to disengage [himself]" (336), pushes the suffering man away and runs upstairs to be with his niece and dying son (337). Similarly, and perhaps a more obviously demonstration of Lionel's remaining animalistic tendencies, Lionel survives the storm that steals Adrian and Clara. Lionel narrates:

> I sprung from my hold, and with energy beyond my human strength, I dashed
> aside the waters as I strove to lay hold of [Adrian]. As that hope failed,
> instinctive love of life animated me, and feelings of contention, as if a hostile will
> combated with mine. I breasted the surges, and flung them from me, as I would
> the opposing front and sharpened claws of a lion about to enfang my bosom.
> (444)

Through much of the novel, Lionel is devoted to others and is willing to sacrifice his own safety to protect others[17]; however, in times in which danger is direct, and potential for death is more immediate, he reverts to his animalistic tendencies that place preservation of self above everything else. Additionally, Lionel almost consistently values his relationships with the nonhuman, as is evidenced by his idyllic description of the times he spends with his family at Perdita's cottage (*TLM* 90-91). I argue in this section that it is the fact that Lionel Verney has many animal-like characteristics that he embraces in times of trouble that he is able to survive the plague and other natural disasters that utterly destroy every other human being on earth. Animals are exempt from the effects of the plague in Shelley's novel, which leads me to believe

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[17] See, for instance, his willingness to take on the role of Lord Deputy to the Protector, a dangerous position (253-56).

that it is Lionel's connection to animals—a connection that is firmly established throughout the narrative—that allows him to survive. Furthermore, his respect for the nonhuman demonstrates the type of reciprocal relationship between human beings, particularly between the government and its citizens, that Shelley advocates.

To begin with, *The Last Man* demonstrates a group of people who successfully channel their capacities for both rationality and compassion into creating reciprocal relationships. Lionel and his family study literature, philosophy, and history (77) while also supporting each other. Significantly, they take their support further: While the De Lacey family in *Frankenstein* creates a closed community, Lionel, Adrian, Idris, and Clara open their community to all survivors, even seeking those who need help (331). The background of the novel[18] suggests Shelley's frustration that the pursuits of her literary and scholarly circle did not prevent them from an untimely death. Through Lionel, Shelley suggests that striving to increase one's class or status in society is not necessarily beneficial. She demonstrates, through the plague's indiscriminatory nature, that class does not matter; likewise, reaching a higher status than one grew up in is possible, but it does not improve that person's life. Through making the right connections and studying philosophy and history, Lionel is able to reach a higher social and economic status than he had as he grew up, but it is his lower-class, semi-animalistic attributes that help or allow him to survive the plague.

The beginning of the novel, in which Lionel narrates his background and early years, establishes Lionel's inner animality and closeness to nature and the non-human. As a youth, Lionel was a shepherd, a job that allowed him his dog by his side and "a companionship with nature" (14). He describes himself as "rugged but firm," "daring and reckless," "rough as the

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[18] "'The last man!' . . . 'Yes, I may well describe that solitary being's feelings, feeling myself as the last relic of a beloved race, my companions extinct before me,'" Mary Shelley famously wrote in her journal in May 1824 (Shelley, *The Last Man*, vii). Percy Shelley had drowned July 18, 1822; Lord Byron died April 19, 1824. Shelley had also lost a baby daughter on March 6, 1815 and a son, William, on June 7, 1819, and suffered one miscarriage.

elements, and unlearned as the animals [he] tended" (14). Furthermore, he admits, "I often

compared myself to" the animals and that he "wandered among the hills of civilized England as

uncouth a savage as the wolf-bred founder of old Rome" (14). Lionel's tone throughout his

narration of his early years indicates that he found not only his childhood actions but his

connection to nature to be less than admirable. He indicates contrition for his actions but a

different type of regret about having to live as close to nature as he did; he laments his lost place

in society, feeling as though he deserved better (14). Furthermore, he includes references to the

classics, such as comparing himself to Romulus, to prove to the potential reader of his narrative

that he has a greater intellect and learning. He makes certain that his readers are aware that he

has distanced himself from the unlearned savage that he was, establishing himself as someone

who has read and knows the history and philosophy that a man of his status should know.

However, Lionel cannot completely separate himself from the boy who was so closely

associated with nature. Throughout the novel, Lionel uses nature metaphors because that is what

he knows. In order for him to grasp the significance of a situation, he needs to relate it to plants

and animals that he connected with as a child and young man. Whereas Ann Radcliffe's

characters culturalize nature through writing about the landscapes they see, Shelley's hero in *The

Last Man* naturalizes culture by relating inane human interaction in metaphors of nature. As

Lionel settles in Vienna as the private secretary to an ambassador, he reflects on whether or not

he is satisfied with his elevation into society:

> But in truth, neither the lonely mediations of the hermit, nor the tumultuous
>
> raptures of the reveler, are capable of satisfying man's heart. From the one we
>
> gather unquiet speculation, from the other satiety. The mind flags beneath the
>
> weight of thought, and droops in the heartless intercourse of those whose sole aim

is amusement. There is no fruition in their vacant kindness, and sharp rocks lurk

beneath the smiling ripples of these shallow waters. (38)

In this passage, Lionel reflects upon the loneliness he encounters in society, comparing his

superficial interactions with others to rocks and water; the people seem happy on the surface, but

that surface is rather shallow, and beneath it lies something painful. By using the nature

metaphor of "sharp rocks lurk[ing] beneath the smiling ripples of these shallow waters," Lionel

recalls his time as a shepherd. While he does not want to return to that life, for he would feel

like the lonely hermit, he realizes that general society[19] will not satisfy him either.

Similarly, when he reflects on Adrian's unrequited love for Evadne and desire for a

republic rather than a monarchy, Lionel says, "Beloved friend, this ill world was no clime for

your gentle spirit; you delivered up its governance to false humanity, which stript it of its leaves

ere winter-time, and laid bare its quivering life to the evil ministration of roughest winds" (43).

Here Lionel compares Adrian's spirit to a tree and the "ill world" to a harsh winter. As a

shepherd, Lionel would have experienced the harshness of winter away from the protection of a

man-built shelter. Unable to leave the sheep even on the coldest and windiest of days, Lionel

comprehends and even sympathizes with how a tree would feel when stripped of its protection

from the elements.

Later on in the novel, Lionel quite tellingly uses a cultural metaphor when he says of his

relationship with Idris, "We had for many years trod the highway of life hand in hand, and still

thus linked, we might step within the shades of death" (318). The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s

first definition for "highway" is "A public road open to all passengers, a high road; esp. a main

or principal road forming the direct or ordinary route between one town or city and another, as

distinguished from a local, branch, or cross road, leading to smaller places off the main road, or

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[19] This passage also echoes Burke's ideas on society and solitude similar to the way that *Frankenstein* did.

connecting two main roads" (def. 1.a.). Although a highway can also be "[a]ny track well-beaten

or regularly traversed by animals or things" (def. 2.b.), the novel's context suggests that Lionel is

referring to a metaphorical highway that is man-made. As the dwindling population of

humankind travels from town to town and city to city to look for other survivors, they stick to

main roads that would have been built by human beings rather than paths that may have been

formed by animals. In a world in which they are reaching out to all of their own kind that they

can find, the remaining humans need to choose roads that would lead them to as many other

humans as possible.

Towards the end of the novel, Lionel utilizes a final nature metaphor, comparing himself,

Adrian, and Clara to trees. They are the last three people alive, and he describes them thusly:

"We stood like trees, whose roots are loosened by the wind, which support one another, leaning

and clinging with increased fervor while the wintry storms howl" (438). Just as he compared

Adrian to a tree earlier in the novel, Lionel compares the remaining trio to trees that have no

protection from the harsh winter winds. The repetition of this tree-and-weather metaphor from

earlier with the simile here emphasizes the importance of the power that weather has over all

living things. The vegetation is condemned to endure the harsh elements that the world has to

offer just as human beings are.

While every entity on earth is susceptible to the effects of the weather, only humans are

immediately susceptible to the power of the plague; however, humans of all social classes are

equally susceptible. *The Last Man* strongly indicates a difference between the human and the

nonhuman; at the same time, it depicts that all human beings are equal. Lionel himself strives to

define himself as human and not animal, but the difference between the human and the

nonhuman is ultimately made apparent and validated through the plague, which does not cross

species. Just as in *Frankenstein*, in which the creature's capacity to understand good and evil strengthens arguments for his role as "human," *The Last Man* advocates the idea that a conscience makes a human part of that particular species; furthermore, as he develops, Lionel moves from being an object within the narrative to becoming a true character—an entity with an ability to be responsible and responsive. At the beginning of the novel, after first meeting Adrian and learning to "become wise and good," Lionel states, "I now began to be human. I was admitted within that sacred boundary which divides the intellectual and moral nature of man from that which characterizes animals" (29) and soon after, "my crook thrown aside, a nobler flock to tend than silly sheep, even a flock of new-born ideas, I read or listened to Adrian; and his discourse, whether it concerned his love or his theories for the improvement of man, alike entranced me" (36). Kevin Hutchings comments on this particular passage, stating, "Trading a real flock of sheep for a figurative one, Verney at once rejects his shepherd's identity and retains it, transforming his sense of self-identity by embracing an idealized rather than an earthly concept of pastoral duty and labour" (231). For Lionel, the difference between human and animal is more than physical and fundamental characteristics: it is their ability to rationalize both intellectually and morally. Hutchings is correct to say that Lionel "rejects" and "retains" his identity as shepherd; Lionel determines that it is ideal to lead a flock of other human beings who can respond to rationality with rationality. And because Adrian is the one who converts Lionel away from his animalistic ways into those of the human race, Lionel reveres him. After Perdita and Raymond marry, they move to the continent, and Lionel finds himself living alone at Windsor with no money, despite Adrian's offers to help him. Lionel claims that "a peasant would have disdained my scanty fare, which I sometimes robbed from the squirrels of the forest. I was, I own, often tempted to recur to the lawless feats of my boy-hood, and knock down the

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almost tame pheasants that perched upon the trees, and bent their bright eyes on me. But they were the property of Adrian, the nurslings of Idris" (78). It is through identifying these birds as belonging to his savior and his savior's sister that he prevents himself from causing any damage to them.

Ultimately, the novel itself indicates a difference between human and nonhuman through the fact that the plague only affects people, not animals or any other living entity. Lionel narrates:

> Summer advanced, and crowned with the sun's potent rays, plague shot her unerring shafts over the earth. The nations beneath their influence bowed their heads, and died. The corn that sprung up in plenty, lay in autumn rotting on the ground, while the melancholy wretch who had gone out to gather bread for his children, lay stiff and plague-struck in the furrow. The green woods waved their boughs majestically, while the dying were spread beneath their shade, answering the solemn melody with inharmonious cries. The painted birds flitted through the shades; the careless deer reposed unhurt upon the fern—the oxen and the horses strayed from their unguarded stables, and grazed among the wheat, for *death fell on man alone*. (276, emphasis added)[20]

This passage dwells on the effects of the plague on plants and animals in order to contrast the effects it has on human beings. The corn is affected only because there is no one there to reap it; the woods remain in all their glory. Both birds and landed animals live freely, in part because no man is there to control or hunt them. In the death of humans, animals find freedom.

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[20] In chapter 2, I argue that Radcliffe uses the eighteenth century convention of investing human emotions in the landscape (John Ruskin's "pathetic fallacy") to show that the nonhuman is capable of taking repsonsiblity for humans and providing them with something to respond to. In this passage, Shelley offers a parody of that convention through the nonhumans disinterest in the suffering of the human.

The plague furthermore provides evidence that class differences between human beings are erroneous, for the plague impacts everyone no matter their nationality or station. Some characters, particularly the Countess of Windsor, believe that their social and blood status places them above others, including when it comes to surviving the plague. Furthermore, the British deem themselves immune to the plague, preferring to believe that their geographic location will protect them from it. These aspects of the novel and its commentary on what it means to be human further reflect the situation resulting from the French Revolution. Some individuals and groups believed that the social hierarchy should be destroyed. Other groups, not mutually exclusive from the previously-mentioned groups, believed that Britain would be immune from such outbreaks, while others lived in fear of them.

Adrian's intervention in a battle between immigrants and British citizens demonstrates his understanding that Britons are no different from other living beings; it also illustrates his ability to channel his rationality and compassion into being there not just for his own family or small, closed community but for the human race. This action elucidates Shelley's point about what human beings *should* do for each other. Adrian, whom Lionel depicts as the hero of his narrative, makes it clear that people should value the individual over the collective; or, perhaps more accurately, people should value the collective because it is made up of individuals. And because there is value in the individual, class and nationality are not important in identifying the worth of a human being. Before the plague makes its first appearance, Adrian attempts to argue for the lack of difference between nationalities. He claims, "The Turks are men; each fibre, each limb is as feeling as our own, and every spasm, be it mental or bodily, is as truly felt in a Turk's heart and brain, as in a Greek's" (161). For Adrian, each individual human life has a distinct intrinsic value, a point he continues to make through his actions when he takes over the role as

Protectorate. As the plague induces people to immigrate to England, the British try to stop them from coming in and bringing the disease into their country, sparking battles throughout the country. Despite Lionel's willingness to take on the role of Protector, given that it means certain death, Adrian insists on assuming the part. And he takes the responsibility seriously. He stops a battle between current British citizens and potential immigrants by riding into the fray; he rides in front of bullets to stop men from shooting at each other and reminds them, "Sheath your weapons; these are your brothers, commit not fratricide; soon the plague will not leave one for you to glut your revenge upon: will you be more pitiless than pestilence? As you honour me— as you worship God, in whose image those also are created—as your children and friends are dear to you,—shed not a drop of precious human blood" (301). Adrian believes that the bond between human beings should take precedence over distinction between nationalities and that in order to honor their roles as humans they have to care about each other both as a whole and as individuals. His speech reminds the armed men as well as the readers that humans have the capacity to feel compassion while nature, in this case the plague, does not. The people should not respond to the plague with attacks on each other but by responding to each other's needs and building a stronger, more supportive community. Soon after, Adrian holds a wounded man as he dies: "The fate of the world seemed bound up in the death of this single man. On either side the bands threw down their arms, even the veterans wept, and our party held out their hands to their foes, while a gush of love and deepest amity filled every heart" (303). The death of this single man did what the deaths of many could not: it brought the people together and helped them realize the consequences of their actions. A focus on the individual rather than the whole, then, is important to the definition of being truly human. While Adrian loves all of his countrymen and fellow occupants of earth, he does so with a concentration on each individual rather than

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solely on the collective. Thus Shelley suggests with this passage that it is only be valuing *everyone*, despite nationality or status, can England prevent the type of devastation they saw in France.

The Countess of Windsor in particular fails to come to terms with the fact that class no longer matters under the rule of the plague. Throughout most of the novel, the Countess represents those who are unwilling to form reciprocal relationships with those outside of their social communities. At the beginning of the novel, the Countess insists upon maintaining the class separation between her family and the Verneys, going so far as to attempt to drug Idris to force her to marry someone besides Lionel (86-88). Idris and Adrian separate themselves from their mother in order to form a family with Lionel and Perdita. Even after the plague strikes, and people of all classes begin to die, the Countess refuses to accept Lionel as her son-in-law: "She consented, she said, to forgive her daughter, and acknowledge her grandchildren; larger concessions must not be expected" (293). In refusing to forgive and accept Lionel, she clings to her expectations of class difference. But to Lionel, "this proceeding appeared (if so light a term may be permitted) extremely whimsical. Now that the race of man had lost in fact all distinction of rank, this pride was doubly fatuitous; now that we felt a kindred, fraternal nature with all who bore the stamp of humanity, this angry reminiscence of times for ever gone, was worse than foolish" (293). The Countess is an excellent example of the potential effects of clinging to class separation. While others allow themselves to break down the class boundaries in order to value others as individuals, the Countess misses out on a full relationship with her daughter, grandchildren, and son-in-law. It is only after Idris's death that the Countess learns to value everyone (359). Ultimately, she realizes that compassion and care are more important; Lionel narrates,

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> The aged Countess of Windsor had fallen from her dream of power, rank and
> grandeur; she had been suddenly seized with the conviction, that love was the
> only good of life, virtue the only ennobling distinction and enriching wealth.
> Such a lesson had been taught her by the dead lips of her neglected daughter; and
> she devoted herself, with all the fiery violence of her character, to . . . obtaining
> the affection of the remnants of her family. (385)

The Countess's refusal to create a contact zone with in her own family caused her to miss out on positive relationships.

Furthermore, the plague does not discriminate in favor of any nationalities. The plague confirms that England is not immune to any bad happenings simply because it is separated from the continent. Many of the British in *The Last Man* believed that they could hold to their aristocratic system, with many individuals believing they, too, could become peers (222); Lionel specifically indicates the people were doubtful that a democracy like in America would work in Britain (222). Fear of the American democracy is implicitly validated for the skeptics when America becomes the latest victim of the plague: "America had also received the taint; and, were it yellow fever or plague, the epidemic was gifted with a virulence before unfelt. The devastation was not confined to the towns, but spread throughout the country; the hunter died in the woods, the peasant in the corn-fields, and the fisher on his native waters" (223). The specification that America received the epidemic that "was gifted with a virulence before unfelt" highlights the general fear that democracy begets bad effects. English people traveling abroad as well as people from other countries flocked to England for safety (236). However, England receives the plague soon after:

The plague is in London; the air of England is tainted, and her sons and daughters

strew the unwholesome earth. And now, the sea, late our defence, seems our

prison bound; hemmed in by its gulphs, we shall die like the famished inhabitants

of a besieged town. Other nations have a fellowship in death; but we, shut out

from all neighbourhood, must bury our own dead, and little England become a

wide, wide tomb. (248)

This passage draws attention to Shelley's call for unity not just within small communities but across communities as well.

Lionel's Calling to Create a Contact Zone

Much has been written on Lionel's transformation to "human" and how he defines that role. However, to fully understand *The Last Man* as a novel and the last man as a character, we need to go beyond that and look at Lionel's close relationship with the nonhuman—a relationship that he struggles against but never fully loses. Mary Louise Pratt's original idea of the "contact zone," states:

[A contact zone] shifts the center of gravity and the point of view. It invokes the

space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are

co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect. The term "contact"

foregrounds the interactive, improvisational dimensions of imperial encounters so

easily ignored or suppressed by accounts of conquest and domination told from

the invader's perspective. A "contact" perspective emphasizes how subjects get

constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among

colonizers and colonized, or travelers and "travelees," not in terms of

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separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings

and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (8)

We can easily view Adrian as a colonizer of Lionel; he takes Lionel and domesticates him to be a

civilized man in the way Adrian believes one should be civilized. However, this narrative is told

not from the "invader's perspective" but by the point of view of the "invaded." Lionel willingly

takes on the ideologies and beliefs of his savior rather than being forced to accept them. Because

Lionel was willing to be changed, he, Adrian, and the others he encounters throughout his

conversion to being human are able to form contact zones effectively. And perhaps Lionel's

willing colonization provides another way to understand how he was able to maintain a contact

relationship with the nonhuman.

However, Lionel also shows a lack of willingness to maintain a contact zone with another

living being in the previously-mentioned scene in which he "embraces" the negro half clad. As

he rushes home to be with his dying son, a "negro half clad" grasps and clings to Lionel's leg

(336). "With mixed horror and impatience I strove to disengage myself, and fell on the sufferer;

he wound his naked festering arms around me, his face was close to mine, and his breath, death-

laden, entered my vitals. For a moment I was overcome, my head was bowed by aching nausea;

till, reflection returning, I sprung up, threw the wretch from me, and" rushed in to be with Alfred,

Lionel narrates (336-37). Some scholars indicate that Lionel's actions are more of a pushing

away than an embrace (Melville 835), and Wang draws attention to the phrase "reflection

returning" to bring out the activity of looking at the negro and the passivity of his looking upon

Alfred (242-243). This phrase appears also, however, to indicate that his leaning into the negro

was involuntary whereas his decision to push the suffering man away was a conscious act. Thus

it seems that Lionel's rational, human side is that which pushes away the negro. Melville

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articulates that this pushing away demonstrates the limits to Lionel's capacity for compassion

(835). Like the kind Felix attacking the creature in Frankenstein, Lionel acts on instinct when

wanting to be with and protect his family.[21]

Strang argues that "for Lionel, making a friend, learning the political and philosophical

history of his country, getting a job, moving to the city, are the conditions of becoming human at

all" (426). Mark Canuel indicates that Lionel believes that manners are what make him more

human; Canuel claims, "The sign that Lionel offers of his humanity is an increased esteem for

such cultivation in other persons, a cultivation that he in turn desires to emulate" (154).

Undoubtedly, Lionel strives throughout the novel to be human. However, I argue that despite

having an idea of what it is to be human, and going to great lengths to reach that goal, the fact

that Lionel never loses his inner animality is what ultimately saves him from the plague, an idea

that Strang appears to agree with, stating "that it may be exactly [the] former nature of Lionel's

that lets him live through the plague. Certainly it is an 'instinctive love of life' that allows him to

survive the shipwreck that drowns his final companions" (426). The point could be raised that

most humans embrace their inner animal when it is an issue of life or death. Other characters in

the novel demonstrate this idea; Ryland, for instance, abandons the post of Protectorate when the

plague crosses into England (Shelley, *The Last Man* 244). What makes Lionel different, and

what Strang indicates, is that Lionel has a stronger animal nature to return to. He has that

background that others do not have (Strang 426). What Strang fails to point out, however, is that

Lionel returns to that animal nature while still maintaining the humanity he developed. Upon

realizing Adrian's and Clara's deaths, he defines himself as human, claiming "I remained alone

of my race" (*TLM* 446). He further demonstrates his maintained humanity through

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[21] Melville also points out that Lionel believes he could have saved Alfred if he had been there to nurse him back to health (835).

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demonstrating his capacity for rationality and compassion; Lionel critically ponders his situation by comparing himself to Robinson Crusoe and thinking out how he can provide for himself (448), and he mourns the loss of his companions (446). And because he no longer has any human to create a relationship with, he accepts his ability to create reciprocal relationships with the nonhuman, the sheepdog he finds in the Campagna (467).

Thus Shelley begins and ends the narrative with the relationship between Lionel and a dog. Although he fights against creating relationships with the nonhuman, Lionel ultimately accepts his calling to create and maintain a contact zone with the nonhuman. Lionel's life story, as presented to the reader, begins and ends with a dog at his side (*TLM* 13-14, 469), thus drawing lasting attention to the relationships Lionel creates with the nonhuman. Although he resists it at times, Lionel ultimately has a strong respect for his relationship to and with the nonhuman. His resistance is shown when he first "began to be human" (29) when he throws aside his shepherd's crook for "a nobler flock to tend than silly sheep" (36). Additionally, after the others have died, Lionel nearly kills a goat that rushes at him but intentionally misfires and then runs from the horror he nearly commits (*TLM* 460). It appears that his impulse is to separate himself from or master the nonhuman; however, when he realizes that the sheepdog in the Campagna is the only available companion, he concedes that his role is to create relationships with whatever species remains alive with him. He sees the dog continuing to do his man-given duties and takes him as a true companion, even taking him inside St Peter's (468). Thus Lionel demonstrates his willingness to treat the nonhuman as he would a human. "[W]hen Lionel, carrying the works of Shakespeare, and the dog step into their little boat to sail for Africa in the novel's final moment, at least there is the possibility of more than one living, humanized creature surviving the future," Strang concludes (427-28). This connection, this reciprocal relationship formed between Lionel

and the sheepdog, demonstrates Shelley's promotion of "contact zones"—that humans should always seek to create a place where they can communicate and connect with all beings who inhabit the world.

My final chapter will expand on the idea of "all beings who inhabit the world" to look at the universality of the need for compassion. This shift towards compassion is not a unique need of the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twenty-first century; rather, it is a need that the creatures of the world have had throughout time, an idea Shelley demonstrates through novels set in the fourteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-first centuries. Furthermore, this need is not limited by location, which Shelley demonstrates through setting these novels in Italy, England, America, and other locales.

Chapter Four:

Seeking a "Sincere Sympathy with our Fellow Creatures" in Shelley's *Valperga*, *Lodore*, and

The Last Man

My first three chapters looked at the ways in which one's overall capacity for

responsiveness can be shown through one's sensitivity to the possibility of the spiritual

supernatural, one's ability to respond to landscape, and one's ability to respond to humans and

nonhumans in order to create reciprocal relationships. This final chapter considers the

universality of these concepts by looking at how characters in novels of the past, present, and

future were able to respond to and take responsibility for other human and nonhuman characters.

Like the ability to have a heightened awareness towards the possibility of the supernatural, an

ability to empathically experience history demonstrates a capacity to be sensitive towards the

needs of others. Mary Shelley invites her readers to practice that particular form of empathy in

Valperga[1] (1823), *Lodore*[2] (1835), and *The Last Man*. Central to my reading of these novels

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[1] *Valperga* is a historical romance that tells the story of the historical figure of Castruccio Castracani and his friend and lover, Euthanasia. Castruccio and his family are Ghibelines, who support monarchy, and Euthanasia and her family are Guelphs, who support liberty. The parents are able to remain friends while having different beliefs, and the children are able to as well when they are young. After the two grow up, Castruccio becomes a military leader, and Euthanasia becomes the sole heir of her family's estate, and she leads the people of Florence compassionately. Castruccio and Euthanasia maintain their love for a while, but ultimately Castruccio's greed for power destroys their relationship. Beatrice, a prophetess, is a temporary love of Castruccio whom he forgets once he is reunited with Euthanasia. However, once he casts her aside and begins to do the same to Euthanasia, the two women become friends. Unfortunately, Beatrice has suffered because of her ability to prophesy, and dies soon after the friendship is established. Euthanasia is left alone with her subjects to defend Valperga and Florence against Castruccio and his troops. Ultimately, Castruccio takes Valperga and banishes Euthanasia. She gets on a ship that never makes it to its destination.

[2] *Lodore* tells the story of the end of the Lodore family line. Lord Lodore fell in love with and married Cornelia, whose mother's interference contributed to the downfall of their marriage. When Lord Lodore is faced with the prospect of dueling with his illegitimate son, he opts to move to America rather than fight. When Cornelia refuses to follow, Lodore takes their daughter, Ethel, and moves to the Illinois without her. There, he isolates himself from

through a historical perspective are Stephen Cheeke's ideas regarding the "translation" of history. His consideration of experiencing historical places provides a way to connect ecocriticism, history, and empathy.

Through experiencing these historical, current, and future situations empathically and examining the different ways in which characters respond to political, economic, and biological devastation, Shelley further invites her readers to respond to similar situations in their lives with the responsible and caring actions of characters such as Euthanasia, Ethel, Adrian, Clara, and Lionel. In these novels, nature causes danger and catastrophe: storms and plague cause danger and death. Although not all of the devastation is caused solely by nature, nature serves as a catalyst or contributing factor in the various situations. Furthermore, characters such as Castruccio, Lord Lodore, Lady Santerre, and Adrian and Idris's mother add to the devastation caused by nature through selfish behaviors—attempting to improve their own situations by harming others. Thus in these novels nature initiates the occasion to show human compassion. Unfortunately, characters who respond to devastation through caring for and supporting each other still feel the effects of the events; however, those who are responsive to the needs of others feel those effects less drastically than those who respond selfishly. Ultimately, Shelley suggests that if society makes it a practice to support and care for one another, social and political changes are possible. As twenty-first century readers, we can translate these experiences not only to our

society, bringing up Ethel in a secluded environment. Once objectionable suitors try to court her, he realizes he is not safe there and decides to move back to England. However, while in New York, he duels a man and dies. Once back in England, Ethel moves in with her aunt and tours Europe. In the process, she meets her mother, who is not allowed to associate with her unless she agrees to give up her allowance (a stipulation of Lodore's will that he verbally retracted but did not put in writing). Ethel falls in love with Edward, who struggles financially. While Ethel does not see this is a dilemma, for she was happy living in the country with basically nothing, Edward does find it problematic. Eventually, they marry. When Edward is thrown in debtor's prison, Ethel insists on staying with him. Cornelia ultimately gives her money to allow Edward and Ethel to pay their debts; however, she makes this sacrifice under the stipulation that no one can find out. She then moves into a cottage near Ethel and her aunt so that she can occasionally hear of her daughter. Ultimately, she is discovered, remarries, thus ending the Lodore family name, and everyone lives happily ever after.

social and political environments but also to our physical environment by applying the types of responsive relationships the characters establish with each other to our own relationships with the nonhuman.

One purpose of this chapter is to contribute to the limited scholarship available on some of Shelley's lesser-studied novels. *The Last Man* has begun to receive substantial attention in the past few years. In 1978, Robert Lance Snyder lamented, "Over a century and a half after its initial publication, Mary Shelley's third novel—an apocalyptic vision of earth's depopulation through plague—remains nearly as unexplored and uncelebrated as it was in 1826" (435). Since then, scholars have increasingly discussed this novel concerning topics ranging from treatment of family and gender[3], apocalyptic and prophetic themes[4], and immunity and Lionel Verney's encounter with the "negro half clad"[5]. *Valperga* and *Lodore* have also begun to receive some consideration, but neither has received the amount of critical attention as *The Last Man*, and none has received the extensive study that *Frankenstein* has been allotted.

I align myself with Fuson Wang's positive reading of *The Last Man*; although the narrative ends with Lionel alone, there is a final indication of hope for the endurance of the human race along with the other species that are all immune from the plague. His article "track[s] Shelley's continuous revision of models of companionship and community, from the ungendered creativity of the introductory pair [the travelers who find the Sibylline leaves in the cave], to the androgynous balancing act of Evadne, to the cosmopolitan embrace of the negro, and finally to the cross-species coupling at the novel's conclusion" (237) in order to "argue that

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[3] See Suparna Banerjee's "Beyond Biography: Re-Reading Gender in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*," Kate Ferguson Ellis's "Subversive Surfaces: The Limits of Domestic Affection in Mary Shelley's Later Fiction,"
[4] See Paul A. Cantor's "The Apocalypse of Empire: Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*," Kevin Hutchings's "'A Dark Image in a Phantasmagoria': Pastoral Idealism, Prophecy, and Materiality in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*," Kari E. Lokke's "*The Last Man*," and Morton D. Paley's "*The Last Man*: Apocalypse without Millenium."
[5] See Snyder, Anne McWhir's "Mary Shelley's Anti-Contagionism: *The Last Man* as 'Fatal Narrative,'" Peter Melville's "The Problem of Immunity in *The Last Man*," and Fuson Wang's "We Must Live Elsewhere."

Shelley continuously rewrites redemptive narratives into *The Last Man* and gives shape to a

politics of possibility that recovers the novel from charges of nihilism or anti-Romantic

conservatism" (236). Similarly, *Valperga* and *Lodore* have endings that can be read

optimistically. Euthanasia's calm and proud exit from her homeland provides for a positive

lasting impression of her; even if Castruccio cannot be redeemed, Euthanasia is immortalized by

the text. Furthermore, in *Lodore*, Lady Lodore is redeemed by her sacrifice for her daughter and

son-in-law, symbolized by her name change to Mrs. Saville and then to Viscountess Maristow

(446).

Valperga, *Lodore*, and *The Last Man* as Comments on Sympathetic Communities

Although there has been an increasing number of readings of *Valperga* and *Lodore*, none

address the concept of sympathetic communities, which have been addressed in *Frankenstein*

and *The Last Man*.[6] By reading *Valperga*, *Lodore*, and *The Last Man* together, we can see that

this idea is one that spans Shelley's oeuvre. *Valperga* has been read predominantly as a

historical novel. James P. Carson, for instance, argues that in "*Valperga* (1823), Shelley seeks to

define humanity historically, in a study of the influence of passion, imagination, and conscience

on fourteenth-century Italians" (167). Sonia Hofkosh looks at the white silk handkerchief found

in the wreckage "as a way to think about the representation of history in Shelley's novel, which

will mean thinking about the history of representation, for, as Stephen Bann contends, issues of

historical method involving the boundary line between verifiable fact and fiction inevitably touch

on the problem of representation" (689). How Mary Shelley uses the biographies of other

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[6] For instance, Colene Bentley argues that *Frankenstein* is more concerned with community than with humanity (332) and that the creature wants to contribute as well as receive in a community and that he wants to join a specific, small community rather than humanity as a whole (331), and Jeanne M. Britton posits that "*Frankenstein* offers a version of sympathy that is constituted by the production and transmission of narrative as compensation for failures of face-to-face sympathetic experience" (3). Although not his central argument, one of Peter Melville's points about *The Last Man* is that when Lionel pushes away the negro half clad, "He experiences a lapse in precisely the kind of sympathy toward sufferers of which he routinely preaches to others in his community" (835).

women, particularly that of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, "whose choices challenge nineteenth-century moral codes" is Patricia A. Matthew's central investigation (382). The argument Kelley M. Theresa contributes is that Shelley adds the fictional Beatrice and Euthanasia to the historical figure of Castruccio to demonstrate the devastatingly small role women played in history and to allow readers to imagine a different outcome (635-36). She further indicates that the novel draws parallels between Castruccio and Napoleon, emphasizing the repetitive nature of history (636). Finally, Leanne Maunu examines depictions of war, torture, and pain. She argues:

> *Valperga* is more than just an anti-war novel; it is a novel that asks its readers to explore the connections between torture and war; between heroic ideology and tyranny; between pleasure and pain; and, perhaps most importantly, between physical and emotional suffering. War functions as a backdrop to the scenes taking place before us, but that representation of war is grounded in an investigation of the role violence serves in European society and of our fascination with and fetishization of it. (447)

Most of the articles that focus on the historical aspects of the novel point specifically to the political implications, a strand I pick up on by arguing that Euthanasia demonstrates the capacity for a leader to act responsibly towards her citizens and show sympathy for them. Ultimately, this capacity, along with the respect and love that her citizens return, allow her to tolerate her hardships.

Valperga demonstrates that being community-minded can minimize despair. Castruccio serves as an example of a selfish ruler; he wants to rule over Florence, which would eliminate their republic as well as offend Euthanasia, whom he loves. However, he is willing to make the

citizens of Florence suffer and cast away his childhood friend and lover so that he can have control. Shelley effectively contrasts Castruccio with Euthanasia, who willingly sets aside her love for Castruccio in order to be a responsible leader. William Brewer has indicated that a sound mind can alleviate despair; to that argument I will add that a willingness and ability to create a community with others helps diminish suffering. Brewer reads *Valperga* as a political critique, arguing that the novel is a "portrait of obsessive ambition" that "shows that this passion can rage even within an outwardly calm individual, and that a degree of psychological insight (such as that possessed by Euthanasia) may be needed if one is to recognize a would-be Napoleon before it is too late" (135). He proposes that Shelley "is wary of love as a ruling passion" (136) and that "Euthanasia has the capacity to curb her emotions with her reason, and this makes her . . . a kind of ideal in the bloody, medieval world of *Valperga*" (137). Most particularly relevant to my discussion here is Brewer's claim that "Shelley's condemnation of the ruling passions of ambition and love implies an endorsement of reason, a faculty which, even though it condemns Euthanasia to a loveless and frustrated existence, allows her to avoid the storms of emotion that buffet and finally destroy Beatrice" (137). While his claim about Euthanasia's strength of mind and reason is certainly valid, it is also important to consider Euthanasia's motives for acting as she does. She confirms throughout the narrative that her desire to protect the safety of the citizens of her country is greater than her desire for Castruccio. She tells him, "'It does not appear to me . . ., that I sacrifice any thing noble in my nature, when I refuse to unite myself to the enemy of my country. . . . But more than I love Florence, or myself, or you, Castruccio, do I love peace'" (205). Her steadfastness and understanding that the greater good of others is more important than personal desires allows her to accept her exile in peace. The narrator indicates, as she approaches the ship that will take her

to her unknown destination, that "Euthanasia, being now separated from her former connections, and from him who had been the evil genius of the scene, began to resume her wonted tone. . . . She looked up, and exclaimed in her own beautiful Italian, . . . 'What a brave canopy has this earth, and how graciously does the supreme empyrean smile upon its nursling!'" (374). Castruccio's end is less peaceful. In contrast to Euthanasia, Castruccio continues to achieve military and political victories until his death. However, the novel ends with a reminder of what he sacrificed in order to achieve those goals by concluding with the inscription on his tombstone, which concludes, "I lived, I sinned, I suffered, I surrendered to nature. Kindly come to the aid of a pious spirit in need, mindful that in a short while you will die" (380-81 n. pg. 424). Shelley thus indicates that no one can avoid death, but people can make their lives more peaceful through caring and responsible actions.

Lodore also contains contrasting characters that demonstrate the effects of refusing or creating sympathetic relationships, an area of the novel that has yet to be explored fully. Outside of collections designated specifically for Shelley's little-studied works, Lodore gets almost no scholarly treatment, and The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley (2003) barely mentions the novel. A 2007 article on Lodore indicates that "the elements of the gothic, the historically alien, and the globally catastrophic are absent; and so, it seems, are those marks that distinguish Shelley's particular literary gifts. In addition, the novel has been seen as less daring politically than its predecessors and, as such, representative of Shelley's retreat into the safety of propriety in the face of social and financial pressure" (N. Williams 397), perhaps demonstrating why this particular narrative has received little attention.[7] The Other Mary Shelley offers Lodore a few passing acknowledgements—enough to point out that it was "her most popular novel since

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[7] While the novel certainly is not as subversive as some of Shelley's other novels, it still maintains that same suggestion that society should work together to form supportive communities.

Frankenstein" (Fisch, Mellor, and Schor 6) and that Fanny Derham fails as "a radical and successful heroine" (O'Sullivan 154). In one chapter, Kate Ferguson Ellis questions Anne K. Mellor's earlier claim that Shelley continued to be concerned with the bourgeois family throughout her writing career (Ellis 221). Ellis discusses *Lodore* alongside *Mathilda* and *Falkner*, looking at father-daughter relationships to argue that these texts challenge the idea of the idealized woman rather than conceding to it (232). Most relevant to my own discussion of *Lodore* is Fiona Stafford's "*Lodore*: a Tale of the Present Time?", which points out that Shelley nearly subtitled her novel "a tale of the present time" in order to demonstrate that "Shelley's depictions of the English aristocracy in contemporary London, complete with references to Almack's, the King's Theatre and a network of West End streets, has obvious affinities with the work of her popular contemporaries" (183). Furthermore, through its depictions of social structure, "[t]he story of Lord Lodore contains not only a political allegory of Reform, but also a lingering attachment to the past, and an attraction to the Romantic heroism that seemed threatened by the brave new world of legal equality" (192). My interest in time in this piece lies partially in its ability to serve as a comparison to the past and future novels. Furthermore, the novel substitutes a change in time for a well-defined change in location by crossing continents.

In contrast to *Valperga* and *The Last Man*, the majority of the devastation that occurs in *Lodore* is caused by humans rather than nature. However, the novel compares working with others to form a community of compassion and responsibility with isolating oneself and avoiding caring for others. Lord and Lady Lodore's separation is caused, in part, by their inability to communicate and sympathize with each other. During their marriage, Lady Santerre prevents the couple from truly communicating with each other: "Cold and polite to each other, the noble pair were not in the habit of disputing. Lady Santerre guarded against that. Any thing as

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familiar as a quarrel might have produced a reconciliation, and with that a better understanding of each other's real disposition" (110). In part because of Lady Santerre's interference, the couple can never sympathize with each other. Lord Lodore increases the gap not only between him and Lady Lodore but also between him and all others when he isolates himself in the Illinois. Like M. Barreaux's isolation in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which I discuss in Chapter One, Lodore's isolation prevents him from being able to act responsibly towards others.

The relationship between Ethel and Edward Villiers contrasts that of Lord and Lady Lodore, showing how care and sympathy can create a strong bond and enable the pair to endure hardship. Although Edward did not want her to join him in debtor's prison, Ethel insists on doing so. When she arrives, the narrator indicates, "the mind of Ethel, surrounded by the world's worst forms of adversity, showed clear and serene, entirely possessed by the repose of love. It was impossible but that, in spite of shame and regret, Villiers should not participate in these feelings. . . . Ethel's affection demanded to stand in a place of prosperity, and he could not refuse to admit so dear a claim" (352). Just as Euthanasia's love of peace and strength of mind enable her to withstand her hardships, Ethel's love for Edward helps her to withstand hardships. Furthermore, through sharing their hardships, Ethel and Edward are better able to endure them.

Finally, *The Last Man* demonstrates the various responses to the plague that threatens the human race. While Adrian works to bring people together to support each other, others such as Ryland attempt to run away from others to protect themselves. Ryland abandons his role as Lord Protector, telling Adrian, "Every man for himself! the devil take the protectorship, say I, if it expose me to danger!" (244). When Ryland meets his end, it is in solitude. The narrator describes his fate:

Many of those who remained, secluded themselves; some had laid up stores

which should prevent the necessity of leaving their homes;—some deserted wife

and child, and imagined that they secured their safety in utter solitude. Such had

been Ryland's plan, and he was discovered dead and half-devoured by insects, in

a house many miles from any other, with piles of food laid up in useless

superfluity. (319)

In contrast, those who band together with Lionel and Adrian's group die surrounded by friends.

This group displays a sense of responsibility and compassion towards each other, and although

they cannot shirk death, their experience of the plague and their ultimate deaths are much more

tolerable. Idris, for instance, indicates to Lionel, "'we are intimates of a miserable prison, and

there is no joy for us; but the true love I bear you will render this [Alfred's death] and every

other loss endurable'" (339). Like Ethel and Edward, the group cannot avoid hardships

altogether; however, being together and having a compassionate community partially alleviates

the effects of the devastation they experience.

The Role of History and Weather

Part of creating a supportive community is forming empathic relationships. Shelley

models these types of relationships through her characters. Furthermore, Shelley allows her

readers to identify with the struggles of the characters by experiencing the historical moment as

"place" through showing the impact nature has on both the human and the nonhuman. Through

her creation of place and connection to the historical moment, Shelley invites her readers to

practice multiple types of empathy, connecting to the characters, the locations, and the historical

moments. My examination here posits that this empathy can enable us to better understand the

nonhuman. Weather in particular plays a significant role in affecting the characters' lives.

Specifically, weather provides the opportunity for characters to either work together or separate from each other, thus enabling them to create a future that is either more devastating or more tolerable. Both *Valperga* and *The Last Man* contain a storm at sea that causes the deaths of major characters while in *Lodore* one brings Lord Lodore to his future wife. In *Valperga*, the storm eradicates Euthanasia's life, completing the task that Castruccio, because of his love for her, cannot. *The Last Man*'s final storm kills Adrian and Clara, leaving Lionel to finally be the title-mentioned last man. Furthermore, in *The Last Man*, the plague acts as a natural disaster with the same power as an earthquake or fire, and in *Lodore*, isolated, country settings prove to be impacted by culture just as much as cities are.

The time setting of each of these three novels, when looked at together, allows Shelley's readers to experience the "historical" moment in the past, the present, and the future. *Valperga* is a historical romance set in the early fourteenth century that depicts the life of Castruccio Castracani. However, throughout the novel, the narrator makes the reader aware that the story is being told from an early nineteenth century perspective by reminding the audience that clothing styles or politics were different than they are "now." *Lodore* is set in Shelley's contemporary nineteenth century, a fact she nearly emphasized with her subtitle. *The Last Man* is set in the late twenty-first century; however, the story is told from some Sibylline Leaves an outside narrator finds in Naples in 1818.

In order to make the argument that Shelley's readers can experience the historical moment as place, I will rely on the theories set forth by Stephen Cheeke. Although he mainly focuses on Lord Byron, Cheeke's ideas regarding establishing connections to historical places can be applied to other texts. He argues,

Byron wrote about historical places, about specific 'spots,' as if they were sites in which direct connection with the buried subjectivity of the lived experiences associated with those places was somehow (supernaturally) possible. This, we might argue, is merely a Romantic version of the brightest aim both of the New Historicism and the 'new geography' – the idea of the recovery of lived experience. (13)

According to Cheeke, when scholars talk about Bryon "dramatising" history, they deny the emotional engagement that Byron has with the places he describes in his historical poetry (12-13). Furthermore, "*being there* on the spot" is significant because it provides "a particular kind of historical knowledge" (7, Cheeke's emphasis) rather than a "second-hand and inauthentic emotional response" that one risks having when reading about places (5). Cheeke also investigates the complications involving translation—not just the translation of words but of customs; some cultural practices are difficult to explain to others who do not live by those norms (111, 118). Ultimately, there are some practices that cannot be translated because there is no equivalent in the receiving culture. I will focus on Shelley's attempts to translate lived political experiences into the different countries and times. While she translates experiences that are relatively similar to ones her readers may have, she attempts to make those similar experiences more realistic within their geographical context through her descriptions of nature and weather.

Applying the theory on experiencing the historical moment to Shelley's novels enables us to see the universality of characters' struggles, thus bringing out Shelley's purpose of showing people that it is by acting responsibly towards one another that social and political change can be possible. *Valperga* compares the mistaken values of Castruccio with those of Napoleon or other contemporary rulers. *The Last Man* projects those same mistakes into an imagined future,

showing what could happen if contemporary beings do not adjust lifestyles to be more compassionate to all other living beings. Furthermore, by talking about *Valperga* merely as a historical romance that depicts the story of Castruccio, we miss the connections to Italy, particularly Lucca and the castle of Valperga, that Shelley offers her readers. Through the descriptions of weather and its effects Shelley allows readers to connect to the historical moment of Castruccio and Euthanasia's failed romance. *Lodore* and *The Last Man* present similar connections: in the former, weather and nature establish physical dangers of location as well as the changing times regarding lack of isolation; in the latter, the power of nature and the themes of apocalypse and prophecy enable readers to connect to the future moment of Lionel being the last man on earth.

Most significantly, looking at the ways in which readers experience the historical moment allows us to understand the universality of eighteenth century, nineteenth century, and contemporary struggles and the people's (and our) responsibilities for others. Other texts I have discussed have been set in the past: Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for instance, are set in the sixteenth century. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, it was conventional to set Gothic novels in a different time or place in order for the writers and readers to grapple with their contemporary concerns. By displacing their fears into a different time or place, people are able to reexamine those concerns in a less threatening way. For instance, they can look at Julia Mazzini's and Emily St. Aubert's struggles to overcome devastating situations caused by selfish leading figures and compare them to their own struggles with selfish governments. Through looking at a situation (e.g. being kidnapped by proposed lovers or imprisoned by the Inquisition) that is not directly happening to them or likely to happen to them, they can better think about the analogous situations that *are* happening to them (e.g. war and

poverty). Depictions of characters and situations such as Castruccio and his need for power and

his treatment of Euthanasia similarly allow Shelley's contemporary readers to place themselves

in Euthanasia's position as they see others around them suffer from similar, although less direct,

tyrants. *Lodore* and *The Last Man* demonstrate the strain that obsession with class creates on

relationships, another issue relevant to a society attempting to break free from distinct class

separations and seeing the effects of such attempts in other countries. By looking at a text that

takes place in the past and reading it in conjunction with one set contemporarily and another set

in the future, we are able to then observe that similar issues of obsession with control rather than

responsible concern for others are repeated across the eras.

Creation of Time Setting in *Valperga*, *Lodore*, and *The Last Man*

Throughout *Valperga*, which takes place in the early 14th century, Shelley emphasizes the

time setting to demonstrate that the contemporary political situation is universal across time,

showing how another tyrannical circumstance was established by Castruccio's failure to

sympathize with Euthanasia or the people of Florence. The first specific year mentioned is

"1304, when Castruccio was fourteen years of age" (11)[8], and throughout the novel, Shelley

reminds her readers that the story is being related in the present day but that the story, to the

characters involved, exists in their own time. For instance, she reminds readers that the story

takes place at a different time when she describes one of Euthanasia's outfits: "[Euthanasia] was

dressed according to the custom *of the times*, . . . a silk vest of blue reached from her neck to her

feet, girded at the waist by a small embroidered band; the wide and hanging sleeves were

embroidered at the edge, and fell far over her hands, except when, thrown back, they discovered

her rosy-tipt fingers and taper wrist" (88, emphasis added). At another point in the novel,

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[8] According to Rossington's endnote, Shelley establishes Castruccio's birth year as 1289 while other historical
sources indicate he was born in 1281 (390).

Shelley emphasizes that, to the characters, the story takes place in *their* present. When Pepi shows Castruccio the usurious bonds, he exclaims, "They are not musty! they are parchments of this age! they are signed, they are sealed;—read them! read them!" (183). Pepi wants to make sure that Castruccio recognizes these bonds as living documents, not papers of the past that are no longer legally legitimate. Shelley's emphasis on the fashion of the past and legal papers of the present demonstrates the importance time has to the narrative.

Not all scholars find Shelley's historicism to be effective; however, I posit that even the anachronistic aspects critics identify have meaning. George G. Dekker, for instance, finds Shelley's attempt at historicism to fall flat at times. He specifically cites Euthanasia's visit to Rome, during which she claims to be "elevated by poetic transport" (*Valperga*, qtd. in Dekker 229). He indicates that this phrase "seems doubly inauthentic because the phrasing—dictated, as it were, by the discourse of Romantic tourism—is at once hackneyed and anachronistic" (229). He further claims that Shelley simply was not as talented at writing historical novels as she was at writing other genres (230):

> [H]er choice of period and historical (as distinct from Gothic) fictional mode in *Valperga* limited her freedom to draw effectively on the personal experiences and political concerns that were then of most urgent interest to her. Her encounter with Rome was one of the most important experiences of her still-young life: hence its ventriloquistic inclusion in *Valperga* was perhaps inevitable but doomed to artistic failure. (231)

However, Shelley's use of Romantic phrasings connects the novel's fourteenth-century Rome to nineteenth-century Britain. By drawing on contemporary discourse, she translates Euthanasia's connections with Rome to establish that Euthanasia's connection with Rome is similar to the

ways in which her contemporary audience can connect with places they read about in contemporary poetry, novels, and travel writing. Stuart Curran praises Shelley's descriptions of Lucca, claiming, "*Valperga*, indeed, reflecting Mary Shelley's acute sensitivity to details of climate, natural phenomena, and topography, is embued with a rare authenticity that quietly presses its authority on the events of the novel, rendering its fictional representations as though they carried the actual weight of history" (104). For Curran, then, Shelley is successful in "being there" in Lucca. By visiting Lucca in the present, she is able to connect with present Lucca and thus begin connecting with past Lucca.

Lodore also strives to demonstrate the significance of its time setting throughout the novel. Despite deciding to remove her proposed subtitle of "a Tale of the Present Time," Shelley still draws attention to the fact that the novel takes place in the early nineteenth century. Stafford points out that references to contemporary events such as "The American War," which ended in 1783, ground the novel in certain time settings. Significantly, the novel establishes Lodore's life span to be "between the period between the end of the War of Independence and the great Act of 1832," thus setting up the novel to be "in part at least, . . . an allegory of the Reform Movement" (Stafford 189). Furthermore, the novel deals with issues common to that day such as typical financial struggles of the time (Stafford 184). Edward Villiers, for instance, must take a place in a boarding house and ultimately go to debtor's prison because of the financial mistakes of his father, and Shelley draws attention to the idea that everyone else "was in debt, far beyond his power of immediate payment. He followed the universal example, and suffered no inconvenience, while his wants were obligingly supplied by the fashionable tradesmen. He regarded the period of his coming of age as a time when he should become disembarrassed, and enter upon life with ample means, and still more brilliant prospects" (219). Certainly, financial

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struggles were something that Shelley herself as well as many of her contemporaries struggled with (Stafford 184).

The Last Man, finally, takes place in the late twenty-first century, with the plague first appearing in 2092 (175, 195) and the novel ending around 2100.[9] The frame narrative is established by an external narrator who does not return at the end of the novel but merely indicates that he or she was visiting Naples in December 1818 and found, along with a companion, the story of the last man scribed upon Sibylline leaves in various languages (5). Through this narrative provided as prophecy about the end of the world, Shelley creates a truly apocalyptic novel: The *OED* defines "apocalypse" as "[a]ny revelation or disclosure" (def. 2) and "a disaster resulting in drastic, irreversible damage to human society or the environment, esp. on a global scale" (draft addition b.). Most particularly, Shelley's apocalypse demonstrates the potential outcome of not acting responsibly towards others. *The Last Man* places under a microscope the human instinct to either band together or separate in times of trouble. Because the plague is such a wide-scale disaster, the effects of the two approaches are highlighted, showing that working together and supporting each other allows people to better tolerate catastrophic situations, as I demonstrated earlier in this chapter.

The Last Man establishes time setting through occasional direct reminders of the year. Modern readers expect for a futuristic novel to contain references to scientific advancement, but Shelley's novel, written before this convention had become popular, offers none of that. Instead, she focuses on demonstrating that people's ideologies are the same as they are in their own time. The Countess, for instance, is set on keeping class separation while many others disregard class. Her son, Adrian, for example, takes in Lionel and teaches him philosophy and literature rather than forcing him to remain a shepherd his entire life. The Countess's insistence on class

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[9] The last date mentioned is December 2097 (351), and the novel continues for at least a year afterwards.

separation allows readers to see the negative effects of holding onto old class divisions when there are more important matters at hand,[10] for the Countess ultimately learns that her refusal to acknowledge Lionel prevented her from being with her family. Readers can thus see their own potential future if they continue to put more faith in class divisions than in caring for one another.

Valperga and Tyranny

Throughout *Valperga*, Shelley establishes the past setting and establishes parallels between the society depicted and her own, thereby commenting on expectations for leaders. *Valperga* is a strong example of what can happen when the ruling class acts selfishly, demonstrating how a tyrant can destroy a country, his own love life, and ultimately himself. Castruccio Castracani dei Antelminelli, prince of Lucca and leader of the Ghibelines, never denies his love for Euthanasia, a Guelph, Countess and mistress of the castle Valperga. However, his quest for power causes him to lose Euthanasia's love. Finally, his decision to exile Euthanasia demonstrates his devotion to his own agenda over the feelings of anyone else. He cannot give up his power in order to maintain her love, and her pride cannot allow her to stay and live in a country that is run in a way discordant with her beliefs.

While Castruccio's descent into tyranny is depicted for the readers, we are early on presented with a tyrant of lesser power in order to understand what tyranny is. Furthermore, Castruccio's detestation of the villainy of this tyrant establishes that Castruccio once had a stronger sense of moral judgment, demonstrating that he has fallen. The tyrant presented near the beginning of the novel is Benedetto Pepi. In an early discussion with Castruccio, Pepi argues, "'My friend, the world, trust me, will never go well, until the rich rule, and the vulgar

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[10] I do not think that this critique of the Countess is a sign that Shelley does not believe in some form of class differentiation. Lionel and Idris prove that they have the intellectual and sensibility of the upper and titled class characters.

sink to their right station as slaves of the soil'" (60), and "Castruccio could not help being amused by the strange policy and earnest manners of" Pepi (61). Additionally, Castruccio establishes himself as initially being uncorrupt by reacting in horror to Pepi's usurious deeds. When Castruccio realizes how Pepi made his fortune, he calls the older man a "vile Jew," "a bloodsucker," and "a vile toad or rank mushroom" (184). For Castruccio, lies and deceit are not a way to gain rank or money. He earns his rank through military action; however, he still becomes just as much a tyrant as Pepi. Notably, the novel does not pass negative judgment on having a person of wealth or status ruling over others. Euthanasia demonstrates throughout that she is a strong, compassionate leader. Her subjects and servants willingly fight and die to protect her. Bindo in particular demonstrates the devotion the people of Valperga have for the Countess. Although he was "a man who, from his diminutive stature, and strange dress, might have been taken for the buffoon or dwarf so common at the courts of princes in those days" (116), Bindo insists on being among those who will fight to protect Valperga against Castruccio's Ghibeline troops (245). Euthanasia's desire for him not to fight, her desire to protect the lives of her subjects, and her devotion to what she considers right over her love for Castruccio all establish her as a strong leader, deserving of her position "above" her subjects. Pepi's beliefs, however, reveal him to be undeserving of such a position. His desire to rule over people as slaves rather than as subjects for whom he is responsible establishes him as tyrannical and villainous.

In depicting tyranny, Shelley is able to draw parallels between the characters of the novel and contemporary Europeans, a concept that Carson defines quite well. He "argue[s] that *Valperga* is a liberal work, that Mary Shelley would have associated early-fourteenth-century Florence with republicanism rather than aristocracy (and rightly so), and that at times she shows substantial sympathy for both the people and popular culture" (168). He then "define[s]

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Shelley's mode of historical fiction in *Valperga*, showing how she values history for its potential to expand the narrow perspective of individuals caught in the present moment and how she places sentiments above political events in her representation of the past" (168) and "show[s] that Shelley, recognizing the threat of dehumanization posed by early-nineteenth-century industrial and state institutions, seeks to represent and analyze the fourteenth-century forces that similarly threatened autonomy and humane sentiments, even while she suggests that love and compassion might create superior specimens of humanity" (168).

Furthermore, according to Curran,

> to Mary Shelley . . . , the Ghibellines represented an oppressive centralized authority exerted over all of Europe and embodied in a single man. When Mary Shelley was writing, one such figure had just been overthrown and sent into exile – Napoleon Bonaparte – and another, the Hapsburg Emperor of Austria, had succeeded to Napoleon's dominion over Italy, imposing an even stricter authoritarianism. However the policies of the dictator altered, the general effect for those living under his hegemony was still tyranny. The alternative, from Mary Shelley's perspective, was hardly an embrace of theocracy. Rather, it was to see in those local medieval city-states such as Florence the beginnings of an essentially republican vision of civic polity that pointed the way for a new political order in post-Napoleonic Europe. (108-109)

With Castruccio representing the tyrannical leaders and Euthanasia representing what leaders should be, Shelley allows her readers to understand her idea of how the government should be responsible for its citizens.

And yet Shelley allows her readers to separate themselves from the narrative by demonstrating that it takes place in another time and place. However, the details she includes allow them to *connect to* that other time and place to experience the historical moment. In addition to integrating apt and specific historical details (Curran 105-106), Shelley establishes the location of Italy through constant references to weather, particularly in the significance of wind.

Valperga and Weather

Valperga presents readers with many references to the power of nature, particularly the weather, which plays a significant role in plot development and place setting. Shelley emphasizes the importance of wind to the Italian setting by providing a footnote indicating that "The *Tramontano* is the north wind; the *Scirocco* the south-west; and the *Libeccio* the south-east" (85 n. 1). *A Dictionary of Ecology* more specifically explains these three types of wind. "Tramontano" is "[a] local wind in the Mediterranean region, which brings dry, cold conditions from the north across the mountains;" "Scirocco" is "[a] regional name for one of the types of warm winds from the south which occur around the Mediterranean. It moves ahead of an eastward travelling depression and brings hot, dry, dusty conditions to Algeria and the Levant. To the north, where its humidity increases rapidly as it crosses the sea, it brings moist air to the coast of Europe;" and "Libeccio" is "[a] local south-westerly wind which brings stormy conditions, especially in winter, to the central Mediterranean." Furthermore, all three types of wind are specific to the Mediterranean region, thus making these precise types significant to establishing the Italian setting of the novel and adding another detail that allows Shelley's readers to be there on the spot with her, Euthanasia, and Castruccio. The Libeccio in particular plays a crucial part throughout the novel, and the Scirocco kills Euthanasia at the end.

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The intense winds are something that the characters must be protected from. Snow shields the mountains around Valperga from the *tramontano* (85), and Valperga itself protects from the icy chill; as Castruccio enters the castle while still friends with Euthanasia, "A large fireplace, now illumined by a blazing fire, gave an air of cheerfulness to the hall; several serving-men and two large and beautiful dogs, were cowering round the fire, as a cold January blast rushed through the opposite door, through which Castruccio passed into an inner, open court of the castle" (86-7).

The wind also demonstrates the absence or presence of love or passion. After telling Castruccio that she cannot be with him, Euthanasia reflects:

> [I]n the silence of night and of solitude, she consulted her own heart, she found that love had quenched there every other feeling and not to love was to her to die. She looked on the quiet earth, where the trees slept in the windless air, and the only sound was the voice of an owl, whose shriek now and then with monotonous and unpleasing sound awoke the silence, and gave a melancholy life to what else were dead. (207)

In this passage, the absence of wind draws attention to the absence of love. The stillness, while peaceful in a way, is also dull. Without the wind to instill activity into the trees, there is little movement or sound.

The presence of a light wind, on the other hand, can demonstrate peacefulness and fill in the gap the absence of love leaves:

> [T]o feel the western breeze steal across her cheek, like words of love from one most dear; to see the first star of evening penetrate from out the glowing western firmament, and whisper the secret of distant worlds to us in our narrow prison; to

behold the heaven-pointing cypress with unbent spire sleep in the stirless air;

these were sights and feelings which softened and exalted [Euthanasia's]

thoughts; she felt as if she were a part of the great whole; she felt bound in amity

to all. (207)

In this scene, nature, including the wind, serves as a companion to Euthanasia, helping to remind

her that love exists. She feels comforted by the "words of love" from the wind and feels

connected to everything around her. This connection she establishes with nature helps her to

then maintain the connection to her country that she nearly lost when grieving her lost love.

The wind also serves as a representation of the lost connection between Castruccio and

Euthanasia. The pair had once carved their names in a tree in Lucca (237), making promises, but

those "vows [were] now broken, scattered to the winds" (238). Although the metaphor of things

being scattered in the wind is an often-used comparison, here it provides further distinction in its

foreshadowing of future events. Because the wind has much physical power throughout the

novel, here it metaphorically has the power to dissolve promises. Furthermore, when the strong

winds of the storm destroy Euthanasia's ship to Sicily, their vows will be eternally broken

through her death.

Ultimately, the Libeccio serves as a tyrant and the Scirocco serves as a means of

eradicating Euthanasia. Many times in the novel, the wind impacts the human and nonhuman.

As demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, the wind either causes a chill that must be combated

or creates a sense of peace and unity. At the end of the summer of 1310, however, the trees

had already begun to obey the command of their ruler: the delicate chestnut

woods, which last dare encounter the blasts of spring, whose tender leaves do not

expand until they may become a shelter to the swallow, and which first hear the

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voice of the tyrant Libeccio, as he comes all conquering from the west, had already changed their hues. . . . The evening was hot; for the Libeccio, although it shuts out the sun with clouds, yet brings a close and heavy air, that warms, while it oppresses. (236)

While in many passages, various aspects of nature work together, this passage establishes the Libeccio as more powerful than the trees, controls the clouds, and makes miserable the living creatures who suffer from the heat. The personification of the Libeccio highlights the comparison between it and a human tyrant, commanding and causing destruction with no regard for what or whom it harms.

Furthermore, the Libeccio increases Beatrice's fears and provides a sufficient metaphor for her feelings, allowing Euthanasia as listener and we as readers to imaginatively recreate the moment of Beatrice's horrors. When Euthanasia visits her in her prison at the Inquisition, Beatrice begs her not leave, crying, "it is quite dark; hark to the splashing water, and the howling of the Libeccio; I had forgotten all that; and now they come upon me with tenfold horror[!]" (274). Similarly, when Beatrice is temporarily safe in the palace at Lucca, she laments, "Alas! my mind is as the waters, now lashed into waves by the winds of circumstance, now coldly dark under a lowering heaven, but never smiled upon by the life-given sun. And this perishable frame is to my soul as a weak, tempest-beaten promontory, against which the Libeccio impels the undermining sea" (307-08). In this second passage, Beatrice compares her mind to water that could have been peaceful and strong on its own but is violent instead, and her soul, which could have been firm, is beaten by other outside forces. The physical strength of the Libeccio allows Beatrice to draw an appropriate metaphor from it. Because the Italian countryside has seen the effects of the Libeccio, any Italian can understand the inner tumult she describes.

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Ultimately a storm at sea, not Castruccio, destroys Euthanasia. Castruccio's gradual transformation from innocent boy to powerful tyrant results in Euthanasia giving up on him as a lover. As children, they are intimate friends, and in their early adulthood, they are lovers. However, Euthanasia vows not to be a traitor to Florence, even for love (198), and even though Castruccio continues to love Euthanasia, she refuses him on account of her devotion to her country and peace. Reminders of Euthanasia's choice of country and peace over romantic love are peppered throughout Volumes II and III: "But more than I love Florence, or myself, or you, Castruccio, do I love peace" (205), Euthanasia claims shortly after her first vow to be loyal to Florence. When Castruccio is involved in a plot to kill Robert, King of Naples, in the winter of 1810, Euthanasia "felt a just triumph, that she had overcome her inclinations, and was not the bride of a suborner and a murderer" (222). After the fall of Valperga, the narrator informs us that Castruccio "had in truth become a tyrant" (267), but even though Castruccio becomes more and more tyrannical, he never gives up his love for Euthanasia. Castruccio begs for Euthanasia's love even as he plans to attack her castle (261). While Euthanasia is strong enough to give up Castruccio in order to remain loyal to Florence, Castruccio cannot give up either Euthanasia or Lucca. Even as he leads her to the ship that will take her to her final destination, he implores her, "[R]emember one with whom you have passed your happiest days" (373). While others such as Vanni and Mordecastelli would have Castruccio destroy Euthanasia so that he could gain full power through eliminating all of the traitors (363-64)[11], she is the one thing that he cannot give up.

And so the weather must complete the task that Castruccio cannot. A storm, powered by the Scirocco, causes Euthanasia's death, and Shelley's description of the storm allows the reader to experience that historical moment as someone watching from the shore:

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[11] Euthanasia had, in fact, refused to be a part of the conspiracy to kill Castruccio.

> At sunset that day a fierce scirocco rose, accompanied by thunder and lightning, such as is seldom seen during the winter season. Presently they saw huge, dark columns, descending from heaven, and meeting the sea, which boiled beneath; they were borne on by the storm, and scattered by the wind. The rain came down in sheets; and the hail clattered, as it fell to its grave in the ocean;—the ocean was lashed into such waves, that, many miles inland, during the pauses of the wind, the hoarse and constant murmurs of the far-off sea made the well-housed landsman mutter one more prayer for those exposed to its fury. (376)

Perhaps what is most significant about these winds is that they demonstrate the lack of control humans have over many of the elements that are capable of destroying them. Therefore, humans need to be careful to act compassionately when approaching situations that they *can* control. The government should do its part to protect its citizens from the cold or from starvation. With elements of nature capable of acting as enemies, a country cannot afford for its government to add to the tyranny.

Lodore **and Weather**

While *Valperga* highlights the weather's destructive power, nature brings together and separates characters in *Lodore*. One of the pivotal moments of the novel is the scene in which Lord Lodore meets Cornelia Santerre, whom he later marries. This meeting is enabled by a storm:

> The valley, through which his path wound, was narrow, and the gathering clouds over heard made it dark as night; the lightning flashed with peculiar brightness; and the thunder, loud and bellowing, was reechoed by the hills, and reverberated along the sky in terrific pealings. It was more like a continental storm than any

which Lodore had witnessed in England, and imparted to him a sensation of
thrilling pleasure; till, as the rain came down in torrents, he began to think of
seeking some shelter, at least for his horse. Looking round for this, he all at once
perceived a vision of white muslin beneath a ledge of rock, which could but half
protect the gentle wearer: frightened she was, too, as a slight shriek testified,
when a bright flash, succeeded instantaneously by a loud peal of thunder, bespoke
the presence of something like danger. (92-93)

Despite his own danger and unfamiliarity with the region, Lodore becomes the protector of this
beautiful angel, who turns out to be Cornelia. Lodore subsequently becomes friendly with
Cornelia and her mother, Lady Santerre, "and his imagination speedily painted both in the most
attractive colours. Here was the very being his heart had pined for – a girl radiant in innocence
and youth, the nursling, so he fancied, of mountains, waterfalls, and solitude; yet endowed with
all the softness and refinement of civilized society" (95-96). Yet Cornelia and Lady Santerre
later prove to be more concerned with holding an active role in high society than Lodore first
imagines them to be. Cornelia follows her mother's guidance rather than looking to her husband;
from her mother, she learned to value society, and "[t]he system of society tended to increase
their mutual estrangement. She embarked at once on the stream of fashion; and her whole time
was given up to the engagements and amusements that flowed in on her on all sides" (103).
Cornelia's desire to enjoy society contributes to their ultimate separation when Lodore tells her
they must leave everything because he has insulted a gentleman and must either fight or flee, and
she determines to stay in England (114, 116, 127, 129).[12]

Shelley also establishes the weather in America to be harsher than that of England, thus
depicting Illinois as a place for those who have never been there. As Ethel and Villiers walk

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[12] Cornelia's refusal to leave her mother is another major reason she does not follow Lodore.

over Blackfriars Bridge and feel the cold blasts from "the German Ocean," Ethel reminds

Villiers "that, bred in America, an English winter was but a faint reflex of what she had

encountered there" (325), thereby describing the weather patterns and extremities of the area for

readers who have not been to America, particularly Illinois.

Lodore also comments on population. Sharon Twigg points out that Shelley read Thomas

Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* shortly before completing *Valperga* in the

early 1820s (Twigg 501), so it is certainly plausible for her to still be impacted by the piece or

the ideologies of Malthus being discussed at the time. While Shelley may not necessarily have

intended to make any social commentary upon the idea that the world has become

overpopulated, that suggestion can be seen through the fact that several characters throughout the

novel attempt to rely on nature to protect them from society but ultimately have their retreats

intruded upon. Shelley thus comments that while people should not place position in society and

monetary gain above all else, they cannot and perhaps should not attempt to separate themselves

completely from society. Lord Lodore attempts to flee society by settling with Ethel in the

Illinois in America, "in the furthest wilds of an almost untenanted portion of the globe" (61).

Although he interacts with other people, he formed "an insurmountable barrier between him and

the other inhabitants of the colony" (55), but a money-eager suitor shows him that his safe place

is not as safe as he believed. To a twenty-first century American audience, Lodore's expectation

to be able to seclude himself from society serves as a reminder that such seclusion was once

possible. In a world in which we can isolate ourselves behind closed doors and interact solely

through computers and cell phones but cannot seclude ourselves from people through

withdrawing into nature, Shelley offers an understanding of the types of seclusion people chose

in the nineteenth century and earlier when there were relatively uninhabited areas of America.

Bill McKibben's 1989 study *The End of Nature* indicates a similar idea: that there is no place to experience "unaltered" nature (what many think of when they think of "nature") because human impact on the environment is so widespread (55, 58). Thus, 150 years before McKibben's study, Shelley posits a similar idea: There is nowhere that people can escape human influence.

Shelley's descriptions of the people and surroundings also show America as a place for readers who have never been there. For instance, the narrator indicates that when Fitzhenry[13] and Ethel settle in the Illinois, "the Americans were scarcely to be found. Most of the inhabitants were emigrants from Scotland, a peaceable, hard-working population" (64). While he was friendly with his neighbors, he did not find a true companion among them

> tempered like him, like him nursed in the delicacies and fastidiousness of the societies of the old world; - though he, a china vase, dreaded too near a collision with the brazen ones around; yet, though he could not give his confidence, or unburthen the treasure of his soul, he could approve of, and even feel affection for several among them. Personal courage, honesty, and frankness, were to be found among the men; simplicity and kindness among the women. (59)

When Fitzhenry first meets Whitelock, the man who later attempts to seduce Ethel, Fitzhenry is "excessively annoyed. There was an innate vulgarity in his visitant, and an unlicensed familiarity that jarred painfully with the refined habits of his sensitive nature. Still, in America he had been forced to tolerate even worse than this, and he bore Whitelock's intrusions as well as he could" (71-72). Shelley thus establishes the character of Americans overall to be kind but unsophisticated while there are also a few utterly disorderly citizens.

Multiple times throughout the narrative Shelley refers to Elizabeth Fitzhenry's "beloved seclusion at Longfield" (420). Given the lack of isolation America ultimately afforded her

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[13] Shelley refers to Lodore as Fitzhenry while he is America. I will do the same here.

brother, it may not be surprising that it is to this place that Cornelia determines to make her temporary home, thus invading Mrs. Elizabeth's seclusion. Although she settles there in order to hopefully hear word of her daughter on occasion, Cornelia eventually discovers she can be complacent in a place away from high society. To Elizabeth, she claims,

> "I have planted a great many flowers, and they will soon come up. Do you not know how pleasant it is to watch the shrubs we plant, and water, and rear ourselves? – to see the little green shoots peep out, and the leaves unfold, and then the flower blossom and expand, diffusing its delicious odour around, - all, as it were, created by oneself, by one's own nursing, out of a bit of stick or an ugly bulb? This place is very pretty, I assure you: when the leaves are on the trees they make a bower, and the grove behind the house is shady, and leads to lanes and fields more beautiful than any I ever saw. I have loitered for hours in this garden, and been quite happy." (433)

Thus we see that although seclusion from society is practically impossible, removal from some aspects of society can open characters' eyes to other things in life that have equal or greater benefits.

The Last Man

Throughout *Vaplerga* and *Lodore*, Shelley uses nature to construct place; in *The Last Man*, however, Shelley uses nature to show the destruction of places. In *Valperga* the weather, particularly the wind, is controlling, and *Lodore,* based loosely on William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, contains a pivotal scene in which a storm creates a turning point in the plot. In *The Last Man*, Shelley uses the apocalyptic mode to demonstrate that nature can bring down everything—physical and non-physical—that man worked to create. The monuments in Venice,

for instance, are rendered hideous by the overflowing waters of the Grand Canal. Lionel chronicles:

> The tide ebbed sullenly from out the broken portals and violated halls of Venice: sea-weed and sea monsters were left on the blackened marble, while the salt ooze defaced the matchless works of art that adorned their walls, and the sea-gull flew out from the shattered window. In the midst of this appalling ruin of the monuments of man's power, nature asserted her ascendancy, and shone more beauteous from the contrast. (438-39)

This scene demonstrates the transience of human power and the objects it creates. However, what those objects represent stays with Lionel, giving that representative power a lasting supernatural existence as long as Lionel remains alive. For instance, as he stands amongst the remains of the Forum in Rome, he feels a connection to all of the great people who had created the awe-inspiring qualities that Rome represents (461-63). Because Lionel is able to re-create the historical moment of Rome's existence, the moment and the place still exist. He narrates, "I . . . could almost hear the shouts of the Roman throng, and was hustled by countless multitudes, now beheld the desert ruins of Rome sleeping under its own blue sky; the shadows lay tranquilly on the ground; sheep were grazing untended on the Palatine, and a buffalo stalked down the Sacred Way that led to the Capitol" (463). Lionel simultaneously imagines what Rome had once been and describes what it is now. He experiences both the past and the present, providing a way for Rome's lost greatness to still exist while also his experience of *his* Rome. He continues to lament, "I was alone in the Forum; alone in Rome; alone in the world. . . . The generations I had conjured up in my fancy, contrasted more strongly with the end of all—the single point in which, as a pyramid, the mighty fabric of society had ended, while I, on the giddy height, saw vacant

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space around me" (463). Lionel thereby demonstrates his awareness that Rome exists only within him, thus driving him to write his story. The novel ends with Lionel's decision to leave a record of his existence so that if anyone ever finds his book, his world can continue to exist.

Allen Pred looks at the historical and social elements that help construct place, indicating that leaders decide where a building will be erected as well as who will build it (283). Furthermore, because that project is taking place at that particular spot, nothing else can go in that spot, and none of the efforts being put forth for that project can be used elsewhere (283). Pred's theories further highlight the significance of this Roman scene: kings, senators, emperors, or other leaders ordered the construction of the buildings that make up the Forum, and laborers across centuries did the manual toil. Centuries before Lionel stands there, others have decided that this place will hold meaning, and people afterward continued to ascribe meaning to it through making it the center of political and other events.[14]

The plague further serves as a force of nature that humans cannot successfully fight. Like the winds in *Valperga*, the plague acts as an enemy to which humans should not add their own tyranny and destruction. The novel mentions other disasters that earth is capable of conjuring: earthquake, storm, pestilence, famine, tornado, and simoom[15] (232-33). The plague joins with these other natural disasters to eradicate the entire world population. However, while earthquakes, storms, and other disasters aid in the destruction of the human race, the plague and its immediate effects do the most destruction. Disease kills many, and the drive to survive kills many more. Emigrants from America to Ireland and Ireland to England are representative of the actions that were likely taking place across the world. Humans attempt to flee the plague,

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[14] In Chapter Two, I referenced Tim Cresswell, who defines place as a space that has been given meaning (10). By continuing to hold significant events at the Forum, the Romans verified the significance of this particular place.
[15] The OED defines "simoom" as "A hot, dry, suffocating sand-wind which sweeps across the African and Asiatic deserts at intervals during the spring and summer."

thinking they can survive; they act as locusts, consuming all the resources in one area and then moving to the next (298). Eventually, groups come into contact with each other, each trying to protect or achieve resources, escape the plague, or prevent the plague from descending upon them. Thus, quickly-formed armies attack each other. Lionel describes one such troop:

> [W]e heard their disorderly clamour, the barbarian shouts, the untimed step of thousands coming on in disarray. . . . The first ranks had muskets; some were mounted, but their arms were such as they had seized during their advance, their horses those they had taken from the peasantry; there was no uniformity, and little obedience, but their shouts and wild gestures showed the untamed spirit that inspired them. (300)

Shelley thus emphasizes the effects of the plague on human interactions, successfully highlighting what happens if humans add to the destruction around them rather than rising above it and attempting to help each other. The human desire for preservation of life leads to barbaric actions. Shelley draws out the barbarity through her description of the makeshift army, referring to them as "disorderly," "barbarian," not uniform or obedient, and having an "untamed spirit." Adrian intervenes when the troops attack each other, but not before "about fifty men lay on the ground dying or dead" (301), and reminds the men that the plague is destroying enough lives and that they should not add to the destruction, by saying "You are dear to us, because you wear the frail shape of humanity[.] . . . Shall man be the enemy of man, while plague, the foe to all, even now is above us, triumphing in our butchery, more cruel than her own?" (302). Earlier in this chapter, I argued that those characters who form sympathetic communities are able to endure their sufferings more easily than those who do not support each other. These battles highlight

another aspect of that lack of support. Not only are these men not lightening each others' loads by helping them, they are making the troubles worse for all through creating violence.

The plague's effects also destroy the non-physical ideas that represent human capacity for knowledge and power. Lionel laments their passing by saying goodbye to them at length:

> Farewell to the patriotic scene, to the love of liberty and well earned need of virtuous aspiration!—farewell to crowded senate, vocal with the councils of the wise, whose laws were keener than the sword blade tempered at Damascus!—farewell to kingly pomp and warlike pageantry; the crowns are in the dust, and the wearers are in their graves!—farewell to the desire of rule, and the hope of victory; to high vaulting ambition, to the appetite for praise, and the craving for the suffrage of their fellows! (320-21)

This passage highlights the transience of human impact, including ideas we tend to believe will last for a long time. However, with Lionel's written narrative, remnants of these aspects remain; it is only through the written word that these ideas can echo into the future.

Similarly, in *The Last Man*, a storm destroys Adrian and Clara, Lionel's last human companions. Unlike in *Valperga*, where the storm is described as seen from shore, in *The Last Man*, we view the storm through Lionel's eyes. Details of the group's struggle to stay afloat in the midst of the storm demonstrate the trio's inferiority to nature. Lionel describes the beginning of the storm thus: "In the inky east two vast clouds, sailing contrary ways, met; the lighting leapt forth, and the hoarse thunder muttered. Again in the south, the clouds replied, and the forked stream of fire running along the black sky, shewed us the appalling piles of clouds, now met and obliterated by the heaving waves" (441). They attempt to keep their boat afloat in the storm; their acts show their bravery and each person's willingness to sacrifice him or herself so that the

others could live on. In the dark, Lionel cannot see all; instead, he presents snippets of the

events: "Adrian exclaimed that the rudder was gone;—'We are lost,' cried Clara, 'Save

yourselves—O save yourselves!' The lightning shewed me the poor girl half buried in the water

at the bottom of the boat; as she was sinking in it Adrian caught her up, and sustained her in his

arms" (444). This perspective puts readers on the boat with Lionel and highlights the physical

and emotional struggle that Lionel, Adrian, and Clara have. While the boat's struggle against

Valperga's ending storm is a complete mystery, the end result demonstrated by a description of a

wrecked vessel included "a white silk handkerchief, such a one as had bound the tresses of

Euthanasia the night that she had embarked, and in its knot were a few golden hairs" (376).

What the two stories have in common, however, is that there is no undeniable physical evidence

of the characters' deaths, leaving us with that glimmer of hope that the characters did survive

their storms and were able to continue living. We believe along with Lionel "that [he] might find

one of [his] beloved companions cast like [him], half alive, on the beach" (*TLM* 445). Although

the lack of physical body as proof of death allows for the characters to have a lasting,

supernatural existence, both novels indicate that nature is stronger than humankind. *Valperga*'s

narrator informs us that Euthanasia "was never heard of more; even her name perished. She

slept in the oozy cavern of the ocean; the sea-weed was tangled with her shining hair; and the

spirits of the deep wondered that the earth had trusted so lovely a creature to the barren bosom of

the sea" (376). The reference to Euthanasia lying with the "spirits of the deep" implies an after-

death existence for Euthanasia. While the spirits of the deep in *Valperga* do not understand why

they were given Euthanasia, the ocean steals Adrian and Clara in *The Last Man*. "The ocean has

robbed me of them—stolen their hearts of love from their breasts, and given over to corruption

what was dearer to me than light, or life, or hope," Lionel narrates (451). These lines

demonstrate Lionel's loss and that the power of the ocean can counteract all of humankind's greatest attempts to thwart it.

Truly understanding a time or place one has never been is nearly impossible, but through detailed descriptions of times and places, Shelley allows her readers to experience those places empathically. Through paying particular attention to weather, Shelley enables her readers to take general concepts they are familiar with and translate them into the narratives. Furthermore, invoking references to weather patterns that are special to given areas strengthens the connections that readers can make to those areas. Finally, demonstrating the ways in which those who form sympathetic communities to endure hardships suffer less, Shelley invites her readers to do likewise; instead of creating larger rifts following wars, people should band together and support one another to recover from such tragedies.

Conclusion

[T]here is not an atom of life in this all-peopled world that does not suffer pain; we
destroy animals;—look at your own dress, which a myriad of living creatures wove and
then died; those sables;—a thousand hearts once beat beneath those skins, quenched in
the agonies of death to furnish that cloak. Yet why not? While they lived, those
miserable hearts beat under the influence of fear, cold and famine. Oh! better to die, than
to suffer! The whale in the great ocean destroys nations of fish, but thousands live on
him and torment him. Destruction is the watchword of the world; the death by which it
lives, the despair by which it hopes: oh, surely a good being created all this! (Mary
Shelley, *Valperga* 282).

The idea presented in this study, that a sensitivity to the idea that the human and

nonhuman are intimately connected and that creating reciprocal relationships among all beings is

important to living a compassionate and selfless life, is not a unique one. Many religions and

philosophical ideologies embrace the idea of community and mutual support. The Christian

Bible touts practices such as "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men,

especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6.10), and "From each according to

his abilities, to each according to his needs" is a major tenet of Marxism. Many scholars agree

that Mary Shelley cared more about the ways in which people treated each other than she cared

about politics. My reading of Ann Radcliffe and Shelley, however, is unique because it

combines Ecocriticism with this call for social and personal reform. Furthermore, my reading

brings together *Valperga* and *Lodore* with Shelley's more commonly-studied works,

Frankenstein and *The Last Man*.

My first chapter argued that Radcliffe finds patriarchal and hierarchical systems to be

acceptable provided the leaders of the systems fulfill their responsibilities towards those in their

care, identifying and providing for their needs. Furthermore, responsible patriarchs can be

identified through their ability to perceive that a form of spiritual supernatural is possible; those with such a heightened awareness understand that there is more to other humans and nonhumans than what others may see, and this awareness allows them to treat others with a form of compassion appropriate to their responsibilities. Finally, Radcliffe's explained supernatural occupies a liminal place between nature and culture because it is something that is beyond nature; it is beyond full human comprehension, and only those who are aware of its intricacies can be responsible patriarchs. Thus those with heightened awareness understand the connections between the human and the nonhuman; furthermore, they can apply their understanding of the value of all human life and their responsibility for it to their relationships with nonhuman life.

Chapter Two demonstrates that this understanding of the individual's responsibility for the nonhuman can apply to landscape in particular and that those who are willing to form a reciprocal relationship with the landscape can draw comfort from the landscape. Moreover, female characters are able to assert some control as they draw comfort from the landscapes and through their ability to write about nature and landscape. While this culturalization does involve exerting human authority over the nonhuman, it is done with the intent to better understand the landscapes they observe. Furthermore, through this act of culturalization, the female characters are able to construct "place," thus allowing landscapes a greater role within the stories. I assert that landscapes occupy a role between "space" and "place" given their significant role in Radcliffe's novels.

Chapter Three turns to Mary Shelley, whose novels advocate communities that are characterized by compassion and acceptance. Donna Haraway's concept of the contact zone provides a means of understanding that there is a place where the human and nonhuman can form ways to communicate with each other and form reciprocal relationships, thus creating

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communities that are open to all who are willing to contribute responsibly. In *Frankenstein*,

communities that are otherwise welcoming deny the creature the opportunity to form such a

relationship while in *The Last Man*, the central community that Lionel, Adrian, Idris, and Clara

form demonstrates the type of all-welcoming community that people should create. In particular,

Lionel's ability to create a contact zone demonstrates the possibility that beneficial reciprocal

relationships that cross species can thrive.

Chapter Four extends the idea of creating such communities by demonstrating that they

allow for those involved to endure trials that would otherwise be unbearable. While no one can

avoid troubles, sympathetic communities allow the members to benefit from others' support. I

then posit that Shelley's settings of multiple times and places reveal the universality of needing

to form such connections. Shelley uses nature, particularly weather, to allow her readers to

connect to the locales and thus understand their own connections with people from different

places.

I opened my dissertation with a line from Timothy Morton's *Hyperobjects*: "It is not

possible for me not to anthropomorphize, since I am a human" (23), identifying it as the crux of

ecocritical studies. It is important for any ecocritic to understand that we are biologically

different from the nonhuman plants and animals we write about. In my view, it is also

significant to note, however, that if we write without acting on our words in some way or

another, then we have created a closed system that shuts out the very entities we seek to

understand. Not all branches of ecocriticism require any social action. Greg Garrard identifies

"cornucopianists" as those who do not see a threat to the environment (18). Other branches of

ecocriticism, such as social ecology and eco-Marxism are concerned with human-human

interactions rather than human-nonhuman relationships (Garrard 31). And others offer readings

that investigate the relationships between human and nonhuman and leave the study simply with a different or enhanced understanding of the relations without any call for action. Tim Cresswell's and Yi-Fu Tuan's examinations of place are good examples. Other studies, however, attempt to tie their literary or theoretical studies into environmental advocacy. For instance, Morton's *The Ecological Thought* invites non-academics to join in the ecological project, claiming, "We simply can't leave environmentalism to the anti-intellectualists" (13). The ecological thought, he asserts, "comes as close as possible to the strange stranger, generating care and concern for beings, no matter how uncertain we are of their identity, no matter how afraid we are of their existence" (18-19). I find it possible that literary studies can help us understand other beings and that the readers and writers of texts can become more developed individuals if they attempt to apply their understandings to the outside world. I would like to end my own project, then, with an invitation to apply this understanding of the interconnectedness of the human and nonhuman into the nonreading world through a discussion of the relationship between literature and empathy.

Some literary scholars ponder whether or not literature can make readers more empathic individuals. Ann Jurecic, whose article I referenced in my introduction, uses Tony Morrison's *Beloved* and Lucy Grealy's *Autobiography of a Face* in order to demonstrate that we should not value literature solely for its ability to create a feeling of empathy that we then turn into social action or reform; instead, we should value it "because the practice of reading literature slows thought down" and allows us "to dwell in uncertainty and to explore the difficulties of knowing, acknowledging, and responding to others" (24). Jurecic's predominant critique concerns critics of universities who voice that literature does not automatically induce a social change from students; Jurecic indicates, "Students are more likely to develop these traits [of being more

humane and thoughtful about others] if such behavior is a visible and pervasive practice in the institutions where they learn and work" (24). Furthermore, some texts are not written with the intent to create empathy; Grealy's memoir, for instance, intentionally denies its readers to connect with her (Jurecic 21). Although Radcliffe's novels are not written to produce an empathic experience, we can still draw ideas about consideration and compassion from them; Shelley's novels offer greater opportunities for this experience, and I offer here ways that we can use both of these novelists to create social change.

Radcliffe and Shelley make subtle remarks about the relationships between classes and between the human and the nonhuman; using the treatment of upper class women, lower class individuals, and nonhuman animals or beings, they demonstrate that people should pay attention to the needs of others and respond to those needs by taking responsibility for those for whom they can provide some sort of help. By showing that the upper class suffers from hierarchical tyranny, Radcliffe is able to show her readers of all classes that no one is unaffected by self-serving hierarchical figures and thus ask everyone to reflect on their own treatment of the middle and lower classes. Shelley, meanwhile, incorporates the lower or marginalized class in the form of characters such as Frankenstein's creature and Lionel Verney. The creature is treated as beneath even the peasant class because of his physical differences; Verney is treated as part of the peasant class while he is an animal-like shepherd, but once Adrian chooses to mentor him, he is allowed the same respect that the middle and upper classes receive (with the exception of Adrian and Clara's mother's treatment of him).

Drawing on the Romantic idea of recognizing nature's power and the feelings people get from viewing nature, Radcliffe and Shelley are able to draw parallels between the agency given to lower class individuals and the agency given to nature in order to invite their readers to

reassess the ways in which they treat people and their natural surroundings. This call for responsibility and responsiveness towards the physical planet and our various communities is applicable today as well. In my introduction I referred to Ashton Nichols's concept of urbanatural roosting, which asks people to consider their relationship with their surroundings and share a sense of responsibility with other humans and nonhumans (Nichols xvii). Looking at social and environmental relationships simultaneously would allow people to understand the reciprocal relationships to be formed within and across species. In the past, particularly in America, some individuals have displayed a mentality regarding our responsibility towards the planet of "Why should I care about the planet when I only have a few years to live here?" and "My ancestors got to pollute the planet; why should I have to take care of it?" The Global Footprint Network finds that from 1961 to 2010, the U.S. has consistently had an ecological footprint that is greater than its biocapacity. The United States refused to agree to the 1997 Kyoto Accord because it would require the country to reduce carbon emissions while exempting developing countries from the same standards. I argued in Chapter 1 that Radcliffe takes a Burkean approach to the hierarchical system, indicating that the system is acceptable if it conforms to an ideal of the upper class and men taking responsibility for those whom they are supposed to be in charge of. Applying this argument to our approach to the environment asks developed countries such as the United States to conform to agreements such as the Kyoto Accord. Even though such agreements may put more responsibility on the U.S., as a developed country, it is the U.S.'s responsibility to do its part to help developing countries and the world at large. While there are certainly a substantial number of environmentally-conscious people today, there are still many who place their personal convenience and desires over the greater good of the planet. Animal rights activists are also more common and vocal than ever before, but there

are still others who abuse animals, holding to the mentality that those creatures are there to serve them or exist for humans' entertainment and do not truly matter. A ubiquitous understanding that we have a responsibility for the environment and the nonhuman animal, a realization that the human is not above or below the nonhuman, and an ability to respond to the needs of these entities, is necessary.

This need for a stronger identification with the needs of others followed by a carrying out of our responsibility for them may seem easier to point out than to achieve. However, looking at Radcliffe's and Shelley's novels allows us to see a way to do so. To alleviate this gap between the human and the nonhuman, the privileged and the oppressed, the leaders of a country and the citizens, or the managers and workers of an organization, we must begin by creating a sensitivity to the needs and value of each member of the given system. Recognizing the value of the nonhuman, such as a respect for its power or what it can contribute within a given community, is the first step to creating a reciprocal relationship with it. Next, we need to create a "contact zone"—a place of communication with the nonhuman. Whether the breakdown in communication is caused by different languages or political or social values, a meeting-place is possible when all parties are willing to identify and work towards a common goal. Finally, it is important to create supportive communities within and across species. While these communities may originate in shared language or values, they also need to be open to allowing others in. While the De Lacey and Frankenstein families represent strong supportive communities that are willing to let in specific outsiders, their failure to welcome other willing members causes catastrophe; Lionel and his family, however, serve as a strong example of establishing a community that welcomes others into the support system.

My epigraph to this conclusion, spoken by Beatrice to Euthanasia in *Valperga*, draws attention to the fact that there are many who suffer because of the will of others along with the idea that it is better to die than to suffer beneath these destructive wills of others. Through greater attention to the ways in which we approach other beings, we can eliminate the negative effects our desires can place upon others. Although a complete eradication of social or political hierarchies may not be possible, particularly if another goal is to find a place of mutual understanding between conservative and liberal parties, a greater understanding of our responsibility to other humans and nonhumans around us is certainly a good step forward.

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