

## Treatment of the Gothic Elements by the Early Romantics

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### Abstract

*The advent of Romantic literature and the revival of Gothic literature took place almost simultaneously. They also share something common in them. If “imagination” was the keyword for the Romantics, “unbridled imagination” can be said to be the driving force behind the creation of Gothic novels. Concurrently, both Romanticism and Gothicism engage with Enlightenment rationality. Although this reemergence of Gothic literature failed to have a firm foothold in the literary world and degenerated into something silly, it had its contribution to Romantic literature. Romantic writers took Gothic elements and used them skillfully in their poetry. This article tries to explore the way the early Romantic canonical writers treated the Gothic in their poetry and thus, proved that it, too, can enrich poetry just like many other essential literary elements.*

**Key Words:** Gothic, Supernatural, Romantics, Enlightenment.

The later part of the eighteenth century is important in the history of English literature not only because of the commencement of Romantic Movement but also for the fact that this was the era when Gothic literature staged a comeback. This Gothic revival was marked by the publication of romances like *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) by Horace Walpole, *The Romance of the Forest* (1792) by Ann Radcliffe, *The Monk* (1796) by Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) by Mary Shelley etc. Both Romantic and Gothic creations can be seen as two parallel streams enriching English literature and complementing each other at times. Just like Romantic literature, Gothic can be seen both as a reaction to and a fulfillment of the preceding age of Enlightenment. Although Romantic canonical writers were not unanimous in their appreciation of Gothic, all of them incorporated Gothic elements in their poetry as manifestations of their imaginative faculty. The inclusion of the Gothic elements was not accidental but a choice deliberately made with several purposes.

Gothic, both as a self-content genre and an indispensable part of Romantic literature, was revived as a reaction against neoclassical rationality. Some Gothic images and myths that found their way into Romantic literature were “the doomed quest, the cursed wanderer, the medieval haunted castle, the solitary outcast, supposedly supernatural events, the evil villain”(Breen and Noble,8).These features “are apparently contrary to the Enlightenment ideas” (Breen and Noble,8). Nicola Trott strengthens this view further by saying, “*The Castle of Otranto* laid claim to freedom from aesthetic restriction –specifically, from the restrictions of both matter-of-fact realism and neoclassical rules” (Trott, 483). The contrast between Gothic and neoclassical was, to some extent, influenced by Gothic architecture. Medieval architecture, one of the most important Gothic elements, provided a clear opposition to the Classical. To exemplify the contrast between Gothic and Neoclassical, Walpole wrote in his *Anecdote of Painting* (1762) that one needs to

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have taste to appreciate Grecian architecture whereas only passion is enough to feel the Gothic. Nicola Trott observes “The antithesis of Grecian and Gothic building became a standard way of describing the dichotomy between ‘Classic’ and ‘Romantic’ art-- the one dedicated to principles of order, proportion, and completeness, the other to irregularity, vastness and indeterminacy” (Trott, 484). Besides, while in neoclassical literature, the emphasis was on reason and the appeal was to the rational faculty of the reader, “Gothic novels are remarkable for their entertainment of the irrational” (Trott, 486). She also believes “Gothic novels seek to undermine, manipulate or critique the logic of Enlightenment” (Trott, 487).

However, there is one more way of looking at things. There were cases when the Romantic writers used Gothic elements to demonstrate Enlightenment ideals. This reconciliation between these two usually opposite streams can be found in Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” where the mariner “who can be seen as a version of the cursed and outcast wanderer, also represent the poet’s enlightened understanding of guilt and obsession” (Breen and Noble, 8). What the two supernatural voices were conversing between themselves unfolds the truth that a sinner must suffer and needs to expiate which the ancient mariner continued to do “by obsessively repeating his tale, his crime of killing the harmless Albatross” (Breen and Noble, 8). In the poem, “That anguish comes and makes me tell/ My ghastly adventure. . .” (Breen and Noble, 8). Thus we find a beautiful blend of Enlightenment notion and Gothic imagery in one of Coleridge’s best creations. Moreover, it is interesting to note that in their attempt to thrive on irrationality in Gothic novels, the writers could not detach themselves from the rational aspect of contemporary neoclassical literature. Victor Sage notices in *Castle of Otranto* that Wolpole’s style there is “suffused with rational virtues of eighteenth-century prose” (Sage, 82).

Thus Gothic literature established its own place in the history of English literature in spite of its “low” status and its treatment by the educated who saw it as a tawdry and debased kind of writing. It was not surprising that the Gothic elements were frequently making their way into the poetry of Romantic canonical poets, dominating the literary arena of contemporary England. These elements are explicit in Coleridge, Byron, Shelly and Keats, but Wordsworth and Blake do not seem to be fascinated by the idea of Gothic, though, as the remaining part of this article shows, traces of it can be found in their poetry, too.

In Blake’s poetry, conventional Gothic elements are completely absent. William Gaunt in his *Arrows of Desire* (1956) has discussed Gothic influences on Blake but failed to analyze any presence of it in his poetry, whether verbal or visual. Of course, Blake developed a deep interest in Gothic art during his apprenticeship to Basire. James Basire of Great Queen Street was an engraver. Blake became apprentice to him on 4 August, 1772, for the term of seven years. “As an engraver, Basire followed traditional methods—he had been held in high regard by Hogarth—eschewing newer techniques like mezzotint, whereby a roughened surface is scraped or polished so that an impression of light and shade is produced” (Heims, 39). This technique is considered to be old-fashioned; but “it was precisely this aspect of the art that Blake wished to master” (Ackroyd, 43). After two years, Basire sent Blake to copy images from the Gothic churches in London where he developed this deep interest in Gothic art. David Bindman strengthens this possibility by saying that he does not have “Blake’s own testimony that he admired Gothic sculpture” (Bindman, 29). He further adds that Gothic art impressed Blake “by [its] simplicity and purity of style, which even as a young apprentice, he had felt to have been lost by the masters of his own day” (Bindman, 30). This liking for Gothic art was not lost on his poetic creations.

Rather, his unconscious mind functioned as a vehicle to transport this into at least one of his best creations, *The (First) Book of Urizen*. It is one of the major prophetic books of William Blake. It was originally published as *The First Book of Urizen* in 1794. The later edition of the book dropped the “first”. The plates that Blake prepared on the themes of *The Book of Urizen* clearly bear the mark of the deep influence of the Gothic on him. G.R. Thompson finds the traces of Gothic motifs when he says, “high Gothic.....[as] the embodiment of insane pursuit of the Absolute.....[which] is metaphysical, mythic and religious, defining the hero’s dark or equivocal relationship to the universe”(Thompson, 2). Thus Thompson here talks about three most common archetypal Gothic motifs that can be found in “A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms” (Thompson and Gibson, 2007): narcissism or self-isolation, the Doppelganger or a doubled or divided self and the quest. A close reading of *The (First) Book of Urizen* reveals the fact that all these three Gothic elements are not only present but have also formed the basis of this poem.

Urizen’s journey through Chaos establishes him as a self-isolated character—a character who is “self-closed” and “self-contemplating”. He is someone who wants to define and control the external world around him— something that can be termed as his quest. The very name “Urizen” carries the same significance as it “indicates his tendency to self- limitation and introspection, his urge to impose boundaries, to reduce in order to define” (Kittel, 33). Urizen’s mind is separated from eternity into materiality and it shows the passivity of his self-possession:

‘ The eternal mind bounded began to roll  
Eddies of wrath, ceaseless round and round,  
And sulphurous foam surging thick  
Settled, a lake bright and shining clear:  
White as the snow on the mountains cold’ (Blake, William *The Book of Urizen*, lines 19-23).

The lake thus serves as a mirror image of Urizen’s mind which reflects only himself and his narcissism. This narcissism suggests that the mirror “serves as a metaphor and a structural concept at the same time that it points to crucial experience in psychic development” (Ragland-Sullivan, 29). This development of his self-consciousness alienates him from the eternal as well as from himself. Blake’s Gothic world is established through this split between Urizen and Eternity. However, this exceptional world is without any castle dwelling, a common setting in Gothic literature.

The emergence of Los in *The (First) Book of Urizen* and his subsequent involvement with Urizen reflects a Doppelganger motif. Critics define this as doubled and/ divided characters or, as Clifford Hallam contends, as an “inner being [which] has in fact made its escape and [now] exists without it” (Hallam, 7). Consequently, the Gothic tradition is filled with images of twins, ghosts and mirrors. Los, it is commented by Paul Mann, actually becomes “Urizen’s unwilling agent” (Mann, 54) although he was sent to guard Urizen. Urizen gets a body because of Los as “Urizen was rent from his side” (“The Book of Urizen”, l. 146). As he helps Urizen to have a physical form, he consequently further seals man’s fallen state; for “if Los had not ended Urizen’s agony by giving him a body, Urizen might have been forced to find a way back to Eternity” (Cantor, 45). Los is, therefore, Urizen’s Doppelganger since he is, in a way, another creator as he gives Urizen a body. Besides, like Urizen, he entraps himself in a fallen state since his separation from eternity becomes permanent: “And now his eternal life/ Like a dream was obliterated” (“The Book of Urizen”, ll. 33-34).

Though Gothic elements are not very explicit in Blake, the use of the Gothic is the most prominent feature in S. T. Coleridge's poetry. In fact, Coleridge stands supreme among all the Romantic poets in his treatment of the Gothic. In "The Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan", for example, the most common aspect that has made them stand apart from all his other creations, is "the time-worn theme of supernatural" (Bowra, 51). Sometimes, he took the conventional approach, as "Christabel" reflects, following the tradition of Gothic Romance writers. But he achieved true success when he took a different route and treated the supernatural in the most unique and convincing way. "The Ancient Mariner" is such a poem where his supremacy and individuality, in the treatment of the supernatural, have been established.

In *English Romantic Poets*, Humphry House observes that one of the two sources from where The Ancient Mariner is believed to have originated, "is the Wandering Jew in Lewis's *The Monk*, which Coleridge reviewed in *The Critical Review* for February 1797" (House, 171)." He further says "it has plain affiliation with Gothic horrors, of which Lewis was the fashionable exponent" (House, 173). Although there is nothing to deny the first comment, there is something to differ from the second. In "The Ancient Mariner", "supernatural took a new character and received a new prominence" (Bowra, 51). Supernatural appealed to Coleridge with a special power. Application of the supernatural was a challenge for Coleridge because if he had ended up reproducing the familiar thrills of horrific literature only, he would never have been able to create one of the finest poems of English literature. "The Ancient Mariner", in spite of all the supernatural elements, is very human and compelling and comparable to Wordsworth's poetry of everyday things. The incredible events are not only convincing but can even be seen as a criticism of life. Besides, he has maintained certain degree of variation while bringing Gothic elements in this poem. Instead of a medieval castle, the setting this time is the boundless sea. The "blessed spirits" making the dead men alive are introduced not to horrify readers, rather they help to contribute to the creation of a heavenly atmosphere. Unlike the conventional Gothic romances where the sole purpose is to create an unnatural atmosphere of fear and which are marked by all sorts of extravagances, Coleridge's treatment of supernatural is much more balanced and "moves over a wide range of emotions and touches equally on guilt and remorse, suffering and relief, hate and forgiveness, grief and joy" (Bowra, 56). As the focus is on all these moral issues, Gothic elements actually help in bringing home these ideas to the readers. This particular style of treatment is comparable to that of Homer or Shakespeare for whom the Gothic was a "subordinate element in a wider scheme" (Bowra, 51).

Coleridge's use of the supernatural in "The Ancient Mariner" is hardly irrational. Though the supernatural events are plenty in number, they never seem absurd or extravagant. "Life-in-Death" and "Death" seem to be appropriate punishments for the protagonist as well as the other mariners for either committing the heinous crime or approving it. The spirit following from "the land of mist and snow" ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" l. 134) and seeking revenge is also justified in its action; nor it is without any reason that, when the ship finally reaches the harbour, it sinks because "it has passed through adventures too unearthly for it to have a place in the world of common things" (Bowra, 58). Even the erratic attitude of inanimate objects like the wind or the ship has been well justified by the chain of command that exists in the world of spirits. Thus the treatment of supernatural earns a flavour of Enlightenment as rationality prevails over all the proceedings.

It is impossible to overlook the way the nature and the supernatural co-exist throughout the poem. Amid all the unnatural happenings, nature remains itself. This realistic treatment of nature has influenced the way the supernatural creates an effect on the mind of the reader. At the agonizing moment when the mariner is haunted by the unbearable look in his dead comrades' eyes, the moon:

‘.....went up the sky,  
And nowhere did abide:  
Softly she was going up,  
And a star or two beside’ (Coleridge, S. T *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, lines 263-266).

The horrible happening in the background of such a serene and calm aspect of nature intensifies the horror as we feel a strange affinity with the mariner. He is someone not from a dreamland or fairy tale; rather, one who is from the real world—the world we belong to. We shudder at this realization and cannot but appreciate this extraordinary way of treating the supernatural. Besides, the setting, being a real one, makes the entire affair believable. In depicting nature, Coleridge prefers to stick to his belief which he regards as the cardinal quality of poetry. In *The Romantic Imagination* Maurice Bowra quotes Coleridge saying that “the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader [works] by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature” (Bowra, 64).

In this poem, the supernatural has another very important role to play. For Coleridge, it has proved to be a powerful device to emphasize the moral issues like guilt and remorse, suffering and relief, hate and forgiveness, grief and joy, crime and punishment etc. The truth which has become banal or neglected is reinvigorated and established once again when an impossible story is created in impossible conditions. After committing the gratuitous crime of killing the harmless albatross, the mariner had to suffer the punishment inflicted by God. But this simple story acquires an extraordinary colour when the supernatural is infused with Gothic elements. The killing of a bird takes the shape of a gruesome murder in the reader's eyes when the bird is found to be the reason behind the favourable breeze and the cracking of icebergs that make the ship move forward. The punishment of the mariner and his companions would not have been so special if it was not imposed by such horrible figures like Life-in-Death and Death. Our interest in the mariner's penance and punishment remains alive till the end of the poem because of the actions of the polar spirit and all the angelic blessed spirits on board. In this way, Coleridge not only successfully incites our emotion but also creates an everlasting impression on our mind. The three poems by Coleridge, namely “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “Kubla Khan” and “Christabel”, according to Bowra, “owe nothing to his study of philosophy or his own conscious theories about the universe” (Bowra, 72). What is common in them is an unhindered application of his creative gift which needs subjects remote from his ordinary existence. This creative gift (or the power of his imagination) resurfaces in “Christabel” where a perfect blend of Gothic and his imaginative faculty lead to the creation of a masterpiece. Coleridge's treatment of Gothic in “Christabel” is more conventional and different from what it is in “The Ancient Mariner”. Gothic elements like “twelve bells at midnight, form-changing, the allegorical dream of the Bard were all elements of popular romance and medieval superstition which Coleridge learned from the people and from his reading” (Cronin, 127). But there must be something extraordinary in it that has placed the poem among the three best creations of Coleridge. I think the co-existence of innocence and evil in the form of Christabel and Geraldine and the sharp contrast they create

within their apparent similarity is the first point to consider. Throughout the poem, Christabel is always with Geraldine; they even share the same bed and there is also a hint of physical union between the two. This keeps our interest alive as we remain curious about the fact that this “being together” is not between two human beings; rather between Geraldine who “is both sorceress and serpent and also divided against herself sexually” (Bloom, 214) and angel-like Christabel whose “name indicates that her beauty has a particular innocence about it” (Bloom, 213). The supernatural has made it possible for Coleridge to create this contrast.

The other reason that has contributed to the success of the poem is the depiction of the character of Geraldine. What Coleridge has successfully done “is to transform the crudity of evil into something beautiful” (Bloom, 212) in Geraldine. Her first appearance is really impressive:

“.....a damsel bright,  
Drest in silken robe of white,  
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:  
The neck that made that white robe wan,  
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;  
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,  
And wildly glittered here and there  
The gems entangled in her hair.” (Coleridge, S.T *Christabel*, lines 58-65)

But we are utterly surprised and horror-stricken by the revelation of the fact that this beautiful lady is none but a vampire. We are stunned when we read:

“Behold! her bosom and half her side  
A sight to dream of, not to tell!” (Coleridge, S.T *Christabel*, lines 252-253)

We appreciate Coleridge not only for this play between two extremes but also for the surprising realization that it is Geraldine who “has the only vitality contained in the poem’s world” (Bloom, 212). She is the source of energy and vivacity in the poem. Though the poem is named after Christabel and her name is derived from ‘Christ’, she is hardly active; rather, she is acted upon. And there lies a similarity between the Ancient Mariner and Christabel, as the former, too, remains a silent observer almost throughout the entire poem. In every major action of the poem, it is Geraldine who dominates and keeps the story going. She is the one who possibly violates Christabel or drives away the spirit of Christabel’s mother or creates a conflict between Christabel and Sir Leoline. Thus the Gothic richly serves in the making of the poem.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the character of Geraldine can be seen as revealing a dark side of Coleridge’s mind. In the poem, there is a stanza which caused Shelley to scream and which influenced Keats in the dream scenes of both ‘Lamia’ and ‘The Eve of St Agnes’ (Miall, 2009):

"Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,  
 And slowly rolled her eyes around;  
 Then drawing in her breath aloud,  
 Like one that shuddered, she unbound  
 The cincture from beneath her breast:  
 Her silken robe, and inner vest,  
 Dropt to her feet, and full in view,  
 Behold! her bosom and half her side –  
 [Are lean and old and foul of hue]  
 A sight to dream of, not to tell!  
 O shield her! Shield sweet Christabel!" (Coleridge, S.T *Christabel*, lines 245-254)

It was Hazlitt who first spotted that Coleridge was a prey to guilty nightmares of emotional and sexual desires. Such experiences lie behind the pseudo-sexual attraction-cum-repulsion in 'Christabel'. There is a possibility that the Gothic setting with its melodramatic and potentially comic elements -- the owls, the crowing cock, the castle clock, the mastiff bitch, the midnight excursion, the ghost of Christabel's mother -- is an expression of the unexpressed lying in the subconscious region of the poet's mind. It is also likely that Coleridge was frightened at his own excursion in 'Christabel' into this region of his mind, and that after his meeting with Sara Hutchinson (in November 1799) it became more impossible than ever for him to handle it in the poem. When he wrote Part 1, he had not yet seen Sara. The undressing of Geraldine was perhaps a combination of the imagination of illicit pleasure and a memory from his brothel-visiting days in London as a student. Now he knew and loved Sara, with whom no consummation was possible except in the guilt-ridden imaginings confided to his notebooks. Restoring Christabel by means of a returning legitimate lover was perhaps too simple and happy a solution, given the tangled nature of his own feelings.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that the greatness of "Christabel" lies in Coleridge's adept use of several Gothic elements. But the same cannot be said about "Kubla Khan", though Gothic elements are not entirely absent from the poem. The specialty and the success of the poem lie in Coleridge's creation of an exotic new world from emotionally selected materials. This world is one "of enchantment, rich with emotional experience, romance, glamour, adventure and sheer magic" (Cronin, Jr., 126). Among all these materials, the Gothic stands supreme. The place where the pleasure dome has been ordered to be built has an additional charm in it. It is a "savage place"; there is a mystery associated with it. This mystery is both created and enhanced with a reference to "woman wailing for her demon lover!" ("Kubla Khan", l. 16.). The treatment of Gothic by Coleridge can be compared with that of Shakespeare. Like the witches in *Macbeth*, "woman wailing for her demon lover" is just an element in a wider scheme, but she has the capacity to change a charming scene into a Gothic and mysterious one.

Among the early Romantics, it is William Wordsworth who, perhaps, showed the least interest in the Gothic. For his part, there is hardly any conscious effort to imitate the Gothic tradition. In fact, his own theory of poetry leads him to reject the supernatural and glorify "incidents and situations from common life". In his own words, "the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants" ("Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800). But it will not be fair to say that he abhorred the genre as it is Wordsworth who suggested to Coleridge to write a poem about "a person suffering from a dire cause for the commission of some crime" and "a skeleton ship with figures in it" (Grosart, 442). He believed the subject to be well-suited to Coleridge's genius; not only that, he (Wordsworth) also contributed the part played

by the albatross and the navigation of the ship by dead men as it is found in *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*.

Conversely, in Wordsworth's poetry there is hardly any reference to the supernatural. It features in "The Thorn" and "Goody Blake and Harry Gill". In "The Thorn", the neighbours, being sure that the babe is buried in a mossy hillock as there was a mound where Martha used to grieve, went to dig it up and bring its mother to justice. But as soon as they started digging:

... then the beauteous hill of moss  
Before their eyes began to stir;  
And for full fifty years around,  
The grass it shook upon the ground," (Wordsworth, William *The Thorn*, lines 235-238.)

No one tries to disturb the grave anymore but the strange stirring of the grave remains unexplained. Thus, this isolated supernatural event can be seen as a device ensuring justice and assuring readers that Martha Ray is, after all, innocent. Besides, this very event adds to the supremacy of Nature above everything. When the entire society goes against the wretched woman, Mother Nature comes to her rescue through this extraordinary occurrence and establishes herself as the one exerting her authority over the male dominated social system.

The two Gothic elements that we find in "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" involve a curse and a witch-like character. On the surface, it seems that the witch-like Goody has cast a spell on Harry, "it is actually quite clear that Wordsworth's explanation is more psychological. He sees Harry's coldness as psychosomatic (created by his own imagination) and not a supernatural event at all" (Gillingham, 23). No matter whatever the psychological explanation behind the event is, its supernatural character bears a similarity with that of "The Thorn". Like "The Thorn", the supernatural is the power working for the wretched and helpless. The poem might not be at the same level with "Tintern Abbey" or "Immortality Ode" but "the Gothic element of the curse enforced by a mysterious power for the purpose of punishing evil has a lasting appeal to that part of us which will always be a child." (Cronin, Jr., 80).

It is not only the beauty of nature that had its appeal to Wordsworth but he was also fascinated by its more sublime aspects. In "A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms" (Thompson and Gibson, 2007), "the sublime" has been included as one of the Gothic elements. While defining "sublime" in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke locates it purely in terms of fear, the source of which is the "king of terrors" himself – Death – and a sense of possible threat to the subject's self-preservation. "Experience of the sublime is thus marked by a terrifying thrill rather than by pleasurable affection" (Day, 189). In the fourth chapter of *Romanticism*, Aidan Day while discussing the superiority of the sublime over beauty, talks about Wordsworth's use of sublime in Book VI and Book XIII of *Prelude*. While Wordsworth was crossing the Alps, "he conflated his own 'imagination'" (1805, VI.525; Wordsworth, Abrams and Gill 1979: 216) with an ultimate power when he spoke of

"visiting of awful promises, when the light of sense  
Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us  
The invisible world" (Wordsworth, William; *Prelude*, Book VI, lines 533-536).

Instead of being Burkean in nature, Wordsworth's treatment of the sublime is similar to what Kant's opinion is in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790). In Kant the sublime becomes a heightened and ennobled way of thinking about the human subject which enables the mind to rise above its

physical limitations after the initial check to its vital forces. In essence for Kant, the sublime is not so much located in the direct experiencing of a terrifying object but in the way that experience signals an apprehension of the infinite capacities of the mind's imaginative powers. Indeed, in language that recalls Wordsworth's sublime mountain ascents, Kant speaks of the mind 'usurping' upon nature during these visionary moments.

There is a recurrence of this sublime moment in Book XIII of *The Prelude* where Wordsworth ascends Mount Snowdon. Here, again, he is "interested in something that transcends nature and the senses" (Day, 187). And the sublime moment occurs when:

".....instantly a light upon the turf  
 Fell like a flash. I looked about, and lo,  
 The moon stood naked in the heavens at height  
 Immense above my head, and on the shore  
 I found myself of a huge sea of mist,  
 Which meek and silent rested at my feet.  
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved  
 All over this still ocean, and beyond,  
 Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves  
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,  
 Into the sea, the real sea, that seemed  
 To dwindle and give up its majesty,  
 Usurped upon as far as sight could reach" (Wordsworth, William *Prelude*, Book XIII, lines 39-51).

Here the mist sea usurps the place of the real sea. And in this way, through the capacity of the mind's own imaginative power, an extraordinary natural phenomenon takes the form of the sublime. This transformation to sublime is in line with Kant's view of sublime as it is not the direct experience of the natural phenomenon (the real sea) but the infinite capacities of mind's imaginative power (which transforms the real sea into a mist sea) gives rise to the sublime. Thus the example confirms the Kantian nature of Wordsworth's treatment of sublime.

In the face of the upsurge created by Romantic literature, however, Gothic literature which had just started its second journey, lost its momentum; but not before leaving its mark and inspiring the Romantics. But it is not the advent of Romantic literature that should be blamed for the decline of the latter. Rather, it is the reckless carelessness on the part of the Gothic writers that brought about their downfall. It became a frequent phenomenon that ghosts and goblins started to crowd their poetry and "instead of creating real horror and dread, this literature tends to be factitious and a little silly" (Bowra, 51). And there lies the supremacy of the early Romantics as they could strike the right balance between Gothic and other literary elements. Coleridge loved it, Blake had it in his subconscious mind and Wordsworth had a prejudice about it; but they had to bring it into their poetry as Romantic literature could not be completed without it. To create a difference in the mind of the readers from what is ordinary, to stir their emotion, to take them to a different world of imagination, Romantic writers, especially the early Romantics, are indebted to these Gothic elements.

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