Re-presentation of Nature: Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley are two eminent writers of what we call the Gothic novels. It has been argued by many that Radcliffe's works provide a great deal of potential for modern feminist criticism.[1] Ellen Moers's claim, for example, that Radcliffe does not assign her heroines wholly intellectual nor the traditionally nurturant role but rather that of the traveling woman, "the woman, who moves, who acts, who copes with vicissitude and adventure" (126), explores the potential. On the other hand, Shelley's women, such as Caroline, Elizabeth and Justine in *Frankenstein*, and Perdita in *The Last Man* are all maternal figures who nurture or support ambitious male characters in these novels. Shelley's heroines, therefore, are more often than not criticised for their incapability in coping with their predicament. While a tragic fate awaits for Shelley's female "victims,"[2] the Radcliffe's stories, particularly in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*, resolve with heroines acquiring a "distinctly *beautiful* refuge"[3] from corruption and with marriage to feminised heroes: Emily St. Aubert with Valancourt and Ellena with Vivaldi. This "happy endings" however may not be the result of heroine's strategic effort but her luck in "stumbling on" a (surrogate) family who could solve the problem in place of her, as Durant has cogently pointed out (525). In finding ways to explore what we may call their "feminist" concerns, this paper does not simply focus on the plot which revolves around a heroine, but on the way

Radcliffe and Shelley resort to aesthetic discourse of landscape in disclosing and re-presenting the gendered imagery of Nature. Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Shelley's *Frankenstein* in which a large proportion is spared for describing picturesque scenery will be analysed for this purpose.

While the Gothic novel can be described as one symptom of a widespread shift away from neoclassical ideals of order and reason, toward romantic belief in emotion and imagination, as was argued by Robert Hume (282), it would be careless to characterise the works of both Radcliffe and Shelley as those which concert with that imagination. According to William Snyder's telling account of the representation of landscapes in the writings of Dorothy Wordsworth, Jane Austen and Anne Radcliffe, these women writers seem to have resisted the romantic notion of nature which is central to the Romantic imagination. The proclivity to associate Nature with fecundity or with maternal nurturer, and further its passivity and submissiveness may be axiomatic in the Romantic writings, and in her works, Radcliffe tries to evade reproducing Nature's imagery as milk of paradise. Mary Shelley's works in which a similar approach has been taken have this definitive aspect of resistance. Her representation of Nature in *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* offers substantial potential for the analysis of cultural assumption about gendered concepts and her effort to redefine it. My own reading is informed by Snyder's critical insights, and I intend to further develop his observation by comparing Radcliffe's text with that of a later Gothic novelist, Mary Shelley.

1. Representation of Nature

Both Radcliffe and Shelley negate the prevailing imagery of Nature. The former rejects Burke's theory that the sublime and

the beautiful are incongruous, by using the notion of 'picturesque,' whereby showing that barren and rugged scene can coexist with fecund and maternal plain in one piece of scenery. This subsequently loosens the rigid category of Burke's gender identification. Although Shelley's Nature remains maternal, she disillusions its romantic restorative function by showing its transitory nature.

Snyder has made an interesting observation on the merging of two concurrent phenomena taking place in the last three decades of the eighteenth century; the solidification of picturesque values, and the proliferation of women artists (143). He has made a persuasive case in analyzing three women writers' works including Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, and concluded that they gravitate towards the picturesque away from the demarcated aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful, whose implication is that the text tempers masculine sublimity of strength, boldness and rationality with feminine delicacy, softness and grace. Just as picturesque thinkers in the 1770s re-evaluated the strictly divided aesthetic categories of Burke, women writers later took issue with Romantic portrayal of both landscape and characters. Nature was to be presented not just as beautiful or maternal scenes but also rugged, broken, ambiguous, ruined or barren landscapes. My chief proposition here is that in deconstructing the binary opposition of landscapes whose consequence was their feminised or masculinised depiction, Radcliffe and Shelley similarly eschewed the portrayal of stereotypical character such as a beautiful "and" weak woman. Thus Snyder has presented us with a possibility of landscape description as manifesting a woman writer's "new reading" of the relation between nature and gender (144).

As Kiely points out, Burke was the first to admit that it was

inconceivable that the sublime and the beautiful could be found in the same place; "In short, the ideas of the sublime and the beautiful stand on foundations so different, that it is hard, I had almost said impossible, to think of reconciling them in the same subject, without considerably lessening the effect of the one or the other upon the passions."[4] The incongruity insisted on by Burke was the chief target for some picturesque theorists such as Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight. They elaborated the notion of nature by using the concept "picturesque." Picturesque can mean artificial alteration or "improvements" effected by human power, which was greatly encouraged by Humphry Repton,[5] but it can simply signify the "blending of opposing qualities [of the sublime and the beautiful] in landscape" (Snyder 144). Our notion of "picturesque" in this paper relies heavily on the latter, a more naturalistic style, put forward by Knight and Price. Knight's *Landscape*, a didactic poem, published early in 1794 is said to have been already well known by the time *Udolpho* came out, and it contains elaboration on trees and what they represent.[6]

The notion of the picturesque has to be adequately grasped in the contemporary sense, for there are often confusions concerning its definition. Jane Austen, for example, makes a caricature of Mr. Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, a literary text often associated with the picturesque movement. He is parodied as an enthusiast in "improving" scenery (Austen 167), but at the same time Austen seems to celebrate Fanny's quality that appreciates picturesque countryside (58). This therefore suggests Austen's critique of Repton's notion of picturesque but her willingness to accept a naturalistic theory of picturesque which admits rooms for "wild," untamed or unaltered nature that inspires aesthetic taste of the viewer.[7]

In this respect, Radcliffe's *Udolpho* takes the same approach

to picturesque as Austen; she rejects Repton's scheme, but does not wholly reject the theory. The sentiments on trees and architecture similar to those of the latter are given to St. Aubert, Emily's father. Chestnut trees together with oak and elm are highly honoured by Knight, and St. Aubert's endearing of the chestnut tree is contrasted with M. Quesnel's neglect of the tree and his perpetual concern with "improvement" (12) in his mansion acquired from St. Aubert.

The favorite scene for St. Aubert and Emily is typically picturesque. This picturesque landscape is introduced in the earlier part of the novel, and it is a scenery surrounding a little fishing-house, a pastoral scene where Emily's family communion took place when both St. Aubert and her mother were still alive:

> ... the margin of a rivulet that descended from the Pyrenees, and, after foaming among their rocks, wound its silent way beneath the shades it reflected. Above the woods, ... rose the lofty summits of the Pyrenees, which often burst boldly on the eye through the glades below. Sometimes the shattered face of a rock only was seen, crowned with wild shrubs; or waving ash. Emerging from the deep recesses of the woods, the glade opened to the distant landscape, where the rich pastures and vine-covered slopes of Gascony gradually declined to the plains ...." (6-7)

The scene containing a rivulet that winds down from the Alps and their "lofty summits" and bare rock crowned with "wild shrubs" all of which are counterbalanced with the distant fecund landscape is a distinctive feature of the picturesque. Emily and her parents wandered in this "pastoral landscapes" of Gascony and found in its "simplicity" the delight of seeing the scenes of simple nature and of "domestic virtue" (1). Emily's early experience with her parents in the picturesque

landscape symbolises her peaceful settlement of home which is to be contrasted later on with Montoni's pseudo-home of Udolpho from which the "sublime" scenes are viewed.

Radcliffe takes issue with Burke by presenting in her novel the scene in which these distinctive features of the sublime and beautiful are in perfect harmony. Just before St. Aubert, Emily and Valancourt proceed to Rousillon, they encounter a perfect picturesque scene which combines the sublimity of Alps with the "charming" and "lovely" country which contains "[g]roves of orange and lemon" with "their ripe fruit," and "extensive vineyards" (55). Radcliffe's tempering Nature's fecundity with its barren and sublime landscape is epitomised by her carefully arranged words, "a perfect picture of the lovely and the sublime, of 'beauty sleeping in the lap of horror'" (ibid.).

Nathan Drake has adequately called Radcliffe 'the Shakespeare of Romance Writers' in *Literary Hours*, illustrating the way she offsets the 'wild' or sublime virtues of Salvator Rosa[8] with 'the softer graces of a Claude.' '[M]any scenes truly terrific in their conception,' were said to be 'softened down, and the mind ... much relieved, by the intermixture of the whole never becomes too strong, never degenerates into horror, but pleasurable emotion is ever the predominating result' (359).

In *Frankenstein*, Elizabeth's love for nature resonates with Emily's disposition to take particular pleasure in observing the pastoral scenes of nature: "[Elizabeth] busied herself with following the aerial creations of the poets; and in the majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounds [her] Swiss home — the sublime shapes of the mountains; ... and the life and turbulence of our Alpine summers — she found ample scope for admiration and delight" (36). Madame Aubert's "unremitting

care" and "tenderness" (8) resemble the depiction of Elizabeth's mother, Caroline, and these characters represent what we may call domestic affection.[9]

The prominence of Elizabeth, the heroine of the novel, is considerably limited compared with Emily in *Udolpho*. She is, however, given voice in her letter to Victor Frankenstein, in which she talks of her beloved nature: "The blue lake, and snow-clad mountains — they never change; and I think our placid home and our contented hearts are regulated by the same immutable laws" (63), making it explicit the correspondence between placid nature and "the tranquillity of domestic affection" (54).

Victor's perception of nature is distinct from Elizabeth's, in that he perceives nature as something he can "penetrate into" (47) by scientific pursuit, which implication is not only antagonistic but also overtly sexual. Shelley's depiction of Victor as a failed scientist, his creature being a hideous monster, betrays the romantic notion that a scientist can reveal the secret beauty of nature. Victor's disappointment in seeing the horrid creature, which was never anticipated from "beautiful" features he had selected for the creation, erases Victor's "beauty of the dream" (56) and the monster's hideous appearance shows this betrayal.

Nature for Victor embodies "secrets" that is to be revealed by means of science but it also has a restorative function. Nature's function in relieving the sorrows and guilt of characters [10] is recurrently expressed particularly when Victor repents his creation of the destructive monster, because of its murder of William and Justine. Victor's spirit, for example, is "sensibly lightened as [he] plunged yet deeper in the ravine of Arve" (91). The landscape presents a picturesque mixture of a scene of "singular beauty" and sublime Alps "whose white and

shining pyramids and domes towered above all" (ibid.). During the travel with Henry, Victor notices a "picturesque" scene: We saw many ruined castles standing on the edges of precipices, surrounded by black woods, high and inaccessible. This part of the Rhine, indeed, presents a singularly *variegated* landscape" (italics added 150). Thus Shelley preferred not to make a clear demarcation between the sublime and the beautiful in depicting the scene of nature, which we may say is similar to Radcliffe's approach. Unlike Radcliffe, however, Shelley does not hesitate to name this restorative function "maternal", as Victor states "the very winds whispered in soothing accents, and maternal nature bade me weep no more" (92).

2. Taste and Virtue

One of the most noteworthy aspects in the way Radciffe and Shelley made use of an extended number of landscape descriptions is their interlocking relation with characters' moral principles. In both *Udolpho* and *Frankenstein*, those who are capable of appreciating picturesque values, such as Emily, St. Aubert, Elizabeth and Henry, are considered benevolent and kind.

As Howard rightly points out, citing St. Aubert's speech "Virtue and taste are nearly the same, for virtue is little more than active taste, and the most delicate affections of each combine in real love" (Radcliffe 49-50), the reader is here encouraged to believe that "aesthetic feelings can become moral principles" (Howard 118). While the heroine of the novel Emily, St. Aubert, Valancourt, and Lady Blanche, Count De Villefort's daughter, are responsive to the picturesque scenery, other characters, such as M. Quesnel, Montoni, Madam Cheron, Emily's aunt, and the Countess De Villefort hardly take notice of the scenery, and even when they do, they react to it

repulsively or with horror.

The degree to which each character is sensitive to or shows taste in aesthetic beauty corresponds with how much or whether he or she owns what St. Aubert here calls virtue. St. Aubert's readiness to accept Valancourt's company, for example, on the whole is grounded on the former's perception that the latter has the manly frankness, simplicity, and most important, "keen susceptibility to the grandeur of nature" (34). Madam Cheron, Emily's guardian after St. Aubert's death, whose "selfish vanity" (139) only permits her to evaluate people in terms of their "name" (124) and wealth, disregards St. Aubert's judgment and drops his recommendation of Valancourt as a prospective suiter of Emily. Madam Cheron's willful reaction to the "names" of the rich,[11] is acutely contrasted with Emily's appreciation of the scenes of nature, "those sublime spectacles" as "so infinitely superior to all artificial luxuaries!" (60) which are open for the enjoyment of the poor, as well as of the rich. In other words, she places more value on the "taste for the grand, and the beautiful" than on what wealth can buy.

As we saw earlier, Elizabeth in *Frankenstein* has a similar disposition as Emily, St. Aubert and Valancourt, in that she enjoys contemplating and admiring the majestic and wondrous nature. Her sensitive taste for nature's scene is the opposite of Victor's insensible eye. He is "haunted by a curse" (149) of desecrating the sacred nature, and has "shut up every avenue to enjoyment" of the scenery of nature: "The summer months passed while I was thus engaged, heart and soul, in one pursuit. It was a most beautiful season; never did the fields bestow a more plentiful harvest, or the vines yield a more luxuriant vintage: but my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature." (53) Aside from Elizabeth, Henry is depicted as a

benevolent character and they share the proclivity to watch and admire the Alpine scene. We may say that Shelley's experience of six weeks' tour, the outcome of which is her travel writing *History of A Six Weeks' Tour* (1817), is whetted especially in the episode of Victor and Henry travelling to England. During the trip, Henry points out to Victor "the shifting colours of the landscape, and the appearances of the sky" (149). Elizabeth's portrayal resembles that of Henry, both sharing the disposition of "gentleness" and "tenderness", and has the function to soothe. It seems clear that benevolent and virtuous characters in both novels are inclined to keep in peace with nature rather than to "penetrate" it or be antagonistic towards it.

3. Relative Autonomy of the Perceiver

Radcliffe and Shelley have curious similarity in portraying the relationship between the Alpine scenery and the perceiver of that scenery. While Burke had an idea that the perceiver's reaction or emotion (pain, fear, awe, pleasure, delight) to an object they are perceiving is oriented towards the object, which usually belongs to two distinctive categories, the sublime and the beautiful. The implication is that the source of the emotion is chiefly the object and not the perceiver. Burke's own statement about the sublime is here most illustrative; "[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime ..." (36). Radcliffe and Shelley have both contradicted this, and in their novels, have established a new relationship between them in a way that the perceiver has relative autonomy from the perceived.

As the story develops the descriptions of the landscape in *Udolpho* come to accompany the viewers' sentiments and their state of mind. St. Aubert and Emily decide to travel down to Languedoc via Rousillon, through which they expect to encounter the grandeur landscapes of the Pyranees, for St. Aubert was prescribed the air of Languedoc for his ill-health. St. Aubert's emotional interaction with the scenery is often described while they travel to their destination. He and Emily "indulge the sublime reflections, which soften, while they elevate, the heart", and in turn, this scene brings him melancholy sentiments, and "gives to every object a mellower tint" (28). This description deviates from Burke's statement about the human response to sublimity; he had repeatedly stressed that terror and danger are essential components of the sublime experience which cause one's fear, and never 'soften' the heart.[12]

This may be accounted for by what Ann Mellor has termed "positive sublime" (*R & G 95*). Through the experience of the positive sublime, it is said that Radcliffe's heroines respond to the magnificence of Alpine scenery with pleasure rather than fear. Mellor's point that this experience can produce a sympathy or love that connects the self with other people is made explicit in "a shared enthusiasm [of Emily and Valancourt] for the grandeurs of Alpine scenery drawing [them] together in love (ibid.). This claim is persuasive enough in that not just when Emily recollects the memories of Valancourt but when she thinks of her father, she draws on the sublime scenery as a catalyst of reviving their images and the sentiments that accompany them. This is conspicuously observed when Valacourt, after the death of St. Aubert, talks with Emily about the scenes they passed among the Pyrenean Alps; "[t]his subject recalled forcibly to Emily the idea of her father, whose image appeared in every landscape" (105-106).

On the contrary, Emily's perception of the Alpine scenery changes on the way to Italy, being forced to accompany Madame Cheron on occasion of her marriage to Montoni who is later to imprison both in the castle of Udolpho. The picturesque landscape of "cultivation and barrenness" (164) continues, but in reaching the summit of Mount Cenis, she sees only "in imagination" the beautiful and pastoral landscape with the shepherds pasturing summer flocks on its flowery summit if "the snow should be gone." Once she decsends on the Italian side, where Montoni is to scheme an evil design on Madame Cheron (later Madame Montoni) and Emily, she perceives that the precipices become "tremendous, and the prospects still more wild and majestic" (ibid.). For the first time, her "fear" is roused with mixed emotion of "delight, such admiration astonishment, and awe, as she had never experienced before," and as she listens to the rebounding rocks, "the terrors of fancy yield[s] to those of reality" (166), and the Alps "began to appear in all their awful sublimity" (171).

Hence, we may say that Radcliffe's heroine's response to the sublime is not merely determined by the spectacle that surrounds her, but also the state of her mind in a particular situation. The Alps which rise between France and Italy now come to stand for the "tremendous" and the "awful" in a figurative sense. Durant describes the world into which Emily plunges as "fallen" (524), and shows how the nature of this fallen world is characterised as much by its landscape as by its action and characters. Just in the same way as Emily sees the Alps with fear which are described as "tremendous barriers" (151), she looks upon Montoni with fear (122), whose sublime terror is described in "the fire and keenness of his eye, its proud exultation, its bold fierceness, its sullen watchfulness" (157) and whose "commands are grounded on his lawful power

to enforce her obedience" (209). Emily's trapped situation in the hands of Montoni is expressed by the word "prison, the gloomy court" (227), and the prison she describes points to the castle Udolpho.

The gothic features of the castle, such as its proud irregularity, its loft towers and battlements (245) create the atmosphere of the sublime, and in this castle are both Emily and her aunt Madame Montoni confined, and this gives the heroine new unfortunate circumstances to experience.[13] Emily at first seems to be at the mercy of tyrannical Montoni and another terrifying figure Count Morano, and her susceptibility to their powers appears to manifest her weakness and vulnerability.

Emily often recollects the memories of Valancourt (240) in time of hardship when she was being pestered by the importunate wooer, Count Morano, whom she looks on with horror (209). She also "compell[s] herself to notice external objects," such as the wild grandeur of the scene (241) to relieve her tormenting ideas about the alliance with him, through which Montoni schemes to gain her estate. She knows that this only offers a temporary refuge from her nightmarish world into which she has fallen.

Not until she uses her own fortitude against Montoni's tyranny that she is able to counteract his evil pursuit. It has to be noted, nonetheless, that she is not armed with one of Montoni's fierceness, unfeeling cruelty or violence, but delicacy. Her father's precept warns her against the danger of excessive "sensibility," but at the same time he cautions against "apathy" which is "a vice more hateful than all the errors of sensibility" and "cannot know virtue" (80). His precept at once seems paradoxical when he encourages Emily to take pride in the "gracefulness of sensibility" and also in "the strength of fortitude," because fortitude in those days tended

to be confounded with apathy (ibid.). For St. Aubert and Emily, fortitude and reason was not necessarily incompatible with feminine disposition of sensibility and tenderness.

When Emily has to face the terrifying authority figures like M. or Madame Montoni (Cheron), she always looks to father's precept and the word she found most suitable for his seemingly paradoxical admonition was "delicacy." When she was forced to choose between rebelling against their authority opting for clandestine marriage to Valancourt to remain in France, and obeying docilely to their will to depart for Italy leaving Valancourt behind, she decides to reject Valancourt. The decision, we are told, is based on her "delicacy" (157) and is not to be regretted. She repeatedly reminds herself that her decision was formed by her "delicacy" and is compatible with reason. While Valancourt was falling into pieces with the frenzy of his passion and despair, Emily's "reason" and "somewhat more than female fortitude," enabled her sense of "duty" to triumph over "affection and mournful presentiment" (155). Her reason is based on the possible risk of involving Valancourt in future obscurity or more likely misery of what may follow the clandestine union. The concept "delicacy" therefore seems to entail different implication from what Burke had in mind.

Burke compares robustness and strength of the oak, the ash, or the elm with the delicate myrtle, orange, almond or vine in expressing the delicacy of "the fair sex" (105-106). The beauty of women, he claims, is considerably owing to their weakness, or delicacy, and is even enhanced by their timidity, a quality of mind analogous to it (106). Montoni's attitude towards women is just as heavily gendered as Burke, for he believes that Emily should practice "the virtues, which are indispensable to a woman — sincerity, uniformity of conduct and

obedience" (270). However, Emily's "delicacy" here manifests itself as something more powerful than a feable timidity; Montoni, acquianted with the delicacy of her mind, knew how keenly she would feel his rebuke, but he was a stranger to the luxury of conscious worth, and, therefore, did not foresee the energy of that sentiment, which now repelled his satire (270-271). Montoni's prejudice against the weaker sex deludes the nature of her delicacy and does not foresee the power she possesses and the meaning of her "compassionate" conduct which she is conscious of "deserving praise" (270).

The way in which Emily's weakness is taken for granted as a part of woman's disposition may correlate with Elizabeth's victimised position, who is to be killed by the monster on her wedding night. Yet Elizabeth's confidence in sustaining her tranquillity in any circumstances (182), a quality Victor praises, shows that she deserves [a label] something more than a "victim," whereas Victor who regards "a calm and peaceful mind" and "tranquillity" as a prerequisite condition for "a human being in perfection" (54) is swept away by a "transitory desire" in the pursuit of knowledge. It is reminded in the novel that "paradisiacal dreams of love and joy" is robbed of not because of Elizabeth's weakness or her sin, but because "the apple was already eaten" by Victor himself. In the same way, Radcliffe's heroines, Durant argues, are never sinners, but present "innocent goodness," which therefore offers no poetic justice in the trials the girls undergo" (521).

The chief source of Emily's "tranquillity" and "fortitude" in resisting Montoni's contempt with quick wit or "proud silence" (ibid.), we are told later, is her memory of the happier past with her parents (248) and her connection with Valancourt. This again draws Radcliffe and Shelley closer in heroine's portrayal. Emily's legal knowledge regarding the inheritance of an

estate allows her to see through his cunning design to procure her estate, and also her calm temper and prudence, prevented Montoni from resorting to drastic measures such as to kill her or confine her to an isolated turret like her aunt. In large part, however, the idea of Valancourt, who she thinks is been captured in Udolpho for some reason, helps establish her fortitude, in a similar manner as when picturesque scenery revives her spirits.

This source of Emily's fortitude, however, turns out to be that which betrays her esteem. While she struggles to deal with her problems in Udolpho, Valancourt was much "engaged in deep play with men" (507) in Paris and his "extravagance has brought him twice into the prisons" (ibid.). Emily's justifications that the reason why his noble, ingenuous nature has fallen is because he went to Paris, or "such a friend as [her] father" was not with him there, are unacceptable, for even if St. Aubert was alive and accompanied with him to Paris, it does not definitively prevent him from "falling" again the next time.

Valancourt's susceptibility to temptation which correlates with his strong propensity for passion, is portrayed as a threat or danger, and it is Radcliffe's ambivalent depiction of Valancourt that causes a fissure in what seems to have been a secure criterion of the moral code. Radcliffe's touchstone of characters' virtue was earlier observed to be equivalent to aesthetic taste in picturesque scenery, and on this ground, Valancourt can be included amongst other benevolent people like St. Aubert, Emily, or La Voisin. The appreciation of the scenes of nature, gives an experience of what Mellor has called the positive sublime, and creates a positive effect on such a "benevolent" group of people, "softening" their feelings rather than giving rise to fear, and also arousing sympathetic emotion and uniting one with others. The notion of the positive

sublime holds in so far as the effect leads an elevated self to find "a renewed appreciation of the equal value and dignity of other people" (Mellor 95), and Valancourt's worth does not obviously equal with Emily's.

Once the virtue of one "benevolent" person is in doubt, the romantic belief that nature lovers are good tumbles down. The positive sublime after all was reliant on perceiver's imagination; Emily's emotion was influenced not solely by the perceived object, but the circumstances surrounding her and reflection of people she thinks she is connected with. The fact that the same Alpine scenery could give Emily the feelings of both pleasure and awe signify that the perceiver can have his or her relative autonomy in retrieving his or her feelings when encountering the sublime landscape, "relative" because the circumstances under which Emily copes are in most cases out of her control.

In this way Radcliffe disillusions us by showing that the perceived object or subject can hardly be called "the" source of our feelings. What is left with Emily is her "delicacy" and "fortitude" together with her reason and prudence suspended in midair after the story concludes in "happy ending." The happy union of Emily and Valancourt may seem like a reintegration of the two persons formerly bound with the shared aesthetic tastes with which they together experienced the sublime, but the positive sublime ceases to function when Valancourt cuts himself off from the benevolent world in which people live up to their moral virtue.

Unlike Emily who regains their pastoral paradise after a transitory flight to the underworld, Elizabeth's tragic death in *Frankenstein* signifies that she is forever deprived of such paradise. Shelley's depiction of Victor and monster is, however, not dissimilar to Valancourt in that the former is as ambivalent as

that of the latter, which in a similar manner confuses the categories of the good and evil. Monster seems to share the taste for nature at first as he states, "[m]y spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature" (112), but his benevolent nature is later overcome by his rage against his creator's irresponsibility of abandoning him in solitude. Victor's taste for the pastoral nature through which he gains the "light-hearted gaiety of boyhood" (92) seems to show his innocence and benevolence, but Shelley repeals such maternal influence: "... the kindly influence ceased to act — I found myself fettered again to grief and indulging in all the misery of reflection" (92). A sense of pleasure which Victor comes across when encountering the scene of nature therefore seems to have merely a transitory effect and never a long-lasting one. Just as Emily's vision of Valancourt which soothes and gives fortitude has no ground except in her imagination, the soothing influence of Elizabeth (184) and Nature (92) on Victor proves to have scarcely any secure source. Victor realises that the pleasure he gains from observing nature only reminds him of "days gone by" (92) implying the ineffectuality of the maternal influence.

Shelley, like Radcliffe, isolates the perceiver's mind from the perceived object. She reminds us that the perciever's feelings are moulded not only by the scenery of external nature but also through the interaction between them. The scene of nature does give rise to or shape certain feelings and emotion of Victor during his travel in England as we can see from Victor's statement, "Even I, depressed in mind, and my spirits continually agitated by gloomy feelings, even I was pleased [by a singularly variegated landscape]" (150). However, it is clearly stated again by Victor that it is the mind, with respect to Henry who taught Victor "to look for only in the imagination," that "form[s] a world whose existence depended on the life of

its creator" (151).

In conclusion, both Radcliffe and Shelley have presented us with a considerably different portrayal of Nature from Burke, firstly by tempering the categories of the sublime and the beautiful, and second, showing the interaction between the perceiver's state of mind and the scenery of external nature. Radcliffe's notion that a character's moral principle concurs with his or her aesthetic taste was particularly observed in depicting St. Aubert, Emily, Madame Cheron, and Montoni but was made obscure by fallen Valancourt.

Similarly, Shelley makes a coherent definition of the benevolent by characterising Elizabeth and Henry as the nature lovers, but ambivalent depiction of Victor and the monster disintegrates the coherence of that category. Not only by blending the scenes of the sublime and the beautiful, but by showing soothing but transitory influence of the external landscapes and characters or their restorative function, both Radcliffe and Shelley were able to invalidate the absolute definition of the sublime. On one hand there is the relative autonomy of the Emily's state of mind and her situation from the external landscape of nature, and on the other there is Victor's realisation that the influence of maternal nature is only evanescent. Above all, their resorting to aesthetic discourse seems not merely to have presented an alternative imagery of Nature but to show a certain cultural meaning in the creations of the imagination or pose a phenomenological question regarding the human mind. All meaning resides, not in an indifferent universe but in human relationships,[14] and the notion of the positive sublime through which the perceiving self connects with others anticipates the theory of the language-systems that sustains through human interaction and refuses meaning in the referent.

Notes

1. See for example Patricia Meyer Spacks *Desire and Truth.*
2. See Barbara Johnson, 248.
3. See James Watt, 111.
4. Quoted by Robert Kiely, 15.
5. Humphry Repton was a professional landscapist who wrote *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* (1795) and *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape* (1803). He is famous for "paper war" in which he upheld his principles of landscaping against the attacks of Sir Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, the chief proponents in their different ways of the new picturesque.
6. See Howard, 114.
7. Jane Austen who was likely to have been familiar with the "paper war" between Recton and Knight and Price, seems to have had distaste for Repton , implying a preference for the more naturalistic styles of Price and Knight. See Duckworth, 436.
8. In his paintings outline, mass, and elaborate shadings of chiaroscuro create an atmosphere in which awe serves only to heighten the scene of imminent danger and permanent terror which goes into an experience of the sublime. *Udolpho*, 674.
9. Anne Mellor argues that Mary Shelley articulated the concept of "domestic affection" from a critical observation of Burke's patriarchal sexual politics by conditioning it as flowing "equally and mutually among all members of the family unit." See *Romantics & Gender*, 66.
10. See, for example, 72, 91, 94, 112.
11. Valancourt is welcomed to her estate so long as she regarded the connection with his aunt Madame Clairval continues.
12. See Judith Pike, 153-154.
13. Seemingly supernatural phenomena such as "veiled picture" or the "murmuring sound" are elaborately dwelled on by Radcliffe, but, unlike Walpole, she carefully rationalises these apparent manifestations of the supernatural after the event. See Howard, 20 and Durant, 526.
14. See Anne Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, 169.

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