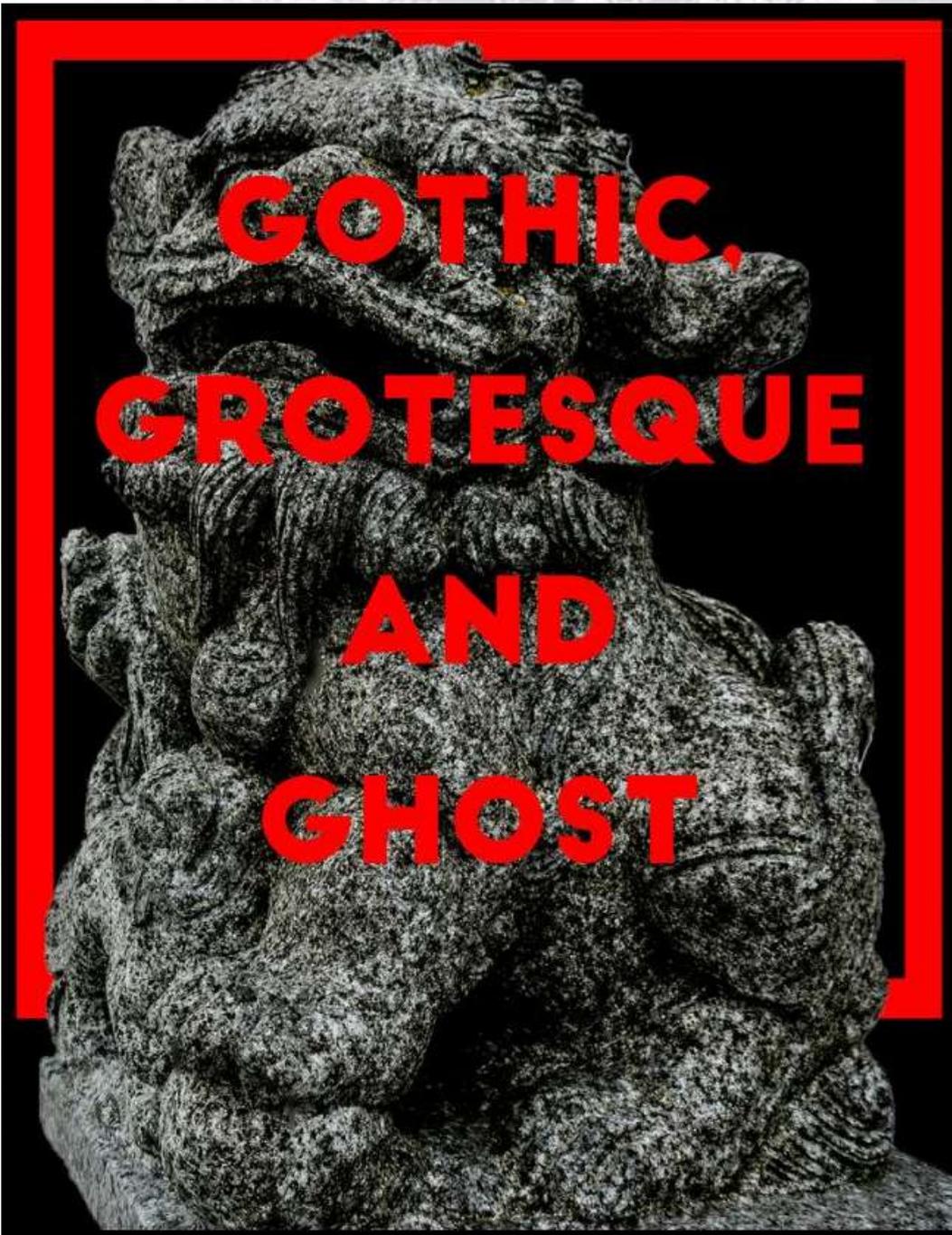
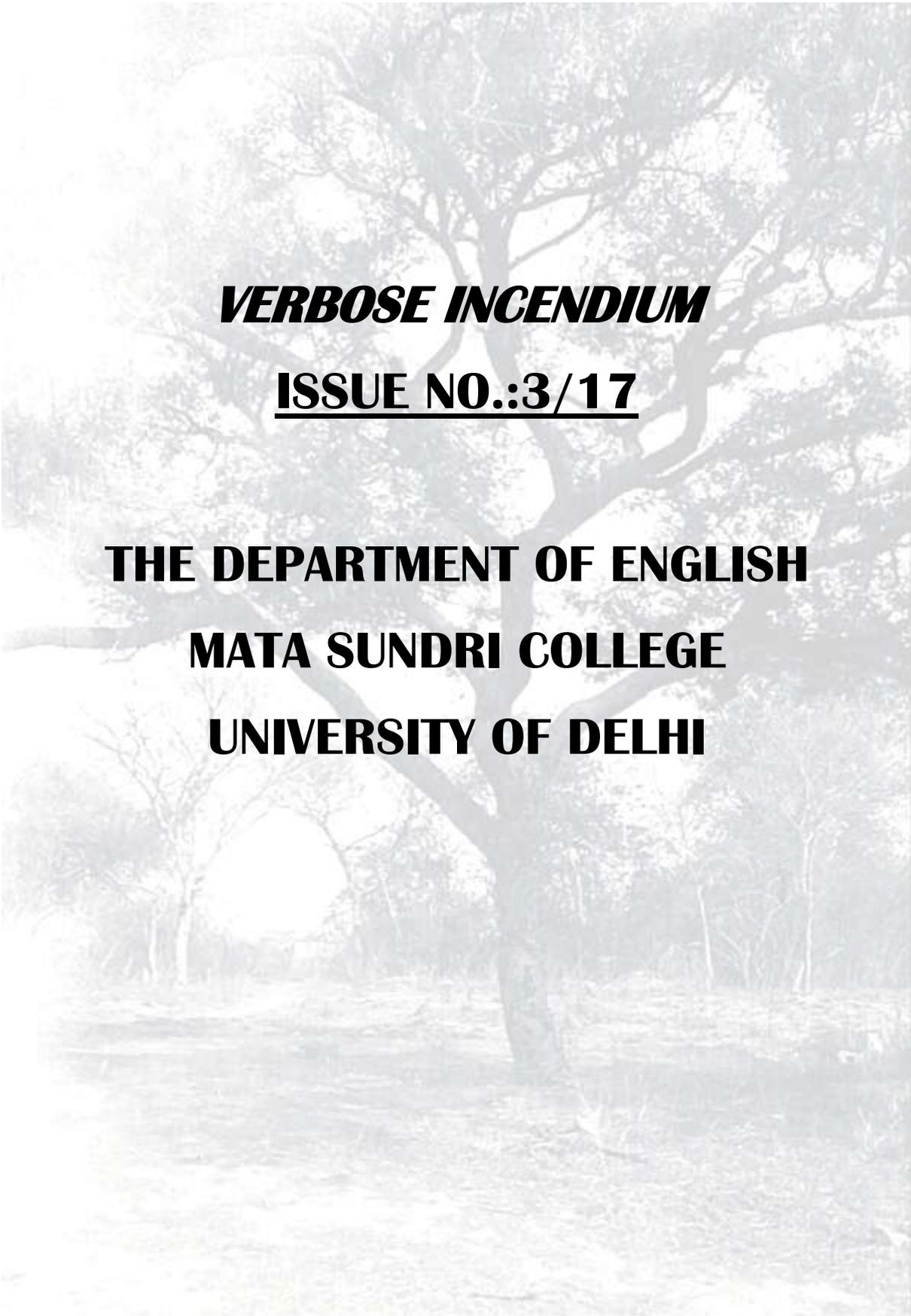


**VERBOSÉ
INCENDIUM**

presents



**GOTHIC,
GROTESQUE
AND
GHOST**



VERBOSE INCENDIUM

ISSUE NO.:3/17

**THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MATA SUNDRI COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**

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Editor's Note

One of the most interesting works I have ever read is Francois Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Besides the unparalleled satirical wit of the writer what drew me to the text was its use of the grotesque. The grotesque in Rabelais is more than just a deformed and comic body. It is a means of communicating the new Renaissance humanist vision of Man and his world. Far from being repulsive or derogatory, it is symbolic of the endless proliferation of knowledge and the connectedness of all forms of life on earth. The grotesque for Rabelais is inherently positive and celebratory. This has led to all my readings and associations with the idea of grotesque as always already affirmative. The second inspiration for this theme was another satirist, who also happened to be an admirer of Rabelais, Jonathan Swift. Swift uses the grotesque body to critique the Enlightenment's ideal of the disembodied mind. He pulls his reader down from an elevated platform and seats him (through both his prose works as well as poetry) at par with the apparently sub-human. The Renaissance was especially effusive in the production of grotesque art with artists such as Raphael, Vinci, and Bosch. This was later perfected by the Brueghels and Gustave Doré, among others.

The journey from the grotesque to the gothic and then to the idea of ghosts happened almost on its own. Needless to say, they share a common ground not just in contemporary popular culture but in literature as well. Gothic literature from its very inception with the *Castle of Otronto* has made use of the supernatural elements and grotesque bodies to achieve the desired effect. Even gothic architecture associated with the medieval castles and cathedrals made use of grotesque figurines and sculptures such as the gargoyles. All three share a common ground in so far as they are used to stir the readers out of their complacency and radically re-orient perception. As such they have efficacy as tools of social and political critique as well.

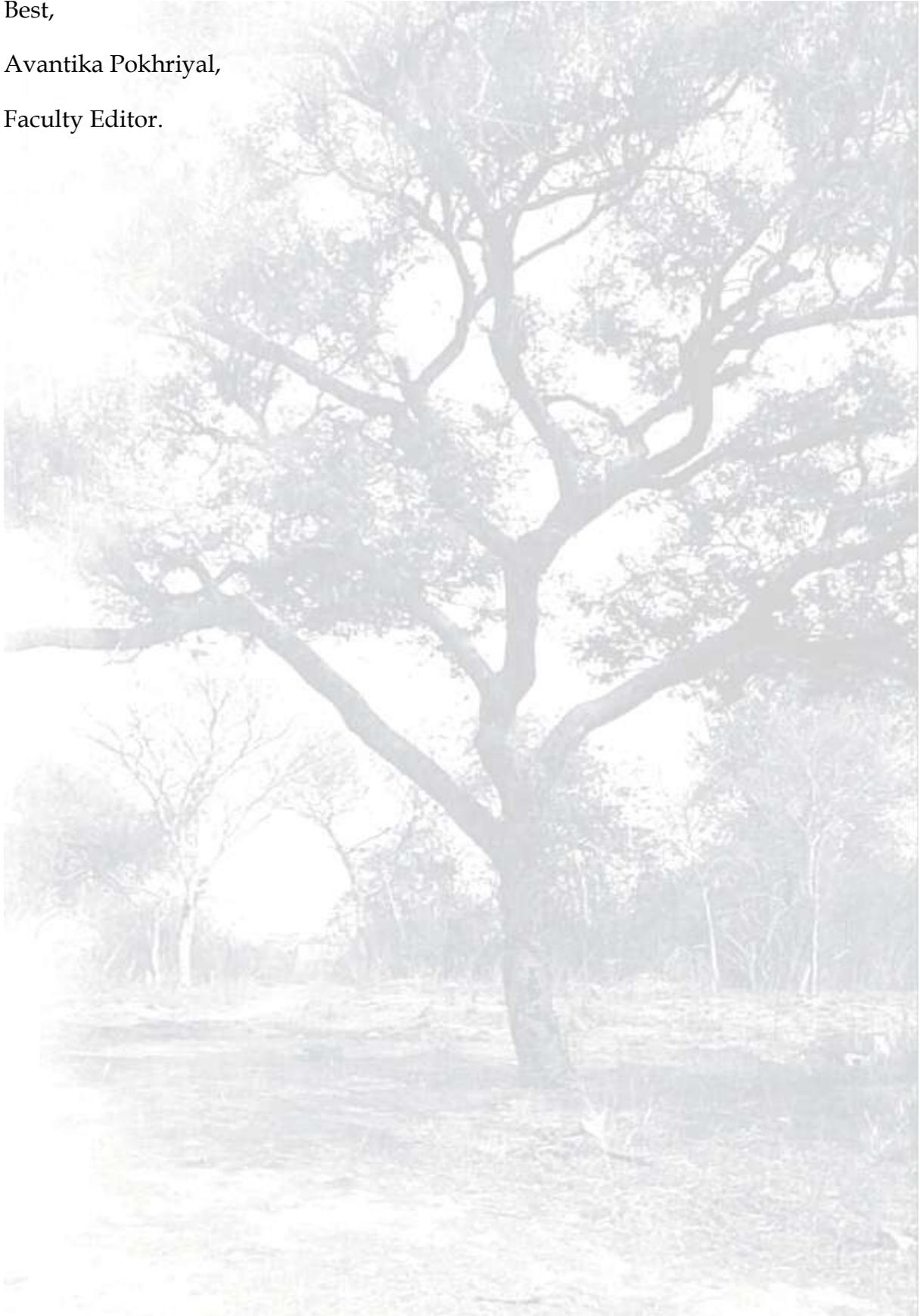
This issue is also special because it brings with it a brand new editorial board comprising young creative writers most of whom are first-year students. Their unbridled enthusiasm and diligence are indeed commendable. The task of endless editing and revisions is not everyone's cup of tea. A special thanks to all our contributors. This magazine is for and because of you. I would also like to take a moment to thank all our third-year student contributors who will be passing out in a matter of a few weeks, now. Last but not the least I would like to thank Dr. Sethi for her guidance and patience. I hope the readers enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed making it!

Happy reading!

Best,

Avantika Pokhriyal,

Faculty Editor.



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SAVAGE AND HARDY, AND FREE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE 'FEMALE GOTHIC' IN JANE EYRE AND WUTHERING HEIGHTS.

In the late nineteenth century, the Victorians were struggling to come to terms with the Industrial Revolution, (the sense of alienation resulting from the mass movement of people from the country to the city). The result was that people (especially the elites) felt a need for a return to an earlier (mythical), simpler time, to an established and recognizable order. The Gothic genre emerged, as an expression of the desire for a return to (sometimes, a fantastic version of) the Middle Ages.

In modern times, the Gothic has evolved to form the subject matter of various television series, films, and pulp-fiction. Some examples include *Penny Dreadful*, *Batman*, as well as the endless vampire fictions. Originally, the Gothic was also a popular form, especially as used in writing fiction. This was particularly true of the form of the novel, which in turn, was considered an inferior form of writing up until the Victorian Age. The genre, therefore, may have entranced a sizable lay-audience but they did not garner much critical acclaim. For the Victorians, Gothic was a space where fears and anxieties could play out in an imaginative and fantastic form, much as it does even in our day. One big difference is that the Victorians lived in a world where physical forces were still not completely understood, where the realms of science and the supernatural were not as firmly demarcated as they are in our time, so Gothic, which relies heavily on the supernatural, was more 'mainstream' then.

Gothic as a genre finds its origins in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Ann Radcliffe later wrote *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) a prominent gothic novel of the decade. The gothic novel combines the element of the supernatural with an exploration of the psychological world of the characters. Descriptions of a sublime setting and extensive use of the objective correlative technique achieve that effect. Novels in this genre are often described as *romances*, the very terminology of which borrows from the medieval romances. These were tales of the adventures of chivalrous knights, which later adopted the theme of courtly love. The influence of still newer themes, like the supernatural, initiated the Gothic into this genre. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) discovers the dark, seductive aspect of the gothic, along with the element of fear and that is characteristic of the genre of gothic fiction. It is this 'gothic romance' which heavily influences the novels of the Bronte sisters.

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) are novels of the gothic romance genre, although the supernatural does not manifest clearly in either of these works. Excessive, bloody passages and a morbid preoccupation with physical decay and death, however, successfully achieve the eerie, spine-chilling effect-

"I must watch this ghastly countenance--these blue, still lips forbidden to unclose--these eyes now shut, now opening, now wandering through the room, now fixing on me, and ever glazed with the dullness of horror. I must dip my hand again and again in the basin of blood

and water, and wipe away the trickling gore. I must see the light of the unsnuffed candle wane on my employment; the shadows darken on the wrought, antique tapestry round me, and grow black under the hangings of the vast old bed, and quiver strangely over the doors of a great cabinet opposite – whose front, divided into twelve panels, bore, in grim design, the heads of the twelve apostles, each enclosed in its separate panel as in a frame; while above them at the top rose an ebon crucifix and a dying Christ.”

Jane Eyre

Thornfield Hall with its dark passages, dimly lit galleries, ruined facade, secret chambers, the haunting madwoman in the attic, the gruesome disfigurement of Rochester, the strange 'fairy-like' qualities of Jane and the 'magical' reunion of Jane and Rochester at the end in *Jane Eyre*; in *Wuthering Heights*, the Yorkshire moors, the dark, mysterious and dreadful character of Heathcliff, his agonised demand to Catherine to stay 'in any form' - all establish the Gothic atmosphere in these novels.

While the gothic was a fantastic escape from the drudgery of the Victorian times, it is this very drudgery which contributed to the growing use of realism in novels. George Eliot (1819-1880) was a prominent novelist of the form. The Bronte sisters combine Gothic elements with realism to deliver a unique blend of genres: everyone can identify with the life story of the young governess in *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte herself drew from her own experiences to give authenticity to the narrative; but these elements are transposed into a gothic and romantic context making them more vivid and dramatic. Protagonists in these texts have strong minds, even being isolated or alone. This isolation can be either psychological (seen in the isolation of the mind) or physical (being trapped in coffins and attics alive).

The gothic novel usually involves a certain trespassing of boundaries. In novels of the genre, very often this trespassing is a breach of female sexuality. The 'damsel in distress' is almost a stock character in these novels. The aforesaid damsel is often victimised by a predatory male character, or by her circumstances. *Jane Eyre*, however, studies a subversion of this idea. Certain episodes from the novel reveal her adoption of the chivalrous, heroic role that should have ideally been attributed to Mr. Rochester. On her first encounter with Mr. Rochester, when she initially fears that the approaching horse might be a 'Gytrash', a beastly spirit of folklore, Bronte allows the readers a glimpse into the timid, distressed female figure. However, soon she has Jane rescuing an injured Rochester. Similarly, towards the end of the novel, it is Jane who supports the blinded Rochester. *Wuthering Heights* may not seem to have such a radical approach to the distressed damsel figure. Catherine Earnshaw, although a deeply passionate woman, is very much the victim of an overbearing patriarchal structure. She is oppressed by her brother, Hindley and driven to the point of harassment by Edgar Linton and by Heathcliff. Catherine dies a victim to these and her conflicting passions.

Charlotte Bronte seems to invest gothic elements in *Jane Eyre* with a symbolic meaning for creating a new, 'female' language. It is through this female Gothic language that Bronte creates a heroine whose autobiographical mode of writing is used to trace a story of female rebellion and search for identity. Although the use of gothic as the new 'female' language is a subversion of the predominant, phallogocentric language of the time, the need for a woman writer to make her

assertions through the gothic, the symbolic and therefore the indirect implies that this new female gothic also represents the agency the women in nineteenth-century Victorian England did not have. The representation of the entrapped female body leads to the issue of suppression of female sexuality.

Bertha Mason is the Gothic symbol through which female sexuality and passion are represented. She is perhaps the appropriate counterpart to Emily Bronte's Catherine Earnshaw. Passion is the common determinant of character in the two. Bertha lurks in the isolated darker recesses of the gothic space, while Catherine inhabits the brightly lit male-inhabited and approved space. One has been a victim of the tyranny of the patriarchy, branded and turned lunatic, while the other in submitting to her husband and resisting her passions for the sullen Heathcliff, succumbs. While Charlotte Bronte seems to be making a strong case for the deviant, rebellious woman, in both Bertha Mason's and Jane Eyre's character, Emily settles for depicting the doom inevitable for this passionate woman, Catherine, who has no place under the rigidly moral reign of the Victorian Age.

The fact that Jane writes a gothic novel to represent female desire implies that she is not satisfied, that the society is not ready for such feminist representations. Her feminist intention cannot be doubted for she clearly insists that "women feel just as men feel" and that they need an outlet for expression of their suppressed feeling. While *Wuthering Heights* may not appear an example of Female Gothic literature at first glance, the most crucial elements of the genre are in place. There is a castle, an oppressed heroine, and the requisite sinister elements. But it is the artistry and talent of Emily Bronte which takes a germ of an idea and develops it into something greater. Emily Bronte makes perfect use of Gothic elements in evoking within the readers' mind a powerful sense of dread, apprehension, and pain. She produced a novel which not only survives but thrives, unlike many of its elder cousins in the Female Gothic genre. *Wuthering Heights* holds true to the Female Gothic genre's aim to socialize and educate its female readers, as well as its tendency to express criticism of male-dominated, patriarchal structures. It capitalizes upon the unique abilities of the Female Gothic to explore the role of women in society.

In the end, it is the sisters' skill in narration, characterization, and innovation that delivered their stories into our hearts; they took the basic elements of the Female Gothic genre and transformed them into one of the great classics of English literature. Emily Bronte and Charlotte Bronte, both, realistically depict the condition of women in Victorian England through the genre of the Female Gothic.

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-ASHIMA PURI

THIRD YEAR



THE SINISTER SMILE

-HARJAS JB SINGH

FIRST YEAR

SOMETHING WICKED

The face that makes you laugh,
Doesn't make me smile.
The face that brings joy to your heart,
Took away mine.
The face that you love to see,
Haunts me, in my dreams.
That face isn't what it seems, who knows what lies beneath?

It's costume but a benevolent disguise,
Under it, lurks a menacing surprise.
Though to cheer the audience he seems to live,
But after the show, shadows are his friends.

He isn't funny, he isn't jolly,
Pure evil is what lies within.
Behind that merry makeup of his,
Lies a face unknown to us.

With razor sharp teeth and bony hands,
He'll tear your heart right out your chest.

With bloody eyes and sinister smile,
No place to run, nowhere to hide.

So Beware! Be Scared!
They are not what they say.
Open your eyes to the truth,
Before they make you 'prey'.

GROTESQUE ART THROUGH THE AGES

The term 'grotesque' comes from the Italian word *grottesco* literally meaning, "of a cave". It is applied to a style of mosaic and fresco wall paintings which were first used in ancient Rome and rediscovered in the late fifteenth-century during an excavation of the emperor Nero's Golden House, or *Domus Aurea*. The style combined Arabesques with floral, animal, and human elements in a whimsically ornamental mode. The style was adopted and extended by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483–1520) and other painters of the Italian Renaissance, who used it to fill marginal spaces, such as borders of paintings, or to cover ceilings or pilasters. In Europe, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries the term was used to describe other artistic forms that combined incongruous elements. It was applied to many forms of medieval Christian art and architecture, the gargoyles, and monsters of Romanesque and the Gothic church architecture. During the nineteenth-century, the term was used in discussions of paintings, sculpture, literature, architecture, and music. In the current times, the concept has been extended to refer to anything unnatural, strange, absurd, distorted or bizarre.

The word grotesque is now widely applied not only to the works of painters such as Hieronymus Bosch (1450–1516) and Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525–1569) but also to elements in the writings of many authors including William Shakespeare (1564–1616), Charles Dickens (1812–1870) and Franz Kafka (1883–1924).



GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS BY HIERONYMUS BOSCH

<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160809-hidden-meanings-in-the-garden-of-earthly-delights>

Grotesque leads to a process of systematic detachment and in turn, acknowledges the possibilities of an open structure in which there can be no certainty, no exclusions or a permanent state of something which does not already contain within it something else: there is no beauty without ugliness, no comedy without tragedy, no white without black. Opening up a space of possibilities where

humans merge with animals and disgust mixes with laughter. The grotesque does not inhabit a stable or predetermined ground. At times, this can lead to a state of anxious indeterminacy, but one where the emphasis is on anxiety as much as it is on creativity.



GUSTAVE DORE'S ILLUSTRATION OF PANTAGRUEL

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/gustave-dore/by-series/gargantua-and-pantagruel>

The Grotesque in Art and Literature by the German critic Wolfgang Kayser (1906–1960) traces the historical development of the style from the Italian Renaissance through the epochs of Romanticism and nineteenth-century Realist movement to its modern forms in poetry, dream narration, and Surrealist paintings. Throughout European literature and painting, Kayser finds the grotesque in the combination of the horrific with the comic; he writes, “The grotesque appears to us in paradoxical guise...and it elicits from us paradoxical responses”. He assesses the grotesque as the appearance of a reality which is simultaneously of as well as opposed to the worlds in which the audience exists. The direction from which he approaches the definition is unique, for he does not abandon the basic concept of unity or disunity, in form and function but integrates them into a consideration of a new concern for the effect that propels the grotesque towards a psychological trajectory. This criticism then facilitates a comprehensive assessment of the role of the grotesque in European art and literature.

THE SYMBOLIC GROTESQUE



THE HYBRID GOAT-MAN, A MYTHICAL CREATURE

In *Modern Painters*, John Ruskin (1819–1900) argues that the grotesque involves a creativity that evokes imaginative depictions of tangible things to reveal that which has been concealed. He describes it as anthropomorphized figures that mix humans and animals or man with vegetable matter like trees. These hybrid forms have an impact on their audiences precisely because they are so human and hence they enable us to see humanity in a new light, revealing ourselves in unique guises and linked to other forms of life. For Ruskin, grotesque is distortion, delineating the gap between imagined possibility and reality. He distinguishes between the noble or true grotesque on the one hand and the ignoble grotesque on the other, recognizing in this distinction the imperfection of humanity and our tendency towards the sensational and the frivolous. Grotesque aesthetics are not necessarily signs of degeneration or decadence, they can also be used for a cultural critique because grotesque forms distort proportion and problematize vision-making objects idiosyncratic and liberating the field of vision through the freedom of the imagination. Grotesque forms such as griffins, for instance are not meant to be figurative or to reflect the physical reality of our lives. As a mythological creature, half lion and half eagle, the griffin is related to the symbolic field, which moves the representational form outside the physical or contextual norms.



THE UGLY DUCHESS OR A GROTESQUE OLD WOMAN BY THE QUENTIN MATSYS C.1513.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ugly_Duchess#/media/File:Quentin_Matsys_-_A_Grotesque_old_woman.jpg

MONTRIOUS FORMS



THE CENTAUR

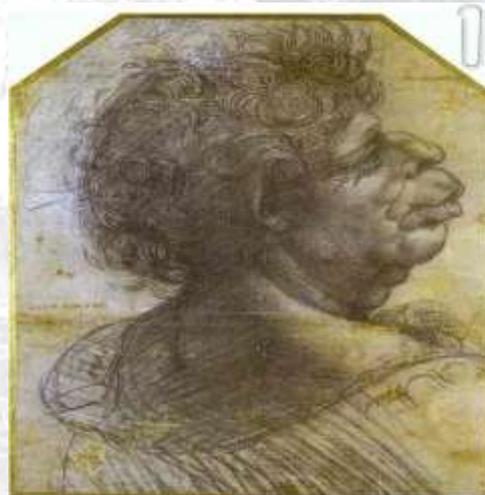
Grotesque art is characterized by distortions or striking incongruities in appearance, shape, and manner. Human figures merge with other forms of life. The world of grotesque imagery is not always the ordinary world of human beings, but it does not necessarily signal a realm of unadulterated monstrosity. The human attributes of grotesque figures are combined with the distorted and disproportionate qualities of forms that incorporate animalistic or in some cases, vegetative life forms. Here, the grotesque flouts the common conceptions of classical aesthetics, which focus on symmetrical representations of bodies and figures that are unified, harmonious and well-proportioned. Centaurs are a perfect example of this. Residing on mountains or in dark forests, they eat raw flesh and are described as lawless and

bestial and hence, their inclusion in myths about abductions isn't very strange. In some tales, centaurs are also known for violence, savagery, drunkenness and lust. While some theorists associate Centaurs with Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and a figure of excessive consumption; others believe that centaurs have, sometime in history battled against Hercules too.

DEFORMED BODIES

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1818) is the story about Frankenstein who creates a nameless 'monster' - who is assembled through a variety of body parts taken from human corpses. But the 'monster', once created, cannot be controlled by its creator. In the moment when the monster comes to life, Frankenstein is overwhelmed with disgust and he is bewildered by the array of forms, shapes, and motifs he cannot categorize:

The monster's ... yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath, his hair was of lustrous black and flowing his teeth of a pearly white; but these luxuriants only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same color as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.



GROTESQUE PORTRAIT STUDY OF MAN BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/97460779414118084/>

Frankenstein has created a grotesque mishmash of disparate elements. *Frankenstein* offers several examples of grotesque bodies. Victor decides to make his monster excessively big, gigantic, eight feet in height and considerably large in order to make it super-human. As a 'modern Prometheus', Frankenstein attempts to give his creation, a monstrous form and in the process embodies the grotesque reversal of nature's order by engaging in a filthy creation whereby he contravenes the borders of mortality and immortality, beast and human, secular and divine. A consideration of form, shape, and frame are vital when considering the grotesque aspect of *Frankenstein*. Various other literary texts such as those by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Francois Rabelais (1494-1553) and Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) among others, portray grotesque for multiple and multi-layered purposes.

FEMALE GROTESQUE



GOING UNDER THE KNIFE - GROTESQUE PAINTINGS OF COSMETIC SURGERY.



WINGED MERMAID - WALLACE COLLECTION

Feminist theorists have also appropriated the idea of grotesque to elucidate how the female body operates in the patriarchal society. In *Powers of Horrors: An essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva describes the process of abjection as a form of expulsion and rejection of the Other, which she ties to the historical exclusion of women. The process of abjection is associated with the deformed bodies and oozing bodily fluids: the blood, pus, bile, feces, sweat and vomit, break down the borders separating the inside from outside. Abjection is a state of flux where meaning collapses and the body is open and irregular, sprouting and protruding. Horror, pathos, and laughter all come together in Kristeva's theory of 'Monstrous-Feminine'. Within her account, the material maternal body is a corporeal manifestation of the fear of the mother's generative power. In this, she employs a psychoanalytical approach according to which our conscious and rational perception of the everyday is, at all times informed by the far more primal impulses of our unconscious. Kristeva argues that the female body, therefore, becomes abject. She explains the experience of abjection in the following words:

...I experience a gagging sensation and still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly, and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk.

In the passage, the leakages of the inside and the outside indicate fluid boundaries that inspire repugnance and abhorrence which refers to the uncertainty that arises from ambiguity- the result of the separation of a child from the body of the mother. The creation of the subject becomes possible only through a body that is porous, open and in flux. Thus, there is always an anxiety, even a terror of reincorporation into that body which threatens the loss of self and the negation of a clearly defined subjectivity.

Other feminist theorists, such as Mary Russo in her *The Female Grotesque: Risk Excess and Modernity*, also re-examine the concept of grotesque in the light of gender and explores the manner in which women are depicted in the western culture. Russo looks at the iconographic and the historical to locate the role of a woman's body in the discourses of the grotesque. For her, the grotesque includes the incomplete, the unfinished and the evolving body. The female grotesque, therefore, is open, dynamic and boundless, in contrast to the male idealization of female beauty which is static, closed and contained. The possibilities of the grotesque for a feminist project are endlessly infinite.

As we can see, the term grotesque can never be locked into any one meaning, historical period, or specific political function. This means that any attempt to locate the grotesque is by definition bound to fail. For, if there is any one idea that defines grotesque, it is precisely its hybridity and mutability.

GLOSSARY

1. Arabesque - an ornamental design consisting of intertwined flowing lines. Its origins can be traced back to ancient Islamic art.
2. Gargoyles - a grotesque carved human or animal face or figure projecting from the walls of ancient buildings, primarily Churches. They were part of the structural design of the building and were meant to convey rainwater away from the roof.
3. Romanesque - relating to a style of architecture which prevailed in Europe during the Dark Ages. It was a fusion of various styles and is characterized by its semi-circular arches.
4. Romanticism -relating the literary and artistic movement of the nineteenth century which relied heavily on the idea of emotional immediacy. Although impossible to define conclusively, it marked a shift of sensibilities away from Reason and Empiricism towards finer sensibilities and an affinity to Nature.

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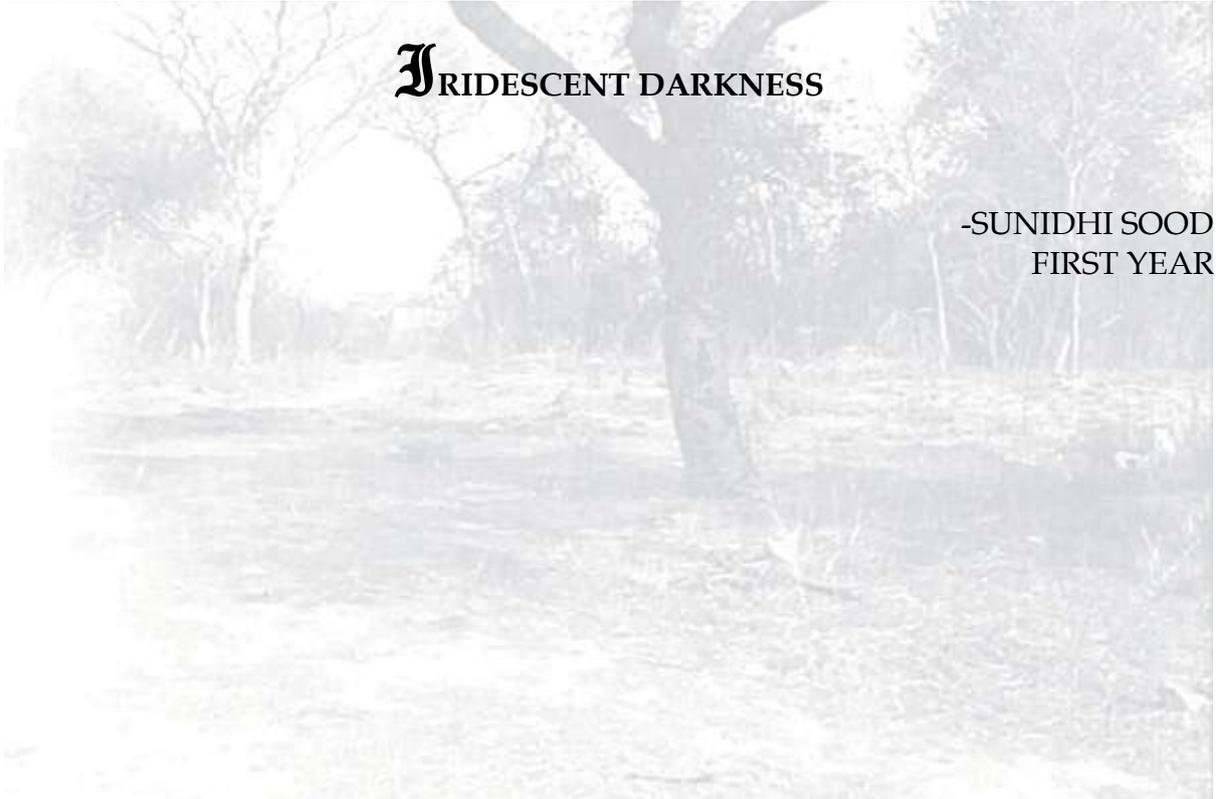
-TANVEER KAUR RIHAL

THIRD YEAR



IRIDESCENT DARKNESS

-SUNIDHI SOOD
FIRST YEAR



THE GLOOMY NIGHT

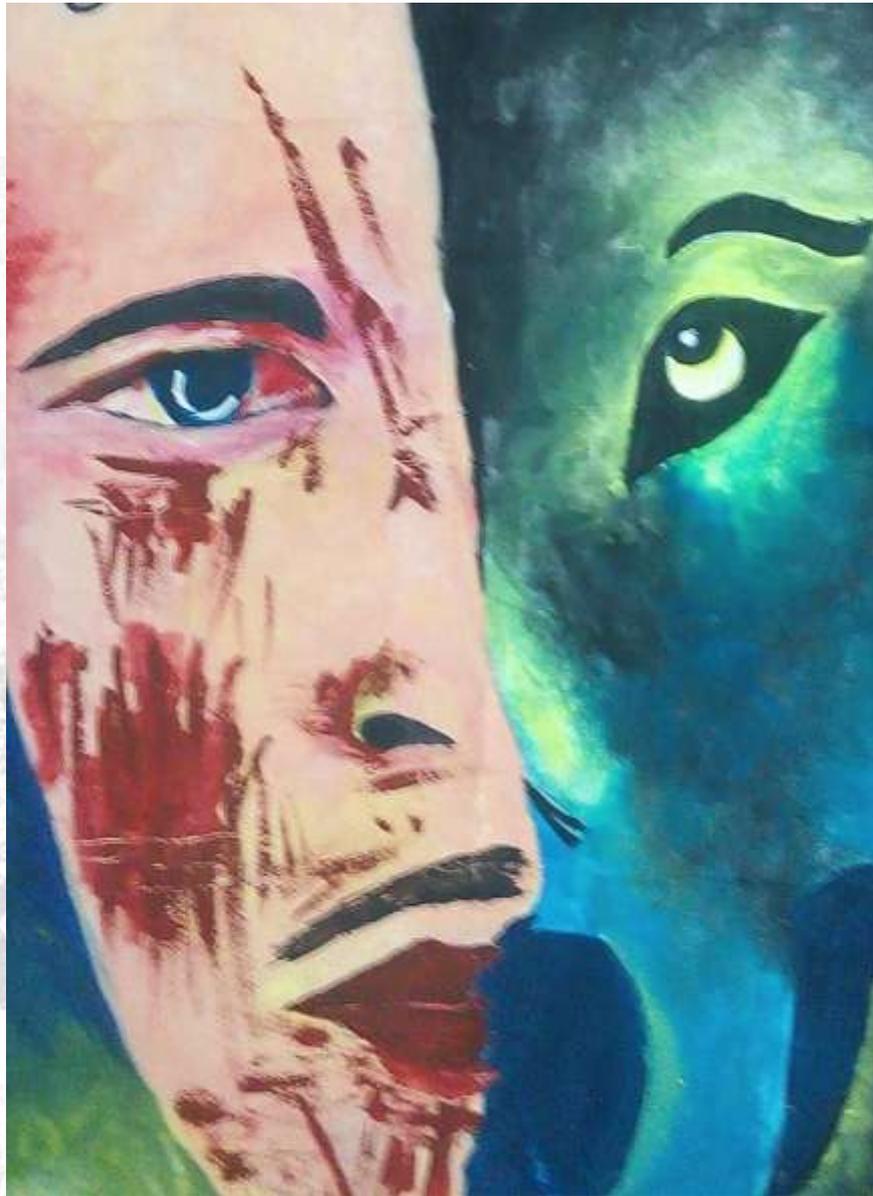
It was the month of December. I was all alone, trying my best to escape the silent cold night and reach home. The sky was pitch black as if it were an empty canvas. The cold ruthless wind roared loudly, as if it was trying to say something to me. The road I was walking on was completely deserted. In hopes of reaching early, I had decided to take the shortcut to home, but I soon started regretting my decision. The trees that stood on both sides of the road felt as if they were watching my steps and were following me with their dark green eyes. The road was so lifeless that I could hear the echo of my erratic heartbeat. The sound of my now fast paced footsteps haunted me. Suddenly, I heard a voice. It was a soft whisper that kept calling my name. "Don't look back", I told myself, but eventually curiosity got the best of me. The minute I turned my head, the street lights started flickering. The winds bellowed furiously making it difficult for me to stay afoot. "Help me! Help me!" my heart cried but only broken screams managed to escape from my lips.

Suddenly the lights went off. The winds stopped all at once, making the trees stand eerily still at their positions. I closed my eyes. Frightened to death, I began to run. But I could still feel something behind me, something close by. Whatever it was, it made me stop. Behind me, I could hear the footsteps coming closer, one step at a time. Gathering all my courage, I pried my eyes open, only to see myself surrounded by a thick coat of grey smoke. I could still hear my name being called, but now it wasn't a mere whisper. I tried to escape the grey cloak of fog, but it had wrapped me completely in itself. Suddenly I saw a hazy figure emerging from within mist. Soon, the figure grew clearer. First, I saw her long raven hair that sat undisturbed on her back despite the winds rushing every which way. Then, I saw her hands, her long pale hands which were reaching out to me. And then, I saw her eyes, her cold, lifeless eyes that took away all my hopes of making it out of here alive. The last thing I remember before the mist and the darkness took over was her long bony hands and the wicked curvature of her lips.

I don't remember what happened next. How my corpse reached my house, I don't know. All I remember is my new home, my grave where my body lies peacefully. I am a spirit and will wander till I take my revenge. Nights will tell my story and the winds will call my name till I am avenged. I will roam on this plane to seek justice for my cold corpse and for my pitiful soul.

-RUBY KAUR SADINA

SECOND YEAR



LUNA'S LUNATIC LOVER

-JASMEET KAUR

'VEGETARIAN VAMPIRES' AND WHATNOTS: GOTHIC IN POPULAR TELEVISION

Contemporary popular culture incorporates a multitude of ideas ranging from literary history to mythology. Certain adaptations of these myths can be lauded for their creative fusion of the ancient past with the modern context, while others remain hopelessly irredeemable. For instance, on the one hand, the PlayStation video game "God of War" is an innovative reworking of Greek and Norse mythology; on the other hand, the genre of the gothic grovels under the burden of myriads of bad Dracula movies. These distasteful spinoffs follow a set pattern- good looking actors, explicitly distasteful sexual content and a miserable script. Scores of Ian Somerhalder and Taylor Lautner could not rescue the Gothic from of its hackneyed treatment in the popular mainstream today.

THE VAMPIRE

Perhaps the only thing that our minds benumbed from binge-watching such television adaptations of the gothic, have managed to retain is the figure of the Vampire. While seduction through vampires was once a sophisticated technique used by writers of the gothic fiction to portray the transgression of boundaries, the vampire today is reduced from the stately Count Dracula to a blood-crazed, sex-hungering, outlandishly gorgeous predator. Oh, how the mighty have fallen!

Although, as part of the modern female audience, we are all guilty of sighing and swooning over these perversions (being infatuated with the undead Salvatore brothers from *The Vampire Diaries* is a sure sign of necrophilia). Certain renditions of this gothic myth, however, are so pitiful (read: Richard Roxburgh as Dracula in *Van Helsing*) that they refuse the audience even this consolatory succour for the eye. However, we must, as responsible students of English Literature, (at least pretend to) rise above such unsavoury renditions of the Gothic.

THE MIXED BAG

Popular television series and movies have somehow found the most ridiculous ways to reconcile absolutely random goblins, ghosts, and monsters with creatures of the Gothic elite. The animated film *Hotel Transylvania*, although thoroughly entertaining, takes logic and throws it straight out the high-arched windows of the castle-hotel and down the dungeons and moats that guard it. Count Dracula, or "Drac", as the blood-sucking nightmare is lovingly addressed by his friends, runs a hotel in no other location in the world than Transylvania- his famous lair. He entertains a Werewolf family -natural enemies to Vampires, as popular culture would have us believe, so "entertained" is not a likely possibility. There is also a Frankenstein's monster couple, which again, predates our beloved "Drac" as far as literary history is concerned. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was published in 1818, while Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was published in 1897. Apart from these, the movie feeds the audience to an overdose of grotesque creatures, flouting the idea of the gothic to the extreme.

GOTHIC IN MARKETING

The Gothic has become a successful marketing strategy, thanks to concepts like Halloween which have infiltrated cultures of even the Orient (Halleluiah unto Edward Said!), just as everything else- from our way of dressing and talking, right down to impressing and squatting pumpkins. Halloween candies have (quite literally) sugar-coated the terror that must have been felt at the sight of such well-dressed ogres as we see at cosplays today. Gothic today is being used and abused as a marketing gimmick to sell clothing, or make music, or throw parties, or form 'demonic' cults.

THE WORST OF ALL

The one ultimate degradation of the gothic that we can all indisputably settle on is its depiction in the *Twilight* novels and movies (at least most of us will pretend that this is the case). A Stone-cold vampire who seems to be afflicted with an incurable malady of the posteriors meets a socially awkward robotic female *homo sapien*. It could easily qualify as a plot for a science-fiction wherein a cure for the ailing vampire is developed and the robotic female finally finds company among other robots from the future, leading to a happily-ever-after for all involved.

Jokes apart, it seems that *Twilight* works along the genre of the gothic romance, but baffles our understanding of both the gothic, and romance. As for the backdrop, an American high school teeming with millennials would have been the last place Shelley or Stoker would use as a gothic setting. It is also responsible for the genesis of 'vegetarian vampires'- what in the name of God was Stephanie Meyer thinking! The gothic in *Twilight* evokes no feelings of terror- it is a distant land of rainbows, unicorns, and candy-canes. As for the romance, it is not unlike the other high school romances of commercial cinema: drama, jealousy, minor inconveniences exaggerated beyond all sense of proportion abound.

Gothic as a spatial, architectural concept was embodied into the psyche of the characters by novelists of the genre. It also deals with the politics of transgression, and often the blurring line between the natural and supernatural. While it has always been a popular genre in literature, and not a very estimable one, the gothic is still rife with rich psychological and political connotations. Television today has sentenced its intellectual undertones to replace them with crude, simplistic portrayals, fit only for vacuous entertainment.

-CHITWAN KAUR

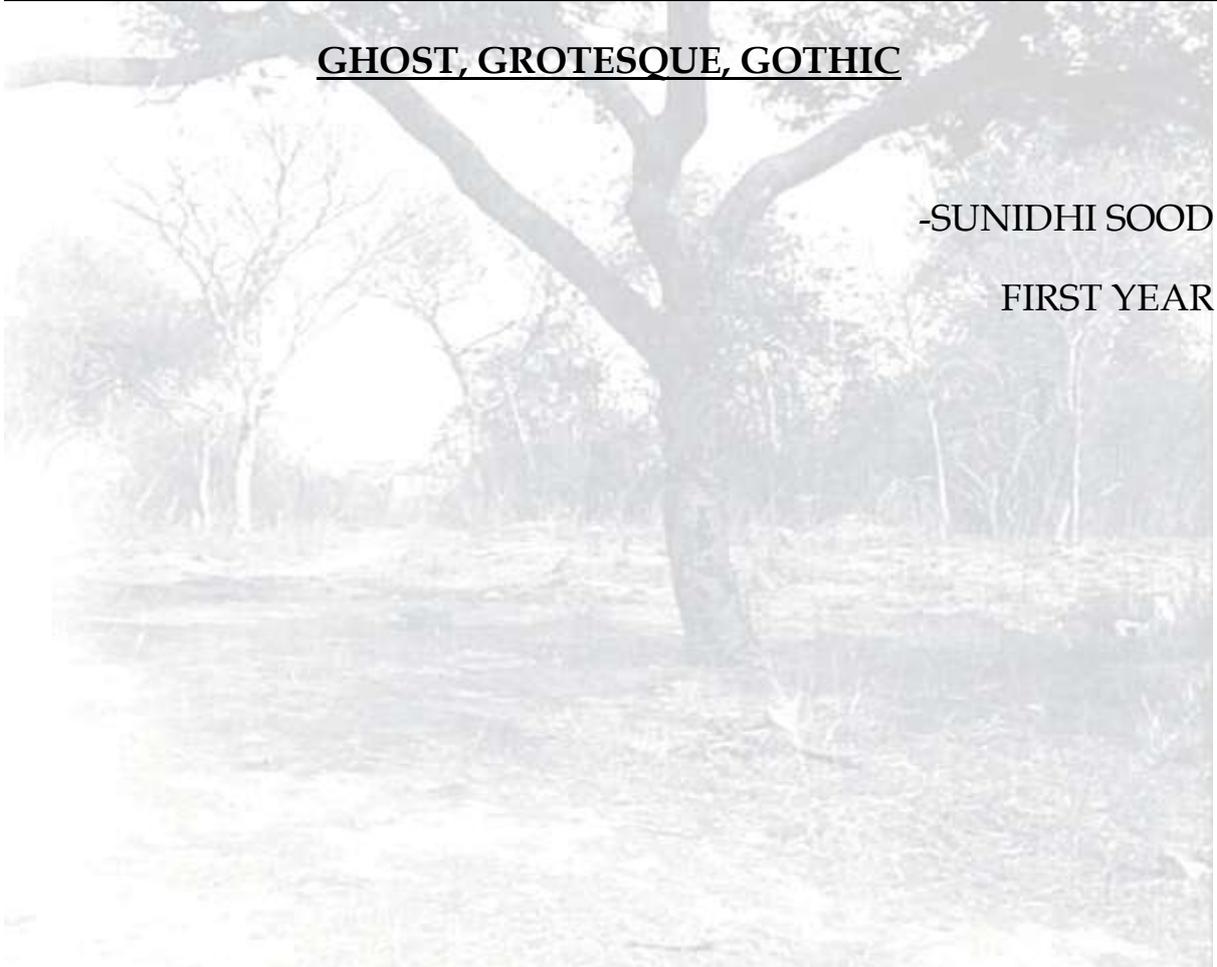
SECOND YEAR



GHOST, GROTESQUE, GOTHIC

-SUNIDHI SOOD

FIRST YEAR



ONE DREADED NIGHT

He said to her, "I don't believe it."

He mocked and blamed all her wit

Not knowing he'd soon lie in a pit

Of the strange and the unknown that makes one's teeth grit.

The creepy climbers clenched the windows hard

As if they in them some secrets did guard

The old house, its walls all marred

Stood in the woods, its memories scarred.

The night fell and the wind gusted fast

The eerie house its shadow cast

Hold your breaths, you'll be aghast

For you'd hear clumsy footsteps walk past.

To avoid the sight she shut her eyes tight

Tried to give her fear a tough fight

The horrendous illusions of her mind increased the plight

Though she tried to repel with all her might.

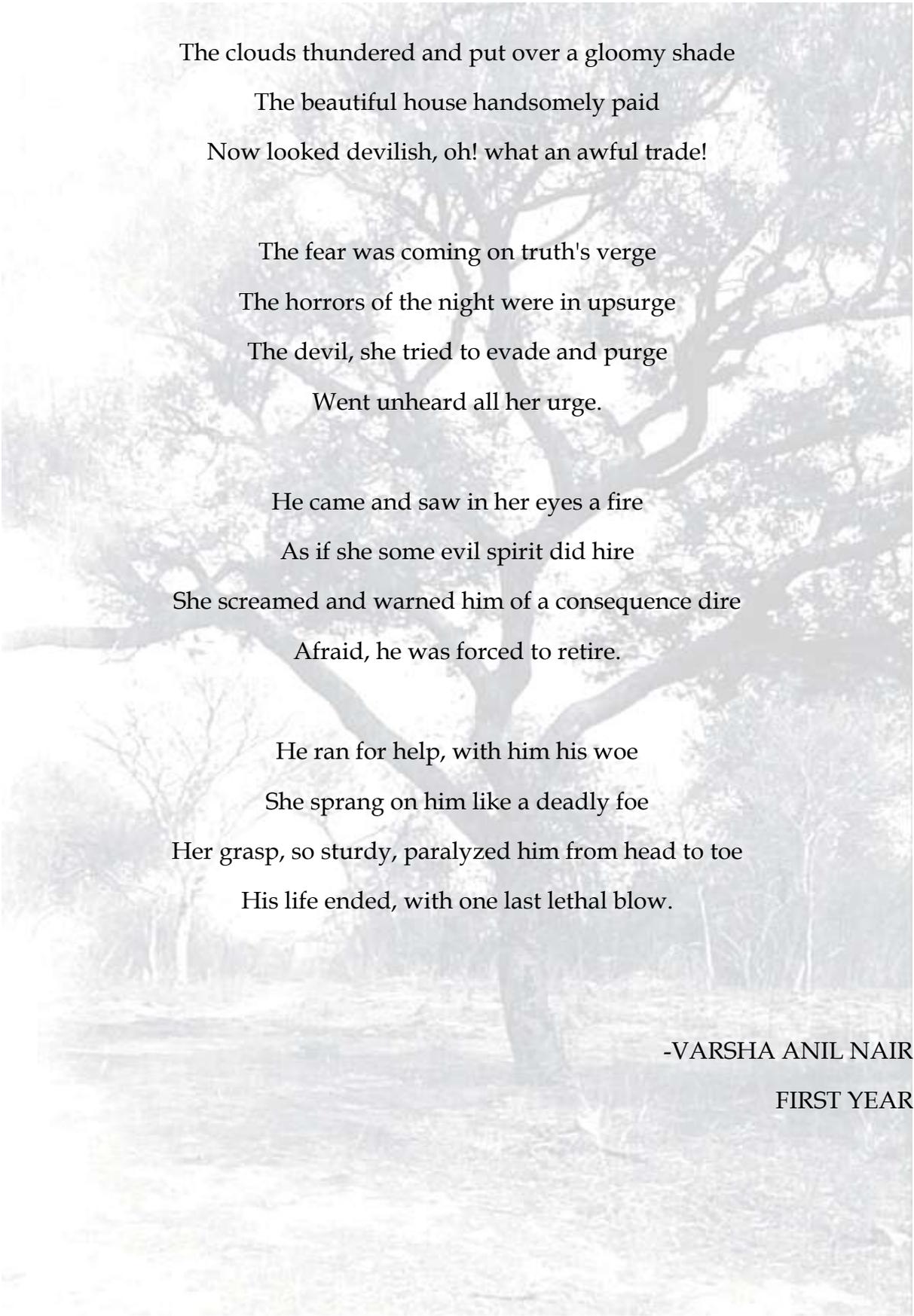
Disgusted at her thoughts, he walked out of the room

Little did he know it would lead to his doom

Death with his dark bloody hands did loom

Awaiting him with a monstrous tomb.

Wind blew hard the curtains swayed



The clouds thundered and put over a gloomy shade
The beautiful house handsomely paid
Now looked devilish, oh! what an awful trade!

The fear was coming on truth's verge
The horrors of the night were in upsurge
The devil, she tried to evade and purge
Went unheard all her urge.

He came and saw in her eyes a fire
As if she some evil spirit did hire
She screamed and warned him of a consequence dire
Afraid, he was forced to retire.

He ran for help, with him his woe
She sprang on him like a deadly foe
Her grasp, so sturdy, paralyzed him from head to toe
His life ended, with one last lethal blow.

-VARSHA ANIL NAIR

FIRST YEAR

MY LUCID MISERY

I fled *the house* as fast as I could. The sky was crying raucously, its teardrops sealing my hair and my clothes to my paper-pale skin. "Where was I going?" I asked myself but had no answers.

Unknowingly, I ventured deep into the dark uninviting woods. It was so dark, that I could almost fool myself into believing that my eyes were, in fact, closed. The moon, hidden behind the grey clouds, hardly did me any favours, for everywhere I looked, I saw wicked sinister figures, I saw big yellow eyes watching me from the shadows, I heard the crackling of branches from behind, startling me every now and then. Everything in the woods, I felt, was mocking me, siding itself with what I was running from, as if to tell me that I could not escape it. I thought it was my mind playing games with me, that I still hadn't lost my sanity, for that was what I wanted to believe. "Keep Going", I told myself. And that's what I did, the only thing I could.

Running. Running endlessly.

I knew it was following me, I could feel its vicious, rotten presence, sending cold shivers down my spine, making me run faster than my legs allowed. It felt like the path I was on would never end, for there was no way out, no way for me to see the light again. But still I carried on.

I could not say for sure where I was headed towards. All I knew was that I could not afford to stop. Suddenly, I found myself falling into a fathomless black pit of nothingness. I tried to grab onto something but my hands encountered only the inky void. By now I knew that all my struggles were for naught. I collided with a hard surface, the impact of it making my whole body shrivel in pain. I opened my eyes in confusion, for something felt different. And the moment I did, I felt fear seep into my bones. *How did I end up here again!?* In front of me was *the house*, once more. It had haunted my dreams for the past five years. I was benumbed with terror when I realized that it was, after all, not a figment of my imagination. The old house seemed wrapped in an aura of unnerving silence, as if it was waiting for me to return, as if it knew I would be back. I remember I was out in the woods, I remember running, I know that I was finally out of there, but somehow, I was back to where I had begun from. It did not take me long to figure out how I ended up here, or what brought me back. It closed the door with a loud bang, letting me know, that now there was no escape, nowhere to run. And in that moment, all I wanted was for me to open my eyes, for this was all but a dream.

Wasn't it?

-SUNIDHI SOOD
FIRST YEAR

STROLL THROUGH THE SPOOKY SANJAY VAN



When the glittery malls and cafes of Delhi fail to amuse me and my friends, the onus falls on the less visited, less popular parks and other such places. On a particularly sunny afternoon, we decided to go to Sanjay Van. I had read a few online blogs about it and was excited at the prospect of going to a proclaimed haunted place, for once. In fact, the rumors about 'ghost' sightings around the area only served to make the trip more alluring for me. Secure in the knowledge I had gleaned from countless books on detective fiction and my repertoire of horror stories, I was more than ready to confront the ever-elusive phantoms of Sanjay Van. We packed some essential food items and a camera (to capture any 'paranormal' activity) and set out for what we were sure was going to be the biggest adventures of our lives.

After a long car ride to Vasant Kunj, we reached our destination and found that it was a lush dense forest. The surroundings of Sanjay Van include the ruins of Lal Kot, a cemetery. This lent an air of mystery and intrigue to our exploit. A few *dhabas* (local eateries) are located just outside the forest perimeter and they seemed to be doing brisk business, thanks in part to the throng of aspiring ghost-busters such as my friends and I. This area is known as *Tankush* and is frequented by college students who want to enjoy delicious food at pocket-friendly prices. While the eateries attract the students, the deserted roads lure the bikers. If you're lucky, you might even witness a few bike races. For the small but die-hard community of bikers in and around Delhi, it is the perfect destination.

On entering the forest its tranquillity and bountiful beauty capture one's attention immediately. The first thing that struck us were the trees- numerous and huge. Living in the heart of a metropolitan sometimes makes us obtuse to the sheer magnanimity of Nature's canvas. All thoughts of ghost-hunting disappeared as we

were enthralled by the unpretentious beauty of Sanjay Van. The constant chirping of birds does not let the forest stay silent at all. They seemed to be competing with each other to capture the attention of the already spellbound tourists. Needless to say, bird-lovers will not be disappointed if they visit the forest.



At Sanjay Van, the haunted and the historical co-exist. One may find here, the ruins of the walls of Lal Kot which were in the modern times, renamed Quila Rai Pithora. This wall is believed to be still lamenting for the fate of the legendary Rajput prince, Prithviraj Chauhan. Sanjay Van receives a lot of visitors during the daytime. And not many of them seemed deterred by it being 'haunted'.

However, as the sun begins to set and the night approaches, one hardly sees anybody going towards the forest. Many firmly believe that the area is possessed by preternatural powers. It seems as if the forest magically transforms into a stage for a bone-chilling ghost saga right before one's eyes, as soon as the sun sets. The *kabristan* (a Muslim cemetery), seems to be the most unsettling place of all. The association between graveyards and ghosts is as old as time. Even during the day, people are reluctant to venture into this territory but at night it becomes a veritable haunted house. Various Sufi saints are believed to have also been laid to rest here. This has led some to the conclusion that the area is teeming with paranormal energy. It is believed the graves belong of those first Sufis who came to Delhi.



Some people have reported the sightings of a lady dressed in a white sari near these grounds. As is not uncommon, it is said that she committed suicide by hanging herself from a Peepal tree, and hence can be seen walking around the tree at night. Some even claim to have seen her body hanging from its branches. A few residents of the area report that unsettling noises are heard regularly at night here.

Personally, my experience of Sanjay Van was disappointing in so far as paranormal sightings were concerned. Despite my best efforts, none of my photographs were able to capture even a whiff of the occult. However, I cannot deny feeling a little on edge during the five hours I spent there. There were not many people around us that day, owing to it being a weekday, and more than once I got the eerie sense of being gazed at. But reflecting on the events of the day, now, as I sit before the computer screen, I realize that it had more to do with my nerves than the machinations of supernatural forces. Certainly, my friends constantly humming the title track of a popular paranormal series did not help my frayed nerves.

As I was soon to find out for myself, most of these stories are baseless and no more than an amusing pastime for the locals. Most of the times, poor children are buried in the burial ground there. The deeper I looked into it, the less credible the haunted tales seemed. All said and done, it seems like a clichéd story born out of the minds of the not-so-imaginatively-blessed. These stories are most likely encouraged by the local shopkeepers to keep their business alive.

In spite of all the rumors, Sanjay Van continues to be the place where people come to enjoy a few moments of solitude away from the busy schedule and hustle-bustle of the city life. Once I calmed down I had a very good time with my friends and would love to re-visit soon. I insist that everyone must visit Sanjay Van once, to enjoy the fresh air, the breeze, to cherish the sight of beautiful birds chirping and to explore the forest in the broad daylight, but if you are planning to visit the forest in the dead of the night, do so entirely at your own discretion!

-SAROVI KAUR KOCHAR

FIRST YEAR

THE HUSBANDS OF CAVALNARRY HILLS

Among all women I had the most fortunate life
Since I had wealth from all my husbands five.
For them, I was their mate but for me they were all pursuits of leisure
Too late they realized that my only goal was pleasure.

Accused them of infidelity, I cheated, lied
But they felt so guilty that to gain my forgiveness they all tried.

Until the day they died,
With all my wishes they complied.
But now they are back from the dead

And haunt my marital bed.

At midnight my first husband cries, "Betrayal, betrayal...I still lie on the hilly
ground".

Levitating beds, floating objects, and strange noises are all around
'Cause I deceived men whose love was fair and sound
Hale storms and terrifying sounds abound.

My second husband also the house haunts
The third fourth and fifth add to the ghostly taunts.

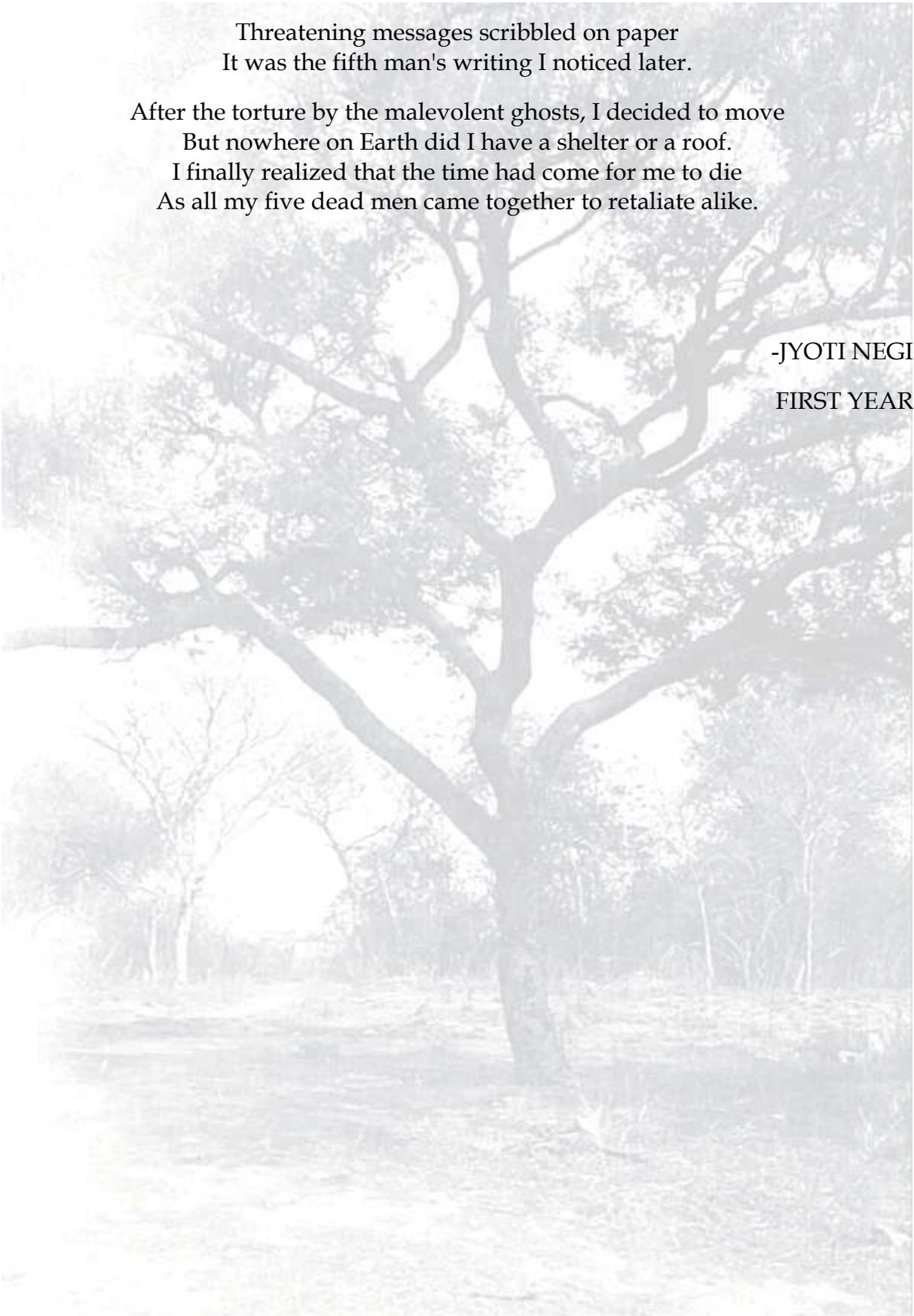
Strange noises in the middle of night give me the chills
The presence of dead inhabitants is known to all in Cavalnarry hills.
The ghosts take pleasure in tormenting me, oh! what a curse!
Through the walls, their ghoulish laughter can be heard.

Often chairs are be pulled suddenly from underneath
A man standing in the doorway, his eyes with anger seeth
Three yank and twist my limbs and two others bang the doors
The lights in the rooms flicker and the window panes smash with force.

The third husband now has a face similar to a desiccated beehive

His head leaning unnaturally on one side.

Sound of footsteps scurrying around the house and voices of people talking
The vibration so distinct, I can hear my fourth husband walking.
Claw-like scratches mysteriously appear across my chest each night
They do everything to worsen my plight.



Threatening messages scribbled on paper
It was the fifth man's writing I noticed later.

After the torture by the malevolent ghosts, I decided to move
But nowhere on Earth did I have a shelter or a roof.
I finally realized that the time had come for me to die
As all my five dead men came together to retaliate alike.

-JYOTI NEGI

FIRST YEAR



Looming Shadows

-SUNIDHI SOOD

FIRST YEAR

THE ONE WHO IS BROKEN, OR THE ONE WHO'D BREAK?

Cut, beaten, broken,

Distorted and deformed beyond recognition;

She still stands tall and fierce,

In spite of the cruelties of someone—

One of her kind gave birth to.

How could clipping her wings

(read: hands, hair, clothes and what not) help;

Untameable, she is wild.

Your atrocities sure did kill her

Yet her spirit, unforgiving which is

Would one day avenge.

The ear-piercing click of her heels

In bold steps, is all that would echo.

Petrified, in the dark

You'd look for somebody to shoo away. But who?

Hearing the spine-chilling ghostly sounds,

Feeling the presence of another being;

What will you do

To pacify that racing heart of yours?

Violence needn't always be physical;

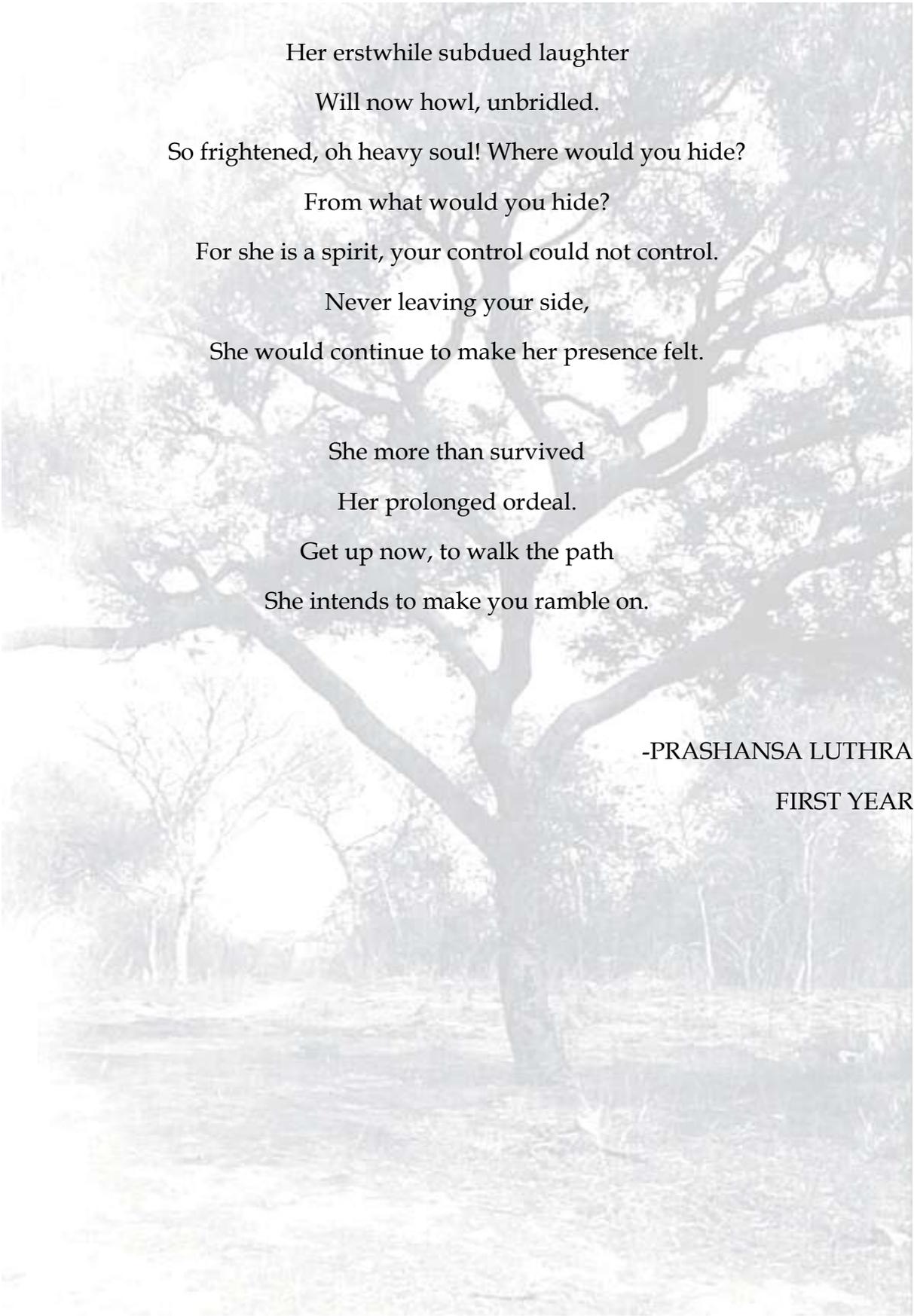
Who better than her, would know that?

No sticks, no fire

No guns would be needed,

The way little girls play with dolls

Is how, your soul would be played with.



Her erstwhile subdued laughter
Will now howl, unbridled.
So frightened, oh heavy soul! Where would you hide?
From what would you hide?
For she is a spirit, your control could not control.
Never leaving your side,
She would continue to make her presence felt.

She more than survived
Her prolonged ordeal.
Get up now, to walk the path
She intends to make you ramble on.

-PRASHANSA LUTHRA

FIRST YEAR

BOOK REVIEW:
NORTHANGER ABBEY

And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce? Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry.

-Henry Tilney, *Northanger Abbey*

Jane Austen (1775-1817) wrote her first work *Northanger Abbey* when she was eighteen years old but the novel was published posthumously, at the end of 1817. *Northanger Abbey* is a meta-fictional text which satirizes the surge of gothic novels in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century British print market. Most of these works were being written to meet the popular need of the consumers and were rather lacking in literary merit. The story of *Northanger Abbey* revolves around a young girl named Catherine Morland and the clergyman Henry Tilney, the second son of General Tilney. They meet during their visit to Bath, become friends and later Catherine is invited to the Tilney residence at Northanger Abbey.

When given the invitation to visit the Northanger Abbey she immediately seizes the opportunity to visit because it will allow her to see a 'gothic abbey' which she reads about in her novels all the time. All the frightening ideas and attributes that Catherine has read about and believes to be associated with all abbeys create an atmosphere of suspense in the novel. Though Henry points out her problematic obsession with the word 'abbey' and says: "you have formed a very favorable idea of the abbey" Catherine's imagination does not stop. *Northanger Abbey* becomes an alluring mystery and a metaphor for her and she starts imaging herself as the heroine of one of her gothic novels. The imagery used to describe the house and the furniture adds to the fear and enigma related to the Tilneys' home. Henry Tilney himself while discussing the house warns Catherine and says-

Will not your mind misgive you, when you find yourself in this gloomy chamber- too lofty and extensive for you, with only the feeble rays of single lamp to take in its size- its walls hung with tapestry exhibiting figure as large as life, and the bed, of dark green stuff or purple velvet, presenting even a funeral appearance? Will not your heart sink within you?

Austen shows her heroine as a young and impressionable girl fond of reading gothic and mysterious novels, specifically those by the popular contemporary writer of gothic fiction- Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823). Catherine's reading habits and her love for mystery lead her to believe that *Northanger Abbey* is also at the centre of a perfidious plot.

All the bizarre things Catherine has imagined and created in her mind about Northanger Abbey turn to nothing once she is acquainted with it. There is nothing extraordinary in the Tilney residence and thus once again Austen mocks at the idea of the 'mysterious abbey'. Like Emily in *Udolpho* Catherine starts searching for the evidence and proofs behind Mrs. Tilney's death but finds nothing save an old age chest. Initially, a chest in Mrs. Tilney's room creates tension and suspense but later it turns out that it contains nothing but some old letters and papers. Austen portrays Catherine as a highly imaginative and sharp-witted girl but also as one who fails to direct her energies away from the fictive world of gothic novels. She lives in the ivory tower of her imagination and through the course of the novel has to learn to come to terms with the real world.

The references to *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1796) -also by Ann Radcliffe- makes the reader think about the differences and similarities between *Northanger* and *Udolpho* and also add to the mysterious tone of the text. The reader's curiosity is increased. Austen satirizes the gothic novels of her time at the expense of her protagonist. Catherine fails to discern the limits of the real and the fictional. Very often Catherine's imagination seems to prevail over the realm of reality. She begins to perceive a 'mystery' behind Mrs. Tilney's death and her suspicion about it leads almost to the end of her relationship with Henry. Other characters in the book include Henry's severe and somber father - General Tilney and his siblings- Eleanor and Frederick. Captain Tilney also acts as the gothic villain in the text. He seduces young women and then gets his way out of them for his own sexual pleasure.

This was the time when English literature was changing its shape from Romantic and Gothic to Victorian. This change is glimpsed in Austen's novel. She does away with supernatural elements of the gothic genre but the suspense is still maintained throughout because of the protagonist's anxiety to solve the mystery. The novel has the charm unique to Jane Austen's work as it hints at the domesticity of the setting, but it also departs from her style as it is set against a gothic backdrop. Like any other novel written by Austen, *Northanger Abbey* also mocks at the patriarchal notions of marriage, wherein the heroine must wed a man of great fortune. Austen's efforts and pains can be seen while reading this text which deals with the idea of gothic fiction at its core.

-VAISHALI ARORA
THIRD YEAR



BLOODCURDLING EYES

-HARJAS JB SINGH
FIRST YEAR

THROUGH THE WOODLANDS

I reckon the stroke of the dusky twilight,
On the solemn skies of a desolate December night,
Where the intemperate air moved along the northern edge
Rushing through my forlorn soul.

The wailing of the rooster,
And the howling of man-devouring animals
Launched a shudder along my spine.
The ghoulish mossed trees sieved my repressed sighs.

Moving through the wicked woodland with a racked spirit,
Where the leaves were withering and sere,
Where the thunder rumbled high
And the flowers were shrouded in an eerie silence.

Along the lone way, trying to embolden my quivering soul
I heard a hiss in my ear,
I felt the accelerated throb of my grim pulse,
The tapping of a hand on my back,
And the heavy pants of a dry mouth on my neck
Made me turn, trembling.

I confronted the dreadful lady holding a dead baby;
The sinister countenance of her air,
Her hoary disheveled hair,
And the splattering of blood over her face,
My heart was racing;

The ominous echo from the horrors of my past
Follow me like a hellhound.

Screaming..! Hysterically screaming!
Drenched with the raging horrors,
I recoiled;
I shrieked but was seized onto by the hands of terror,
Could not escape my phantasm,
I drowned and drowned so, only to be bedevilled evermore.

-YOGITA MALHOTRA
SECOND YEAR



THE WRONG TURN

-SUNIDHI SOOD
FIRST YEAR

GOTHIC, GROTESQUE & GHOSTS: MARY SHELLEY' FRANKENSTEIN

I saw the *pale student of unhallowed arts* kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the *hideous phantasm of a man* stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be; for *supremely frightful* would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.

- Mary Shelley

 riginating from the French word *Gothique*, the term gothic has several meanings attached to it. However, in literature, the term gothic fiction, a sub-genre of Gothic, comes to be defined as a genre which combines fiction, horror, death and at times romance. The genre of gothic fiction originated in England in the second half of the eighteenth-century, with Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), subtitled "A Gothic Story".

Gothic fiction involves elements of the supernatural, dealing with events occurring in nature that cannot be easily explained or are beyond human control. The story follows a plot of suspense and mystery, takes place in pseudo-medieval and mostly ruinous castles which emulate gothic architecture, and produces a sense of wonder and terror by engaging the imagination of the reader. The gothic further employs the imagery of death, decay, and macabre to induce a feeling of horror in the reader through the presence of corpses, skeletons, graveyards or by describing any atrocious event(s) in the novel in explicit detail, which fill the reader with disgust and fear. Each gothic novel is different and unique with respect to its plot, characters, props employed and the story's setting.

Gothic literature is intimately associated with the Gothic Revival architecture of the same era. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century was a time of great discoveries and explorations in the fields of science, religion, and industry - termed as the Enlightenment. With the onset of the Romantic period in the mid-18th century, there was an increased interest in the Middle Ages which revived the Gothic. While doing so, it also rejected the rationalism and uptight clarity of the Enlightenment. The ruins of gothic buildings gave rise to multiple linked emotions by representing the inevitable decay and collapse of human creation. Writers of the gothic fiction in English often associated medieval buildings with what they saw as a dark and terrifying period, characterized by harsh laws enforced by torture and with mysterious, fantastic, and superstitious rituals.

The grotesque on the other hand comes to define the strange, fantastic, ugly, incongruous, unpleasant or disgusting shapes and forms which produce in the audience or the reader a feeling of uncomfortable bizarreness as well as sympathetic pity. The grotesque is used as an effective artistic means to convey grief and pain to the audience or the reader and is often linked with satire and tragic-comedy. Gothic literature often has grotesque components in terms of character, style, and location. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein's monster or creature is an example of a grotesque character. In other cases, the environment described may be grotesque - whether urban (examples include Charles Dickens' portrayal of the city of London in his novels, with all its filth and darkness) or the literature of the American south which has sometimes been termed as Southern Gothic.

MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

Mary Shelley began writing what she thought would be a short story, but with the encouragement of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), she expanded the tale into a full-fledged novel. It was published anonymously, with a preface written by Percy Shelly and a dedication to the political philosopher and Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin (1756-1836). Mary Shelley was also considerably influenced by the experiments made by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) on one hand, and on the other, by Luigi Galvani (1737-1798) and Giovanni Aldini (1752-1834), who were physicists of note of the day and also called 'real-life Frankensteins'. Thus, Mary Shelley had an enormous fund of written material, including her father's highly influential novel *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, published in 1794.

Shelley's Gothic fiction *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* narrates a horrifying tale of the downfall of a young Genevese scientist named Victor Frankenstein, who in his ambitious pursuit of scientific knowledge gains an insight into the process of creation of life and gives birth to a creature of his own. Frankenstein's creation ends up destroying him and his loved ones, as his creature rebels against him for bringing his physically hideous and monstrous form to life, and then abandoning him. Victor Frankenstein refuses to perform his duties towards his creation and leaves his creature to fend for himself in a society that constantly shuns him on the basis of his terrifying appearance.

FRANKENSTEIN: A GOTHIC FICTION

Set in Switzerland and Germany, the novel explores continental Europe which was still considerably unknown to the readers of Mary Shelley's novel. Mary Shelley incorporates scenes that take place in distant and unexplored regions like the Swiss Alps, Russia, and the North Pole. Such a setting creates a sense of mystery and

suspense for the readers who have not yet explored the unknown regions of the world.

Many passages in the novel evoke feelings of fear and terror. Victor Frankenstein gives birth to a creature, raising him from the dead. He wanders the streets of Ingolstadt at night, searching for body parts of the dead in charnel houses and graveyards in order to sew his creature piece by piece in his laboratory. He cuts himself off from the rest of the world, and at times is repulsed by the task he has undertaken:

“Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay?”

On seeing his own creation come to life Victor is struck with horror and runs away in fear and disgust. The monster is gigantic in stature, his yellow skin scarcely covering the muscles and the arteries, his watery eyes almost of the same color as dun white sockets, and his shriveled complexion and black lips add the sense of disgust. These horrifying depictions make the novel rich in visual imagery. Victor Frankenstein’s laboratory which is a filthy and dark workshop where he works tirelessly for nearly two years and where he gives birth to his creation, adds the element of mystery and gloom for the reader:

It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. . . It was already one in the morning, the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out when by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs... I had desired it with an ardor that far succeeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless *horror* and *disgust* filled my heart.

Descriptions of Victor’s several unexpected meetings with his creature – when his creation strangles Victor’s brother William Frankenstein, or when his friend Henry Clerval and his new bride Elizabeth Lavenza die under mysterious circumstances– are descriptions that are suggestive of the gothic in the novel. Extreme weather conditions – stormy and rainy weather or freezing cold- accompany such descriptions and add to the feeling of fear and gloom.

Forebodings or ill-omens haunt his family when Victor prepares to leave for the University of Ingolstadt, in Germany. Elizabeth falls ill because of scarlet fever, and Victor’s mother dies days before Victor’s departure to Ingolstadt. The cost of his scientific pursuit, bordering on madness, weighs heavily on Victor. He compromises the lives of his family and friends. Moreover, Shelley is said to have borrowed her protagonist’s name from the Frankenstein castle that sits in ruins upon a hilltop in Germany. All these elements meet to contribute to the Gothic in the novel.

THE GROTESQUE IN *FRANKENSTEIN*

In pursuit of selfish desires, and driven by a Faustian ambition, Victor Frankenstein creates his creature from the lifeless matter of dead and decaying bodies and intends to surpass the bounds of life and death by being the Creator himself. However, Victor's vision goes awry when he first sees his creation come to life. What he thought would be a beautiful creation, turns out to be a physically monstrous one – gigantic, hideous, and frightening. So terror struck is Victor by his creation's monstrous appearance that he abandons it at once, running away from it from the moment it comes to life.

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the creature is eight foot tall and hideously ugly, which produces a feeling of fearful repugnance in the reader. However, the creature is not a real monster, but is, in fact, sensitive, emotional, eloquent and intelligent. His painful experiences as he struggles to get accepted in the human society, as he is repeatedly and unjustly shunned on the basis of his monstrous appearance produce a feeling of pity for the creature's ordeals. Thus, Frankenstein's creature or monster is a grotesque character yet it simultaneously produces the feelings of both disgust and empathy in the reader.

Through the monster's ordeal, Mary Shelley puts forth the idea of monstrosity as a social construct where it is the societal prejudice against the creature's appearance that forces him to become a real monster. Also, Mary Shelley analogizes the monster to a motherless child. There is a clear parallel here between the 'monster' and Mary Shelley own childhood since she lost her mother at her birth and felt neglected by her father. She also analogizes the monster to the oppressed classes as the creature realizes the societal prejudice towards those who have no money and no influence in the society, and are thus forced to slave away their lives working for those who possess everything when he begins learning about the human society.

After Victor's death, the creature kills himself by throwing himself into a burning pile of wood, as both his revenge and his reasons to live come to an end with Victor's death. Thus, the creature makes for a grotesque being and nevertheless deserves the sympathy of the reader.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

Mary Shelley's novel is not just a gothic fiction but is also infused with elements of literary Romanticism. Many major Romantic poets and writers made extensive use of the gothic, as both these movements simultaneously rose to prominence in the second half of the eighteenth-century. Mary Shelley was surrounded by major Romantic poets of her time including her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley and the couple's friend Lord Byron (1788-1824). Even as a child Mary Shelley was exposed to the likes of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) who were influenced by her father's political philosophy and would visit his home. The Romantics were strongly affected

by the gothic and played a part in shaping the genre.

Though as a genre, the gothic has always been looked down upon as an 'immature' and 'sensational' mode of writing, but it has nevertheless been thoroughly used by the Romantics to portray the underlying horrors of the everyday world and to bring to light the ills of the society. According to the critic David Punter:

Gothic can be seen as a way of imagining the unimaginable, whether it be the distant depths of history or even the more distant soundings of the unconscious. The Gothic is a distorting lens, a magnifying lens; but the shapes which we see through it have nonetheless a reality which cannot be apprehended in any other way.

Similarly, Mary Shelley uses her novel *Frankenstein* to critique certain issues of her time, which include a political satire on her father's radical political philosophies, a critique of both the Enlightenment and the Romantic ideals, and patriarchy.

Mary Shelley was the daughter of two revolutionary intellectuals Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), and William Godwin. William Godwin, like many Romantics, was a staunch supporter of The French Revolution (1789-1799) and believed that as a result of the Revolution, radical change was around the corner. Thus, Godwin took to penning down his radical political philosophy in his novel *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and his book *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), where he illustrates the effects of an abusive and tyrannical government and reveals the devastating effects that established power can result in. Godwin was attacked by anti-Jacobins for his rejection of political institutions, for voicing his utopian beliefs, and in part for his marriage to the pioneering feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft in 1797. In fiction, the imagery of monstrosity was evoked to depict Godwin and Wollstonecraft as begetters of anarchy and destruction. According to the conservatives, utopian reformers bred monsters of anarchy and destruction, just as utopian theories beget savage mobs who rage out of control like the revolutionaries in France.

However, Mary Shelley rejected her parents' radicalism and moved towards a more critical view of the French Revolution, evoking the monster imagery in her novel *Frankenstein* and thus offering a critique of her father's radical political philosophies. This inclination towards radicalism of the Romantics and their strong belief in the Revolution as a means of change is what Mary Shelley critiques in her novel.

-AISHWARYA GULATI

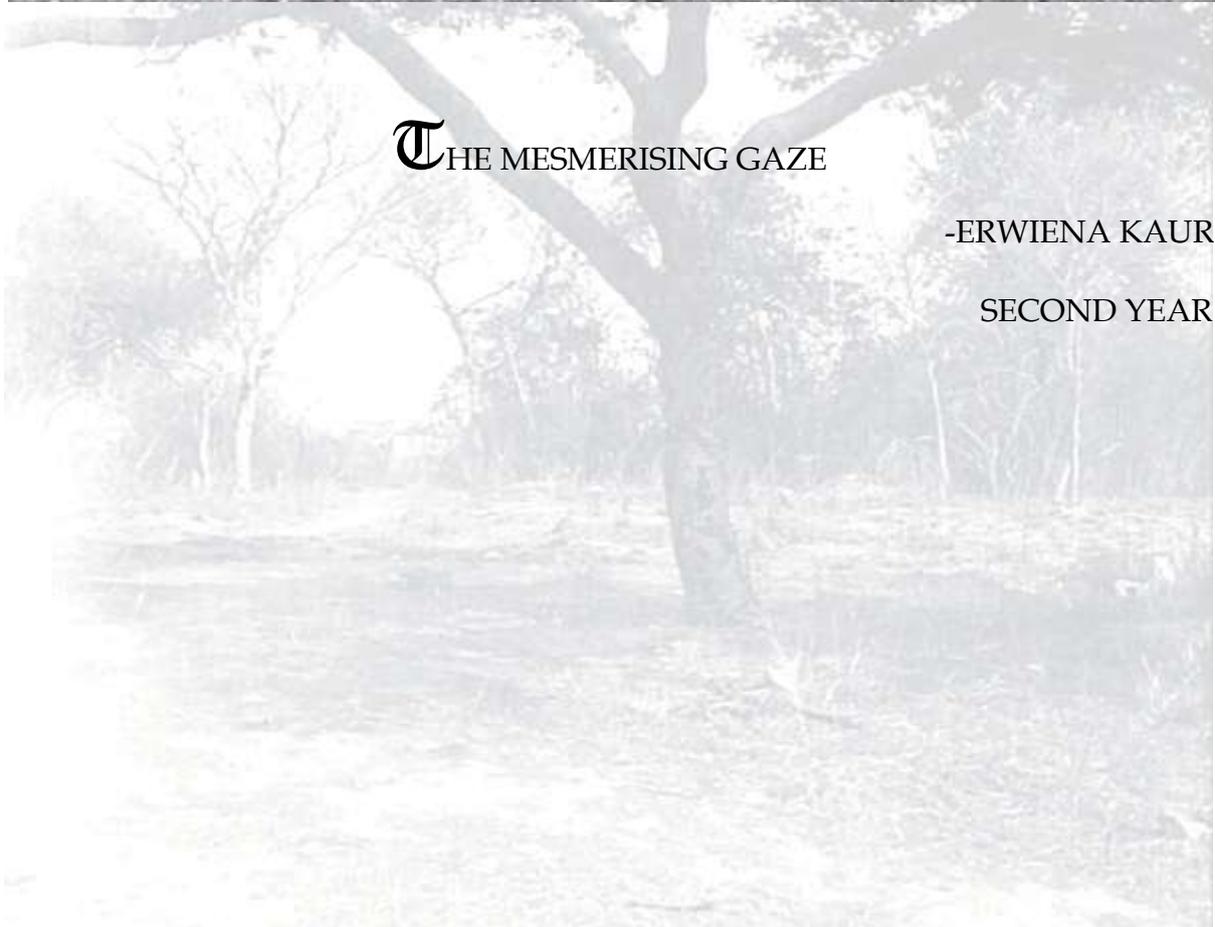
THIRD YEAR



THE MESMERISING GAZE

-ERWIENA KAUR

SECOND YEAR



THE LAMENTING SOUL

That night I visioned myself dying
And swore to eternity I would never come lamenting
She started to say and
The midnight oil was lighting
The shadows were futile but to her
His presence was frightening
This evil comes to me every night
Aiming to slaughter my snow white shine
You haunt and scratch, and I scream in light
Darkness fills every part of mine.
The wax melted as the hours tick
But her fear for his presence began to pick
She wandered madly in the known house
Alas praying to die without a spouse
The walls were dark her heart failed
It seemed as the sky hailed
The window showed the way to escape
She ran to pick the light of faith
Turning to be in paradise that awaits.
Lamps flickered surrendering to darkness
Her silence made me feel desolate
Some ghosts are like they never exist
And some spirits make you feel they always resist.

-PRIYAM PURI
FIRST YEAR



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