Subversion and Survival:
Percy Shelley’s *The Revolt of Islam* and Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*

MA Thesis

Zeynep Seçil Saroğlu
200389001

Advisor:
Assist.Prof.Dr. Phyllis Franzek

ISTANBUL, 2006
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Preface

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was born in 1797 as the only daughter of famous English social reformer William Godwin and first English feminist Mary Wollstonecraft. At the age of sixteen she married famous romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, and they traveled around Europe as exiles. They led an unconventional life for the time. She wrote her first well-known novel, *Frankenstein*, in 1818. After her husband’s death she continued producing novels and stories, and editing her husband’s work. She produced her first ambitious and not highly recognized novel at the time, *The Last Man*, in 1826. She survived as a woman of letters after the death of her husband and brought up her only son Percy Florence Shelley. She died in England at the age of fifty-three in 1851.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in 1792. He was considered among the young generation of romantic poets in English literature. He produced many works during his lifetime but he didn’t receive any positive critical attention when he was alive. He produced *The Revolt of Islam* (1817), a censored version of *Laon and Cythna*, to show his political idealism about the French Revolution in a Greek setting. This long narrative poem can be considered his tryout version of his later-produced work *Prometheus Unbound* (1819), which was considered his masterpiece.

In this thesis, I will work on Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man* and Percy Shelley’s long narrative poem *The Revolt of Islam*, as they both have common points, such as autobiographical representation of these two prominent figures in their works. In addition, Percy Shelley’s sociopolitical idealism is addressed by both, so that they each draw on his sociopolitical romantic ideology that he developed in the context of their time and under the influence of the important events then, like the French Revolution, the Holy Alliance, and the Greek Independence War. Mary Shelley implicitly responds to her husband’s ideology after his death, and thus suggests what Anne Mellor calls feminine romanticism as a solution to a
better world. The result is her own journey to grow as a writer on her own on the artistic level and her survival as a woman through her art on the personal level.

This thesis is not the product of one person only. First, I want to thank my parents and family for their support in my studies during all those years. They have always been totally supportive in every way possible. And I also want to thank Doğuş faculty and all my lecturers there who have made their own contribution to this paper, even if they don't know it. My journey with my academic studies, appreciation and love for literature wouldn't be possible without them. I want to thank Meg Russet, too, for introducing me to such a wonderful novel and unknowingly inspiring me for my thesis with the Crossings graduate program in Bogazici University last summer. Lastly, I want to thank my advisor Dr. Phyllis Franzek. She put as much hard work into it as I did. Since the first day we started working together, she has always been supportive and encouraged me a lot in my hard times. I will always remember how our discussions on Percy and Mary Shelley moved to the discussion of life itself, which, I think, is the proof of how true literature works as the mirror of life. She gave me invaluable information on the writing process as well as the writing itself, and she shared her own experiences with me.
Abstract

In this thesis, I will work on Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man* and Percy Shelley’s long narrative poem *The Revolt of Islam*, as they both have common points, such as autobiographical representation of these two prominent figures in their works. In addition, Percy Shelley’s sociopolitical idealism is addressed by both, so that they each draw on his sociopolitical romantic ideology that he developed in the context of their time and under the influence of the important events then, like the French Revolution, the Holy Alliance, and the Greek Independence War. Mary Shelley implicitly responds to her husband’s ideology after his death, and thus suggests what Anne Mellor calls feminine romanticism as a solution to a better world. The result is her own journey to grow as a writer on her own on the artistic level and her survival as a woman through her art on the personal level.

Özet

Bu tezde, Mary Shelley’nin romanı *The Last Man* ve Percy Shelley’nin uzun şiiri *The Revolt of Islam*’da, her iki eserin de ortak nokta olarak bu iki önemli edebi kişiliğin eserlerinde otobiyografik unsurları nasıl yansıttığı üzerinde duracağım. Buna ek olarak, her iki yazarın da Percy Shelley’nin, Fransız Devrimi, Kutsal İttifak ve Yunan Bağımsızlık savaşı gibi o dönemin politik olaylarına bağlı olarak gelişen sosyopolitik idealizminin nasıl işaret ettiklerini göreceğiz. Mary Shelley eşinin ölümünden sonra üstü kapalı olarak eşinin ideolojisine yanıt verir ve daha iyi bir dünya için sunduğu çözüm yolu Anne Mellor’ın sonradan açıkladığı dişil Romantizmdir. Sonuç olarak ise Mary Shelley’nin bu yolculuğu sanatsal açıdan kendi başına bir yazar olarak gelişmesi ve kişisel açıdan ise sanatı yoluya hayatta kalmayı başaran bir kadın yazar olarak kendini gösterir.
I. Introduction

A. Mary Shelley: Biographical Background

According to Betty T. Bennett, "The Shelleys fashioned an independent, unconventional life that was almost a paradigm for today's world of movement and change" (7). Romantic poet Percy Shelley and novelist Mary Shelley had an unconventional, but at the same time an influential life together. Percy Bysshe Shelley was the son of a noble and wealthy family. His grandfather Bysshe Shelley was an aristocrat and a conservative member in the Parliament. Percy Shelley was educated at Eton and Oxford. He was very fond of science, philosophy, metaphysics and poetry, and he was very much involved in studying them. Although he belonged to a noble family, his ideas were very radical and revolutionary. In fact, his outspokenness about what he believed and his trying to introduce people to what he believed as right and just caused him troubles. He was expelled from Oxford in his first year for publishing a pamphlet entitled The Necessity of Atheism, which was a philosophical study on the impossibility of proving that there is a God in empirical terms (Abrams 644). After this event his relationship with his father was never the same. At the age of eighteen he eloped with Harriet Westbrook and traveled to Ireland. He was involved in the social problems of Ireland and tried to come up with ideal solutions. He and Harriet had two children, but he lost interest in her, and they started to live apart.

It was in this period of separation that Shelley regularly visited William Godwin, who was the famous radical social philosopher of the time. Shelley was an admirer and strong supporter of Godwin's Inquiry Concerning Political Justice, in which he expressed his belief in the evolution of mankind, which would enable the gradual abolition of institutions so that hierarchies would disappear, and equality among people would ultimately be established. These ideas were very much supported by Shelley himself. Shelley was an admirer not only of Godwin, but also of Godwin's late wife Mary Wollstonecraft, who was accepted as one of
the first feminists in English literature with her publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Shelley himself was a supporter of women’s rights, which made him known as a feminist. The Godwins had formerly led an unconventional life in line with their social ideas. They had supported the free-love tradition and had been against the marriage institution itself. They had married anyway, and Wollstonecraft had given birth to their daughter Mary, then had died within a few days.

In one of his visits to Godwin, Percy Shelley met Mary and fell in love. Although he was legally married to Harriet, Mary eloped with Shelley. This disappointed her father very much, and he did not approve of their relationship. Nevertheless, they traveled to Europe together. When they returned to England, Shelley heard about the suicide of his legal wife Harriet Westbrook, who was pregnant from an unknown lover. This tragic incident and the court’s refusing to give Shelley custody of his two children from Harriet made him sad. He immediately married Mary, but the tragic events did not end. Mary lost two of her children, a daughter and a son. They left England and settled in Geneva in 1816 with Lord Byron as their company. After living through these tragic events, the couple, together with Lord Byron, formed their literary circle, spending their time walking, reading and discussing politics and philosophy in Villa Diodati. This is where the famous ghost story contest took place, and as a result of it, Mary’s hidden talent for literature came to light.

How this contest took place and how she produced *Frankenstein*, her first literary work and masterpiece, is explained by Mary Shelley herself in her *Preface* to the book. She says that in this period all of them were involved in reading a book called *Fantasmagoriana*, which was a collection of ghost stories in French translated from German. The influence of the stories and their spending time without producing anything turned into the contest of producing the scariest story, at the suggestion of Lord Byron. The contestants were Lord Byron, his physician John Polidori, Percy and Mary Shelley. Mary won the contest with
Frankenstein, first written as a short story, then expanded into a novel form and published in 1818. We learn from her Preface that the idea of Frankenstein came to her imagination first as the image of a boy, from which she evolved the whole plot of the story. Her explanation of her writing process also highlights a good example of the organicism of romantic literature, how from an image like a seed grows the plant, the work of art itself. Indeed, Mary Shelley’s work often manifests this romantic characteristic more than her husband’s work does. She writes that Shelley always encouraged her writing, that he wanted to see whether Mary was “worthy” of her parents or not (Shelley 260). He edited Frankenstein, and the book’s introduction was completely written by him.

After the publication of Frankenstein Mary did not produce anything else until the death of her husband. In England the book became an immediate success, but it did not encourage her to be a full-time writer. She spent her time reading and performing family duties, very much a domestic woman. In that period she lost another child. The deaths of three children out of four devastated her emotionally and psychologically. She blamed her husband for their deaths, since Shelley was always poor in health, and they had to travel constantly to find a better climate that would make him feel better. He was also very much involved in sociopolitical issues and pondered how he could produce poetic works concerning the issues of society. Thus, Mary felt that he ignored his domestic duties. This series of tragic events with the deaths of their children caused another tragedy for the couple, with Mary’s growing away from Shelley in the last years of their marriage. This is when Shelley became involved with other women. Yet as an outcast from his hometown, he produced what critics call his mature works during these last years of his life, such as Prometheus Unbound. In 1822, before he was thirty, Shelley was drowned in a boat accident with a group of friends. With the sudden death of her husband, Mary Shelley regretted her coldness towards him in the later
years of their lives. This regret and sorrow, some critics say, made her idolize him more in her later works and in her editing of his works (Everest 318).

After the death of her husband, Mary Shelley made her arrangements to return to England, where she made a deal with Percy Shelley’s father Timothy Shelley for financial support for her only surviving son, Percy Florence. She received it on the condition that she would not publish any biography of his son, whom he never forgave for his radical ideas. She did her best not to break the deal with her father-in-law. First, she edited the unpublished poems of Percy Shelley and published them as *Posthumous Works*, and she edited all the rest of his works, providing the long notes of necessary biographical information. She also produced her own literary works to further establish herself as a writer and to support herself and her son. In this period in Mary Shelley’s life she survived financially and literarily without the guidance or support of anyone, which I think proves her as a woman of letters on her own account, not only as Mrs. Shelley. She published some literary articles and stories. Her first novel, *Frankenstein*, and its deserved success caused her other novels to be neglected. In that way we can say that *Frankenstein* as a masterpiece doomed her literary career later in her life. In his Introduction to her novel *The Last Man*, considered by critics as Mary’s second-best novel, and by some, as even better than *Frankenstein*, Hugh J. Luke, Jr. says that in the second half of the twentieth century Mary Shelley was known either as Mrs. Shelley or the author of *Frankenstein* by the students or experts of the romantic Period. However, she produced six more novels after *Frankenstein*: *Mathilda* (written in 1819, published in 1959), *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man* (1826), *Perkin Warbeck* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), and *Falkner* (1837). Through the end of her life, with the death of her father-in-law Timothy Shelley, her son Percy Florence took over the estate, and her financial problems were solved. She lived with her son and his wife her last years, and she died at the age of fifty-three.
B. The Romantics: Historical Background

Her husband, Percy Shelley, was a romantic, though this term was not used when he was alive. Romanticism, the name of the period coined later by literary critics, started with the publication of Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The Preface to this work, published two years later by Wordsworth, was defined by literary critics as the manifesto of romantic poetry in English literature. The romantics were different from their neoclassical predecessors in their understanding and practice of poetry. Although they never called themselves romantics, their distinction was realized even then. Anne Mellor delineates the significant features of both masculine and feminine romanticism:

- Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats all promoted a particular ideology: a belief in the need for revolutionary change (either political or, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, a mental and spiritual), in the redemptive power of nature, in the divinity of the poetic imagination and the creative process, in the central importance of feeling, in the ultimate value of the individual self. In contrast, such women writers of the age as Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, Susan Ferrier, Mary Robinson, Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith, Jane Taylor, and Mary Shelley advocated the development, not of feeling or passion, but of reason, a reason they radically appropriated for the female gender. They celebrated a commitment not only to the creative process, but also and equally to the creative product. Above all, they espoused an ethic of care which emphasized the primary value of the family and posited the trope of the gradually evolving, egalitarian family as the basic model for good government. (Mellor 16)
Moreover, as Mellor points out, the sociopolitical era in which the romantics lived coincided with the French Revolution (1789-1799), which shaped and defined their worldview, as well as their poetry. The French Revolution was influenced very much by the American Revolution in terms of its ideas of liberty and freedom. The revolution started in 1789 with the storming of the Bastille, which was the center of monarchy in France, by the lower class against the ruling class. They became successful in their aim, and their demands were accepted. This action was very much approved by the British liberal intellectuals, too. They shared this people’s ideas of liberty and supported it. According to the French Revolution’s founding document the “Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen,” everyone was equal and had their own representative in the Parliament, so there was no privileged class. These were the ideals that liberal intellectuals promoted. After the first event of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke published his own *Recollections on the Revolution in France* in 1790, which is conservative in its tone and unsupportive of the revolution. This work immediately caused other English social philosophers and writers, who were for the revolution and its ideals, to write their own works to answer Burke. The first response came from Mary Shelley’s mother Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* in 1791. A year later, Thomas Paine wrote *Rights of Man* and William Godwin’s *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* appeared in 1793. All these works were produced to show these British liberal and radical intellectuals’ own support for the revolution.

The French Revolution itself has many phases and other worldwide consequences. Its ideas of liberty and equality of the people thrilled many people in such a way that they believed that this was “the earthly heaven” promised in the Bible. The Apocalypse (Revelations) part of the Bible mentions the idea that in a millennial period, after a big change and disaster, with Jesus Christ’s marriage with New Jerusalem, God’s Kingdom on earth will rule the world, and it will restore the “Edenic felicity” humankind has lost. The romantics
also believed in this idea, and dealt with this issue in their work, especially Blake, who often used these kinds of religious metaphors. The French Revolution was believed to be the millennial event that they had been looking for. However, chaos was born as a result of some people’s using violence as a way to do whatever they wanted. These conflicts caused confusion, especially in the French Parliament. When Robespierre came to rule, in the name of peace for the revolution he took extreme measures and sent everyone who caused trouble to the guillotine. During the period 1793 to 1794, the Reign of Terror started, which disappointed many in England and France. Counter-revolutionary armies were gathered all over Europe by the monarchs to keep their kingships safe and to keep the massacre of France away from their countries. Even those who fought for the revolution were killed by the revolutionaries. Especially the execution of the King and Queen of France made England join the Allies in Europe against France. The bloodshed of the French Revolution not only disappointed the English intellectuals, including the romantics, it also prompted them to change once idealistic and liberal sociopolitical views inspired by the revolution to more conservative ones. Napoleon, once the “child of revolution” became a monarch who tried to combine all of Europe under his rule, so that he turned into the symbol of a tyrant. The Old Generation of romantics, disappointed by the revolution and its millennial hopes, transformed this theme of change from a literal and historical one to a more universal one. Instead of the transformation of the earth to a better place, they changed it into the growing of man’s mind and imagination. Their political and social ideas turned into universal, individual and philosophical ones (Abrams).

However, among themselves the romantics were divided, in terms of those who were disappointed with the French Revolution and those who were still hopeful and supportive of its ideals. The first group is often called the Old romantics. They witnessed the phases of hope and terror during their lifetimes. The Young romantics, as the title suggests, were younger
than the older generation of poets and did not themselves witness the French Revolution. They were against its misapplications and terror, but still, they believed its ideas offered the best hope for humanity, and they explored this theme in their works. Percy Shelley is especially important in this group in terms of perceiving the French Revolution and its ideals, such as liberation of people through justice and equality among all, without any class privilege, as the necessary elements for reform. Most importantly, he never lost his hope in the good times that would come. The millennialism of the Old romantics died away after their disappointment with the French Revolution, and their liberal ideas were often replaced by conservative ones. Shelley not only blamed them for their conversion, he also did his best to make the public have hope in the better future proposed by the ideals of the French Revolution. He strongly believed that, as Mary Shelley herself said, if the people willed something, it would happen.

C. Percy Shelley: His Sociopolitical Ideals and The Revolt of Islam

These are the reasons and circumstances for the composition of The Revolt of Islam, which was the censored and revised version of Laon and Cythna. It was published in 1817 by Percy Shelley, and it never received positive criticism, neither during Shelley’s lifetime nor many years after his death. It is a long narrative poem which is an attempt to show the French Revolution expurgated from its flaws and presented in the way it should take place, according to Shelleyan ideology. It is also supposed to wake in people hope in the midst of the “gloom and misanthropy” dominating the social scene (3). Shelley explains his aim in the work as “in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misinterpretation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind” (1). Although Shelley had always been for revolution, especially if it is the only way for people to obtain liberty and justice, he was
against any kind of violence or killing. He felt that it would only be acceptable to shed blood if there were tyranny. Other than that exception, he always defended a peaceful and bloodless reform. And in order to provide that, he believed in the education of the masses. He pointedly asks in the Preface to *The Revolt of Islam*, "Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent?" (3). This lack of training in how to think and behave in ways that fit these new values is what caused the bloodshed, violence and ultimately the disappointment in the French Revolution, he argued. Before the revolution, he believed that revolution and reform should come before the society's mental change. Later, he became an advocate of the reverse. As M. H. Abrams puts it, "He [Shelley] attributed the evils of present society to humanity's own moral failures and grounded the possibility of radical social reform on a prior reform of the moral and imaginative faculties through the redeeming power of love" (645). Thus, by insisting that moral development of the society through love and hope is necessary, Shelley suggests, as he points out in the Preface, "a slow, gradual, silent change" (45). Like Godwin, he believed that most institutions, including political, religious and even marital ones, were evil. Further, he emphasized that they could be obliterated only through society's gradual evolution, so that they would peacefully disappear on their own without outside force or intervention. This would also be the way for the egalitarian values to be established and for privileged classes to disappear. The Republic, founded as a result of revolution, as a system was considered a step between monarchy and a non-governmental system of the people. This was the final point of society's evolution in Godwinian social reform. These ideas were shared by Shelley, who added his own emphasis on key ideas, such as the need for love, hope and the role of the imagination.

Shelley was very interested in metaphysics, natural philosophy (science) and poetry at the same time. Mary Shelley explains his hesitation in choosing between philosophy and
poetry for his life's work. However, his decision to focus his energies on poetry does not separate him from metaphysics; on the contrary, it is inherent in his poetry. Plato and ancient Greek philosophy shaped his ideas very much. His cave and veil imagery, which he uses frequently in his poetry, are borrowed from Plato's cave parable presented in the Republic and his use of the imagery is in line with Plato's philosophy. This shows how his poetry is inside the philosophical argument. Regarding love, it is central to everything for Shelley, both on the social and individual levels. His ideology on love is again very much influenced by Plato's Symposium. James A. Notopoulos points out that the Republic "appealed to Shelley the reformer, whereas the Symposium appealed to Shelley the poet and lover" (qtd. in Watson 304). From the Republic he borrowed the idea of the division of the cosmos into the perfect world of ideals and its illusory reflection in this material world of imperfectability and suffering (Abrams 645). The only way to reach the ideal beauty is through the beautiful material forms of nature or a woman. Therein lies the significance of love and its function as a way to reach the ideal perfection and beauty. Quoting from Shelley's own translation of the Symposium, Watson observes:

there [in the Symposium] he read of the soul's desire for the beautiful and the ideal, its search for "the supreme beauty itself, simple, pure, uncontaminated with the intermixture of human flesh and colours and all other idle and unreal shapes attendant on mortality." . . . Shelley is continually striving for the beautiful which is beyond beauty as humankind can know it, the essential ideal beauty and love which are suggested by the beautiful things on this earth such as nature and women, but which lie behind them. (304)
This explains why love is central for Shelley, as it signifies that love is a way to reach the ideal.

Considering that *The Revolt of Islam* is dedicated to Mary Shelley, we can see that the couple in the poem, the idealized lovers and fighters for independence Laon and Cythna, who try to save a nation from tyranny, somewhat represent Percy and Mary Shelley. There can be seen a connection between the idealized “soulmates” couple of the poem and the introductory canto by Shelley to Mary. It shows how Shelley perceived Mary and how he believed that their bond was the ideal one. Watson, noting the obvious self-congratulation in Percy Shelley’s characterization, points out the similarity: “The poem becomes a projection of himself and Mary as together and right, in a way which seems complacent. . . . The story of Laon and Cythna . . . is that mankind must act to reform the world through love” (307).

Similar to love, imagination also has an important function in reaching the ideal. Like the rest of the romantics, Shelley considered it the primary faculty in man’s mind. He explains it as “the prime agent of moral good” in *A Defence of Poetry* (Everest 314). It is important because it helps us to think the better form of the world. In our minds we can reach and find the perfect forms of existing materials. It also gives us the possibility of identification with other things, which he calls “sympathetic understanding and identification with others” (qtd. in Everest 315). And as the poets are the ones involved with imagination, they have a superior position among all people for Shelley. Hence, he calls them “the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (*Defence of Poetry* 765).

This division between the ideal and the material worlds and Shelley’s involvement with the ideals causes him to be clearcut in his representations of good and evil. His representation of good looks somewhat unrealistic, impractical and “ethereal,” as some critics call it. Matthew Arnold, for example, defines Shelley himself as “a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain” (qtd. in Watson 300). This is also why *The
Revolt of Islam, seems especially detached from the material world. It engages with ideals, which makes the poem abstract and its heroes too perfect for the community that they try to enlighten. It is a long, narrative verse poem, written in Spenserian stanza. It is a story about a Greek hero named Laon and his fighting against the Ottoman Empire for the liberation of his people. This fight, though, includes not only his physically waging battle, but also his encouraging and enlightening people with the power of his rhetoric. He is a typical Shelleyan hero in terms of representing the idealistic, "ethereal" poet. However, he is not alone in this job. His stepsister and lover Cythna has a big part in fulfilling his duty with the power of her rhetoric. Although this text is rarely considered by Shelley experts to have a high value because of some of its weaknesses, which will be mentioned later, it is quoted very often to prove his feminism. In the character of Cythna, Shelley’s support for the rights of women is explicit. Yet, the poem’s setting or the nationality of the characters is never openly told. As Shelley explains in his Preface, his aim is not to criticize a specific condition. By avoiding going into details about the place and names, he tries to give a universal quality to the poem’s message. This, however, causes the poem to be abstract.

Despite this avoidance, Shelley also gives just enough hints about the whereabouts of the poem that we can infer that the characters are Greek and that they are fighting for their liberation against the oppression of the "Othman." As Shelley states in the Preface, his aim is to present an ideal example of the French Revolution as it should have been by depicting one that is supposed to take place. Although Revolt was written in 1817, before the actual Greek Independence War against the Ottoman Empire in 1821, his philhellenism makes him choose Greece as his preferred setting for the ideals of liberation. His relocation of scene from Europe to the Ottoman Empire reveals his attitude toward the concept of empire in general. In the disguise of the Ottoman Empire he, in fact, criticizes the empire at his English home and through this work about the failed attempt of these heroes to save their people from tyranny.
As Filiz Turhan points out "He [Shelley] often uses the Turkish despot to figure the despot at home, Shelley manifestly implies that all tyrants (i.e. Kings) are the same (78)". Shelley’s mature works were produced after 1819, which is the date of his philosophical drama Prometheus Unbound. This work is accepted as his masterpiece in that it represents his political ideas in a philosophical way. However, he had experimented in The Revolt of Islam, though not that successfully.

In Turhan’s terms, "the relocation of place" in Revolt to represent Shelley’s political ideas in a universal way was reworked as the relocation of time in Mary Shelley’s The Last Man. By relocation of time, I mean that the novel covers a period between the 2070s to the 2090s. Mary Shelley didn’t publish anything after Frankenstein until the death of her husband. This novel is her first successful novel after her husband’s death, though it was not viewed positively at the time it was written. For years it was neglected by the critics, since it was considered merely a roman a clef. Its autobiographical aspect cannot be denied, but it would also be unjust to see it as the fictional disguise of her life with Shelley and their Circle in Italy. It would be wiser to look at it in terms of Mary Shelley’s own account of things, not only on the personal level, but also on the sociopolitical level. It deals with a group of people and their involvement with the political scene in England and with the reenactment of the Greek Independence War against the Ottoman Empire. She sets her novel in the future, but her subject matter is about the near past. The novel is written in 1826, three years after the death of Percy Shelley. The political ideas that are discussed in Percy Shelley’s works are worked on in this novel, too, but they are seen from Mary Shelley’s point of view. As it was not common in the period that Mary Shelley lived for women to address political issues in their works, the political aspect of it has been ignored for years until recently. Since Mary Shelley not only works with the political ideology of her husband, but also presents her own way of looking at things in this work, it raises the question of Mellor’s discussion on the
difference between masculine romanticism and feminine romanticism. Mary Shelley was always physically as well as literarily part of the romantic Circle of what today’s critics call the Young romantics, but she was not named in this circle because of the differences in her literature, differences that Mellor defines as feminine.

In this thesis, I will work on Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man* and Percy Shelley’s long narrative poem *The Revolt of Islam* as they both have common points, such as autobiographical representation of these two prominent figures in their works. In addition, Percy Shelley’s sociopolitical idealism is addressed by both, so that they each draw on his sociopolitical romantic ideology that he developed in the context of their time and under the influence of the important events then, like the French Revolution, the Holy Alliance, and the Greek Independence War. Mary Shelley implicitly responds to her husband’s ideology after his death, and thus suggests what Anne Mellor calls feminine romanticism as a solution to a better world. The result is her own journey to grow as a writer on her own on the artistic level and her survival as a woman through her art on the personal level.
Percy Shelley wrote *The Revolt of Islam* in 1817. First it was written with the title *Laon and Cythna* as a reference to the hero and heroine of the poem. However, as the early version was found inappropriate by the authorities, the work was later edited by Shelley to publish it.

As both of the titles suggest, there are two major themes in the poem that represent very well the sociopolitical philosophy of Percy Shelley. The first one is the idealized love of the heroes and their joint effort to save their people from the tyranny of the king who enslaves and oppresses them. It is not considered Shelley’s best work by Shelley critics. In fact, it is considered one of the weakest of his long narrative poems. And it had not received any positive critical attention until recently. However, in this poem we can trace the major political and philosophical tendencies of Shelley, which were worked later into his masterpiece *Prometheus Unbound*. For my purposes, I will use *The Revolt of Islam*, as it better fits my argument in comparing its issues to those of Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man*. They both take place in an Eastern setting, and the political and domestic issues in those works correspond much better than do those posed in *Prometheus Unbound*, which is more about the cosmological, universal aspect of political resistance. As Shelley himself explains in the Preface of *Revolt*, he writes it to give people hope after the post-French-Revolution era of disappointment and gloom. Poets and intellectuals who put their high hopes in the ideals of French Revolution were so disappointed that they lost their hope that positive social reforms could still take place. And this gloom made them produce works that reflected their despair, which really offended Shelley, as he was the most insistent of all these poets when it came to optimism about the future. His hope never faded, even with the most depressing events.

Consistent with the rest of the young generation of romantic poets in his stance toward the French Revolution, he still believed in the ideals of the French Revolution, though without its mistakes. He never endorsed the violence that the Reign of Terror brought forth either.
Instead, as he attempted to do in this work, he suggested that a nonviolent peaceful revolution should take place. He believed in the ideals of the French Revolution, especially in the ideas of the independence of nations, and of the freedom of man and woman from monarchist oppressors. In Shelley's view, the key necessity for that to happen is for humans to love mankind, even if they are their oppressors and not to lose hope for the good outcomes.

Abrams emphasizes that in his notes on *Hellas*, Shelley defines hope not as a "certainty," but as a "moral obligation," and paraphrases as follows Shelley’s understanding of hope and why he is so insistent on waking the public awareness for it:

> We must, he [Shelley] asserts, cling to hope because its contrary, despair about human possibility, is self-fulfilling, by ensuring the permanence of the conditions before which the mind has surrendered its aspirations. Hope does not guarantee achievement, but it keeps open the possibility of achievement and so releases the imaginative and creative powers that are its only available means. (646)

In the Preface, Shelley also explains his aim in writing the poem as "in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for these doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misinterpretation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind" (1).

If the first reason to produce this poem is to give people hope for a better future, the second reason is to show his readers how this can take place. This long poem, written in Spenserian stanzas, is described as "narrative" rather than "didactic" by Shelley (2). However, that his aim is to show how the revolution should have occurred implies some kind of didactic purpose in it. The poem takes place in an Eastern setting. Here the Eastern setting specifically signifies the Ottoman Empire. One of the weaknesses of the poem is its constant avoidance of naming places or times, which is done deliberately by Shelley to give the poem
universality by taking it out of a specific place or time. He writes to a publisher about the setting of the poem as follows: “the scene is supposed to be laid in Constantinople and modern Greece, but without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners. It is in fact a tale illustrative of such a Revolution as might be supposed to take place in a European nation” (qtd. in Turhan 84). However, this does not make the poem universal, but instead, abstract in nature. Still its Eastern, Ottoman, setting is hinted at throughout the poem by his using stereotypical information about the Ottoman Empire. These references include religious symbols, such as veiled women, and cultural institutions, such as a harem. Turhan adds “he characteristically sketches the scenery with just enough detail to render the Eastern landscape for his reader but avoids a too-close delineation that might distract attention from the reforms he poetically envisions” (78). The poem is about the Greek Hero Laon’s and his stepsister and lover Cythna’s using their poetic and rhetorical skills to save their people from the political oppression of the King Othman. These two lovers represent the ideal couple in Shelley’s mind, for both their political activism in the public arena and their idealized love on the private level. On the community, or public, level we see the revolt of a nation, Greece, against its oppressor, the tyrant king Othman. On the private level, we see the incestuous, but idealistic love between the heroes, Laon and Cythna, and how they become the initiators of the revolution through their poetic powers, which help them to wake in their people the understanding of liberty, freedom, justice and love, that is the basis of an independent nation for Shelley. These crucial points are uttered many times by the heroes of the poem. In the public space, their revolutionary attempts fail, and in the personal space, Cythna is depicted as so strong that she is described by King-Hele as “the first new woman in English poetry: she is the equal of Laon in fighting against oppression” (265). Ironically, however, Cythna herself, as a character and, in her speeches on the liberation of women, as the representor of feminism, is still described in relation to Laon throughout the poem.
The poem opens with a fight between a serpent and an eagle. The “I” poet is the observer and the narrator of the opening scene. He watches the scene on his “aerial rock” (195) and sees the defeat of the serpent and the triumph of the eagle. He is not the only one watching the scene. He sees a beautiful woman on the shore who calls him to join her in her journey to the Temple of Spirit. On their way she tells him the original story of good and explains how, when the time is right, they come together and fight. And this can only happen when people will for the good to triumph. This willpower can only occur with hope, she says to the poet: “When round pure hearts a host of hopes assemble, / The Snake and Eagle meet – the world’s foundations tremble!” (422-23). At the end of their journey, they reach the Temple of Spirit, and there the poet meets Laon himself, and he tells his story to him. This first part of the “I” poet’s narrative constitutes the frame of the poem. It opens with this symbolic fight between the eagle and serpent, which stands for the fight between good and evil. Thus, from the very beginning a binary opposition between good and bad is set clearly by Shelley.

These kinds of dichotomies exist for the other issues of the poem as well. It is in fact the result of Shelley’s Platonic view, which divides the ideal and the material, with the cave parable already setting the binaries as the ideal and the shadow. And Shelley himself couldn’t help but fall into the category of ideal. While looking for it, he unknowingly is detached from the material world, and thus wins himself the title of “ethereal poet.” This Shelleyan tendency to impose division between things find its symbolic expression in the opening scene of the eagle and serpent in which, ironically the eagle, the symbol of West, represents evil, and the serpent, which is usually the symbol of the East, represents good. However, Shelley takes them from their usual context. He does not use them in the sense that the East is good and the West is bad at all. He uses the eagle as the symbol of evil because it was the symbol of the Roman Empire. And for Shelley, all empires were the same, whether it was the Roman
Empire or the Ottoman Empire, because empire itself represented tyranny, with all its institutions to rule other nations, which were supposed to be free. Moreover, the defeat of the serpent is not lamented, although evil triumphed over good, which is also consistent with Shelley's optimism. Instead, Laon, who is dead, tells his story to the "I" poet, relating how the evil takes over. Thus, the frame story is the story of the "I" poet and his meeting with Laon.

After the frame, the point of view shifts to Laon, and the "I" poet disappears. He becomes a "listener" (644), just like in Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, in which the mariner tells his own story to a man who becomes the listener. In fact, the "I" poet is still the one who narrates Laon's story to us. This is significant in the sense that by using this technique, Shelley is consistent with his definition of the poet as the "seer," which he elaborates in his Defence. The "I" poet through his imagination reaches the world beyond himself, specifically the world of the dead. And poets are the ones who have access there through their imagination. Thus, we learn the story of Laon through the "I" poet. The opening canto, then, serves to highlight the purpose of the poet's significance as that of the "bard" and "sage" of ancient times, who enlightens and educates people through his moral poetry. That's how the "didactic" aspect works in the poem, in contrast to Shelley's claim for the poem's being narrative, rather than didactic.

In effect, he allows his narrative to reveal the point that he would teach. He uses a similar strategy to prompt the reader to view even death and defeat in a positive light. From the beginning, Laon's coming to the Temple of Spirit informs us that Laon is dead. And the serpent's falling to the sea after his fight with the eagle is related to Laon's own defeat, which ends with Laon's death, as a result of his fight with the Tyrant King. Yet Laon's death does not necessarily mean a defeat either. The idea here is that, even if people die, they live through their words in the minds of the people. This theme recurs throughout the poem and is
even emphasized with the words of the characters many times as well. It is also part of Shelley’s optimism and hope, since in all his works, he believed in what Stuart Curran argues, “the cyclical nature of history,” which means that all ends bring new and always better beginnings. This was the case for the ancient time’s sages, too. Thus, Laon and Cythna are likened to these ancient sages:

The good and mighty of departed ages
Are in their graves, the innocent and free,
Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
Who leave the vesture of their majesty?
To adorn and clothe this naked world; and we
Are like to them—such perish, but they leave
All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive,
To be a rule and law to ages that survive. (3712-20)

Laon himself, as the hero of the poem who lives beyond both defeat and death, has characteristics of a poet. The name poet does not necessarily mean the one who writes poems in Shelley’s ideology. It is more than that. The first meaning is the one who writes good poetry that educates society with its moral truths, as the ancient poets and bards did. The “I” poet in the opening canto fits into this role. In the case of Laon, we see the poet as the leader. The leader also tries to educate and enlighten his people not through his poetry, but through his poetic sensibility, which manifests itself through his rhetoric, as it does in the case of Cythna, or which is seen only through its existence in the person. In the poem people for some reason believe that Laon is the one who has this capacity. It can be because of their conviction that Laon has higher qualities than they do, just as Shelley, himself, thinks that imagination is the higher faculty of mind which enables us to imagine better worlds and to feel sympathetic
identification. Laon and Cythna fit into this category of poet leaders as they try to teach their people liberty, freedom, justice, and most importantly, love.

Laon, furthermore, is the hero with the ideas. In that sense, he is very much like the representor of Shelley himself. This resemblance between the poet and his speaker is one of the characteristics of romantic poetry. Unlike the lyrical speakers of earlier poetry, the lyrical "I" carries the characteristics of the poet (Abrams 6). Here, Laon represents Shelley's political and poetic idealism. His people, the Greeks, are under the oppression of the King Othman. He wants to wake his people to fight against the tyranny of the king. However, this reaction of Laon and his attempt to revolt against the king do not stand for a bloody fight in a battlefield. Instead, he tries to conquer people's minds, and his weapons are his words:

With deathless minds which leave where they have passed
A path of light, my soul communion knew;
Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic stone, I drew
Words which were weapons;--round my heart there grew
The adamantine armour of their power;
And from my fancy wings of golden hue
Sprang forth -- yet not alone from wisdom's tower,

A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore. (838-46)

His poetic powers go back to his ancestors. All the ancient poets and sages fill him with their truths and ideas, not in this physical world, but through his imagination. Here Shelley's admiration for the ancient Greek poets shows itself. As Mary Shelley writes in the epilogue of the poem, Shelley admired ancient Greek poetry very much, and when he decided to produce poetry, he studied ancient Greek poetry first. His admiration for ancient Greece and its poets is most probably the cause of his philhellenism. Even this poem itself and Shelley's constant
support for Greek liberation and independence was the product not only of his belief in the liberation of all mankind from the oppressors, which was one of the ideals of the French Revolution, but also of his affinity for Greek culture as the ancestor of western civilization. He, like other contemporary philhellenists, felt indebted to the Greeks. Laon is presented as a modern Greek hero who is “chosen” to enlighten his people and give them liberation against the oppressors. He uses his poetic power, which he forges from his ancient ancestors. Thus, Turhan observes that Laon is depicted among the ruins of the ancient Greeks, as if he were taking his power from them (87). Again, ruins or death is not something to be lamented, since it represents the beginning of new and better things.

Laon’s quest to liberate his people is strongly supported by his stepsister Cythna. This quest is not something he does alone. His sister, who has the same poetic powers, offers her help. She is the same kind of idealist as Laon, though in fact, she is the one with the power of rhetoric. While Laon has the ideas, we don’t see him connected with people at all. He is usually located in some isolated places, thinking about his people and how to save them. When he first decides to react against the king and attempts to leave his place of solitude, he is captured and imprisoned. Later he is saved by a hermit who takes care of him and takes him to his place in the woods to encourage him and to remind him of his quest. When the one-night revolution of his people takes place, immediately after it they come across the King’s forces. When they are defeated, Laon withdraws to his cave by leaving the people out there on the battlefield with the enemy forces. In the entire poem, we don’t really see Laon engage with his people at all. He is always in wilderness and isolated. That’s not the case with his stepsister, Cythna, who cherishes his cause even more than he, and even in hardship, she keeps on doing his job for him. She is worldly compared to him in that way. She keeps her promise to tell people about his ideas and let him be heard. If Laon is the ideal and ethereal, Cythna works as his shadow on the earth. In fact, she is addressed many times in the poem as
Laon’s “shadow self” and “second self,” which in accordance with Plato’s parable, gives her the duty of being Laon’s shadow in this material world.

Laon and Cythna have a bond which is more than sibling love. Laon tells her background, relating how she was an orphan before she was found and adopted by his family. This sibling love recalls Victor Frankenstein’s attraction to his own stepsister Elizabeth, which resulted in their engagement and, ultimately her death in Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein*, which is reminiscent of Laon and Cythna. Alan Richardson works on this sibling incest theme in romantic poetry, arguing that the theme of the romantic poets’ attraction to their sisters is common in this period. And for many years, Richardson adds, it was interpreted as the poets’ real-life attraction to their sisters in an autobiographical sense, especially in Wordsworth’s case. However, he thinks in this theme there is more than autobiographical reflection. He believes that if the poets of this period insistently revolve around this theme, it has something to do with the period’s mindset. According to Richardson, romantic poets and the theme of sibling love has to do with the poets’ seeing themselves in their sisters more than any other woman because their sisters are the creatures in the world that resemble them most closely. This resemblance is not necessarily a physical one, but more of a mental and ideological one. He also compares eighteenth-century neoclassical sibling love to romantic sibling love, and shows how experience and the memories that the siblings share are superior to an actual blood tie. As a result of this, we see experience overrule nature as the determining premise; even the stepsisters can be incestuous for the poet if they don’t have a blood tie. And this subtle incest is unconsciously punished by the poet himself as he unconsciously believes that it still is incest. Richardson argues, “For the Romantic Poets, . . . the emphasis is on a shared childhood, on experience that unites the couple through countless mutual associations built up during the most idyllic stage of life. In fact, experience so outweighs birth that a relation between a foster-brother and sister often has the same
ramifications as one between blood relatives, and follows a similar pattern” (739). Richardson also points out how romantic poets such as Coleridge were influenced by Hartley’s associanist psychology:

In his [Hartley’s] work Observations on Man (1749) he argues “if beings of same nature . . . be exposed for an indefinite time to the same impressions and associations, all their particular differences will, at last, be overruled, and they will become perfectly similar, or even equal,” joined by the closest possible ties of sympathy. If this exposure took place in childhood associations were quickened by passion (a typically Romantic reworking of associanist theory), the sympathetic bond would be still greater, and would approach the Romantic ideal of perfect sympathy in love. (740-1)

Shelley himself may be aware of this idea of Hartley because Laon explains his love for Cythna using similar logic: “and such is Nature’s law divine, that those / who grow together cannot choose but love” (2656-57). However, even if this is the outside cause for the siblings’ attraction, there is also another reason for it, which Richardson explains in the following way:

the identification of a brother and sister who mirror one another and are unified in a charged (and also doomed) erotic relation serves to transfer, as it were, feminine characteristics desired because the “mild interests and gentlest sympathies” valued in the Romantic age of feeling are still viewed as essentially belonging to womankind, the prerogatives of a “nursing mother’s heart.” (747)

Sisters are the closest female forms of the poets, closer than any other woman can be. Thus, the reason for Laon’s attraction lies in the poet’s narcissism. He is attracted to his sister because he sees his own reflection in this girl, and he supplies himself with her feminine characteristics as he needs them for his poetry. As Richardson puts it, “Cythna, who
embodies the 'female mind/untainted' by custom, is viewed by Laon as a feminine reflection of his self--subordinated to bringing his visionary conceptions of life’ (749). This understanding really fits the sibling love relationship between Laon and Cythna. From the beginning to the end of the poem, as mentioned above, Cythna is described as a "shadow self" and "second self" to Laon. He says, "as my own shadow was this child to me, / A second self, far dearer and more fair" (874-75). When Laon isolates himself from the society after being saved by the hermit, Cythna, who is taken away to a different country as a slave for the king’s harem, does not isolate herself or give into despair; she continues to enlighten people even women in the harem. Cythna is the medium between Laon and the world. As Richardson explains it, "Cythna informs the millennial dreams of her brother with a 'milder sympathy' by drawing him out of a purely visionary mode, and towards a recognition of the suffering in the real world and his power to transform it" (749). Thus, Cythna and Laon perform related, but distinctively different roles in effecting their revolution.

Similarly, their individual plotlines develop in parallel fashion in some respects—they are both captured, for example. Yet, in other significant ways, their separate lives emerge in radically different ways. Before Laon begins his quest to save his people from the king, his intention is found out by the king, and both Laon and Cythna are captured and imprisoned. As a punishment, Laon is tied up on an altar like a Christ figure. This image also exists in Prometheus Unbound, when Prometheus is punished by Demogorgan as he stands up against the tyranny over the people. In Revolt Laon does not eat or drink for days until he is saved by a hermit who takes Laon to his land, takes care of him, and gives him the courage needed to carry on his task. Mary Shelley explains in her notes to the poem that this hermit character is modeled on Shelley’s own real-life friend and mentor Professor Lind, who was the only one during Shelley’s college years who supported him (128). She adds that Shelley always talks about him with respect. This is another proof for the autobiographical qualities that are
inherent in the poem. In Laon’s and the hermit’s homosocial bond, we see Shelley’s reflection of his own situation in his college years. Even then, Mary Shelley writes, he was resistant to any kind of tyranny and refused to submit to authorities. The important point is that after their separation and capture Laon is saved by a hermit, another man and he is nurtured by him to revive the courage he needs. In Cythna’s case, her post-capture and survival story is different from Laon’s.

First of all, before they separate, she promises him to be devoted to his cause and to do her best to spread it to people. She is taken away to the king’s eastern palace, and she becomes one of the women in the harem. There she speaks to women and tells them about their freedom, which is not welcomed by the authorities, so she ends up being imprisoned in a cave, and left to die. The significant point is the difference between Laon’s and Cythna’s post-imprisonment and revival period. Laon is with another male companion and mentor in the woods to nurture him, whereas Cythna is imprisoned in the cave, where she reaches a state of wisdom which is not just what Plato suggests, a cave of nature, but what Freud calls a female place, a womb, which enables her revival. As Gilbert and Gubar argue, “a cave is—as Freud pointed out— a female place, a womb-shaped enclosure, a house of earth, secret and often sacred. To this shrine the initiate comes to hear the voices of darkness, the wisdom of inwardness” (93). The cave becomes a place in which Cythna reaches her literary power and forges power and wisdom, so that it becomes the source of her transformation. That’s why, although she is expected to die there—as the cave is considered an annihilator—she survives. It serves as a womb for Cythna, who collects her powers there away from patriarchal repression. This transformation starts with temporary madness, and it turns into wisdom. Cythna expresses this transformation in the cave as follows:

This wakened me, it gave me human strength;

And hope, I know not whence or wherefore rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at length;
My spirit felt again like one of those
Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey—what was this cave?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while it yet mocks the all-devouring grave. (3073-81)

Here the seemingly contrasting grave-and-life dichotomy in fact symbolizes the cyclical nature of death and rebirth. The cave is supposed to be an annihilating enclosure, but it turns out to be nurturing. In its darkness a buried female legacy and powers reach Cythna, but, ironically, she still thinks that this knowledge comes to her from Laon. He is surely somewhat the one who initiated her in this knowledge, but the rest is hers. This cave parable and Cythna’s transformation is parallel to what the “I” narrator in Mary Shelley’s Introduction to *The Last Man* experiences in the Sibylline cave and interpreting the leaves that are left for her to translate and bring together, which will be discussed in the next section. Cythna also realizes her pregnancy there, which is a significant dual image of a womb. The first womb is nature’s cave as a womb to give birth to Cythna, which we called a transformation above, and the second womb image is the actual image of Cythna’s womb, from which she gives birth to her baby. Her giving birth to a baby girl may be seen as symbolic of her producing new hope for the following generations with her rhetoric. Her words work like seeds for her listener, and while she is imprisoned in the cave, her words and their cause spread among people. However, as soon as her baby is born, she is taken away from her by the tyrant’s soldiers, so, in effect, patriarchal power intrudes on the supposedly lethal place of the cave and kills the baby instead.
Throughout the poem, Shelley's portrayal of Cythna makes her very much like Wollstonecraft, with her courage and rhetoric to improve mankind. Cythna’s description of her baby girl also recalls Shelley’s description of Mary Shelley’s heritage. It is not hard to see that in this baby Shelley is kind of celebrating Mary Shelley’s birth. In his Introductory Canto, which is dedicated to Mary Shelley, he refers to her, saying, “thou wert lovely from thy birth, / Of glorious parents thou aspiring Child” (100-01). In the poem, Cythna’s words for the baby echo those used to Mary: “it was a babe, beautiful from its birth” (2983). Considering the fact that the poem is dedicated to Mary Shelley makes the reader think that in the portrayal of Laon and Cythna, we see the idealized portrayal of Percy Shelley and Mary Shelley. Watson emphasizes the same point: Percy’s dedication and praising of Mary in the Preface of the Revolt of Islam “foreshadows the relationship in the poem between Laon and Cythna, joint fighters in the war against tyrants and priests. The poem becomes a projection of himself and Mary as together and right, in a way which seems complacent” (307). Though Watson here rightly criticizes Shelley’s hubris in modeling his hero and heroine after himself and Mary, we can nevertheless sense the high level of esteem he must have felt for her parents, and the strength of their shared convictions.

Cythna inscribes her newly-gained knowledge on the sands in the cave. It is an attempt to tell her story, but she does it with a language that is always cryptic and mysterious for an outside reader, as it is language written by a female writer who has to hide her narrative powers from the patriarchal culture. Just like a Sibylline prophetess she inscribes her words on sands in the cave. I said Sibylline prophetess because in the Introduction to The Last Man the future of mankind was on the prophetic leaves, which could only be deciphered by the “I” poet. Here Cythna tells her story, too, on the sands, which again foregrounds the cave as the source of female literary power. It is hidden there. However, Cythna ironically still thinks that this unknown power comes to her from Laon, not from her inner self. In The Last Man
the "I" narrator reaches this knowledge herself and accepts the interpretation of the leaves as hers. Yet, here Cythna is still dependent on Laon and unable to take it hers:

And on the sand would I make signs to range
These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought;
Clear, elemental shapes, whose smallest change
A subtler language within the language wrought:
The key of truths which once were dimly taught
In Old Crotona;--and sweet melodies
Of love, in that lorn solitude I caught
From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize. (3109-17)

Moreover, just as Cythna lacks full self-knowledge in this way, those outside of her sense her difference from them, yet do not quite know who she is either. With the intrusion of nature, an earthquake, Cythna is freed from the cave. A group of sailors see her on the shore and decide to take her with them. After her cave experience some of the sailors think that she is not human. However, another sailor believes that she can only be "daughter" or "bride," which shows how the positive qualities of a woman in the society are related to their connection with a man. "It cannot be—she is a human maid-- /... She is some bride, / Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside" (3214-16). First of all, her cave experience makes her look "un-human" to these sailors, and when they decide that she is human, she can only be so with a connection to a man. When they embark for the land, where she reunites with Laon, people see her as different and think of her as a "maniac," as "lost," or as a "fiend":

Some said I was a maniac wild and lost;
Some that I scarce had risen from the grave,
Some said, I was a fiend from my weird cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o'er the wave,
The forest, and the mountain, came;-- some said
I was the child of God, sent down to save
Woman from bonds and death, and on my head
The burden of their sins would frightfully be laid (3532-40).

The cave as a grave is emphasized here again. She is dead and risen there. Her new feminine rebirth in a “female cave” makes her an outsider, a “fiend from the weird cave,” so that even the metaphor itself shows quite well the “fiendish” quality of a woman who has contacted the feminine power and wisdom in the cave. And she is an alien in this patriarchal culture. People, especially women, somehow recognize the quality and see her as their savior. She, too, is given a Christ-like status, by Shelley, since she is said to be “the child of God” who assumes the “burden of their sins,” and has risen from the dead. Now she along with Laon, is more ready to enlighten the whole society, especially women, against tyranny, oppression and ignorance.

Laon and Cythna’s reunion takes place just after Laon’s entering and conquering his city with a bloodless revolution from the tyrant king. When he enters the city in the dawn, some soldiers recognize him as their savior and help him in his conquest. This bloodless revolution, which Shelley always preferred over a bloody one, takes place suddenly and in a subtle way. As readers, we can’t really picture how the event takes place. After the peaceful dethroning of the king, Laon stops his people from taking any kind of revenge. People want to take revenge in the name of justice for all those years of suffering and oppression, and they say that to Laon:

He who judged let him be brought
To judgment! Blood for blood cries from the soil
On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil
Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil,
Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise!
And to high Justice make her chosen sacrifice! (1999-2007)

Laon, however, believes that a tyrant whose power is taken away from him must be pitied rather than punished. This idea of Laon is reflective of Shelley’s own idea. He does not believe in revolution unless there is a real urgency for people’s freedom and justice. As Harry White explains it, “Those who possess power, whether it has been newly won by peaceful or violent means or long established by custom and law, often employ violence for the purposes of revenge and punishment. This type of retributive justice Shelley condemns absolutely and unconditionally, finding it utterly without moral or practical benefit” (614). Clearly, Shelley believed that feelings of revenge and hate should be replaced by love and pity as the basis of a just and equal society. Laon refers to these ideas in his response: “what call ye ‘justice’? . . . / The chastened will of virtue sees that justice is light / of love, and not revenge, and terror, and despite” (2017-23). And Laon does not punish the king, but lets him go instead. Laon believes in the good nature of man. Even if he is a tyrant oppressor, Laon wants him to experience “rebirth” to acquire better values. In these philanthropic attitudes of Shelley, we also see a Christ-like quality. In fact, White argues that in his later years, Shelley admired Jesus Christ and his disciples for the way that they resisted the institutions of the Roman Empire and lived according to the will of God and that they did that with love of people in their heart. However, it doesn’t mean that Shelley was a devout Christian. He was known as an atheist, and he hated any kind of religious institutions, just as he hated the political ones.
For him, all kinds of institutions were evil, a position which was borrowed from Godwin.

White calls it, “the moral principles of primitive anarchism” that Shelley admired (626). This affinity for Jesus Christ is reflected both in Prometheus’s and Laon’s characters; especially their crucifixion for the liberation of mankind is an image borrowed from Christ himself.

After the exile of the fallen king a new federation is founded amidst the celebration of newly liberated people. Laon and Cythna meet again in front of the Altar of the Federation. Laon declares it, “The Altar of the Federation . . . which the devotion of millions in one night created” (2072-74). Cythna sits on the altar as the spokesman of all people. Here the description of the altar is significant for what it represents:

Three shapes around her ivory throne appear;
One was a Giant, like a child asleep
On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were
In dreams, scepters and crowns; and one did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep;
A woman sitting on the sculptured disk
Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
A human babe and a young basilisk;
Her looks were sweet as Heaven’s when loveliest
In Autumn eves. The third Image was dressed
In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies;
Beneath his feet, ’mongst ghastliest forms, repressed
Lay Faith, an obscure worm, who sought to rise,
While calmly on the Sun he turned his diamond eyes. (2156-68)

Kenneth N. Cameron discusses the similarities between this poem and Volney’s The Ruins of Empire. He claims that Shelley produced this work under the influence of Volney’s
work. He supports his claim with specific examples from the both texts. It is a known fact that Shelley was aware of the work and that it influenced his social philosophical thinking (Everest 325). Also, Mary Shelley refers to Volney in *Frankenstein*. The monster’s ideas about the East are shaped by this work. In this above example, the detailed description of the throne is influenced by Volney, Cameron says, though he adds that Shelley’s symbolism for the three images is different from Volney’s:

The first image is, as in Volney, a symbol of Equality, the giant signifying the masses dreaming of a communist state, a conception frequent in Shelley. The other two, however, do not, as in Volney, symbolize Liberty and Justice, but Love and Wisdom, Shelley apparently believing that they were concepts of more poetic dignity, and concepts, too, that fitted in better with his moral philosophy in which Love plays the major role. (180)

Thus, we can see why Cythna’s celebratory speech on liberty echoes Laon’s, or Shelley’s, ideal state in which there is no place for blood and revenge, as they can only breed disease, fear and madness. With this new state, love is the basis. And “science and poetry” will rule it with their light. It is significant that disease, fear, and madness are explained as the outcome of tyranny. Here the idea that Cythna refers to, and that Shelley believed and reflected in his works, is that famine, pestilence and these kinds of disasters are nature’s reaction to the evil and unjust action of man. If man corrupts, nature manifests it with certain kind of disasters, which are specified by Cythna below, and these reactive corruption images are very common in Shelley’s other poetic imagery as well:

Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
To the pure skies in accusation steaming;
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
To feed disease and fear and madness,
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness,
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this Earth, our home, more beautiful,
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free! (2245-56)

In contrast to what Cythna celebrates as their new Federation, all the negative consequences that are caused by tyranny immediately come back, almost with the same suddenness as their bloodless revolution takes place. The tyrant king whom they send away returns with forces other than his against the revolutionaries led by Laon. The revolutionaries, who are unarmed, are killed, and the scene of peace turns into one of bloodshed. Laon and Cythna manage to run away and hide in a cavern, where they consummate their love. The heroes withdraw to their own isolated place as a solace for each other. Love is always the key in Shelleyan philosophy, thus, their reunion ends with the consummation of their love:

Few were the living hearts which could unite
Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
From linked youth, and from the gentle might
Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest strong. (2680-85)

Another significant point about their reunion and their response, as Laon remarks above, after a tragic, failed event is consistent with what Richardson says about the past memories that siblings remind each other of, which makes their bond even stronger: "Even when the pair
has been separated and reunited, the power of their reunion lies in the early memories they evoke for one another. This power gives birth to a sympathetic love more intense and complete than either sibling could feel for anyone else” (739). After this intense intimacy, restored by their love, they return their focus to the larger scene, discussing “how those seeds of hope might yet be sown” (2709), and Shelley’s implicit political critique of his contemporary scene continues.

As Laon describes later, the armies that help the king in his war against the revolutionaries belong to many nations; they made a vow against the revolutionaries:

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things,
Whom slaves call men: obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the Shepard brings
To the stall, red with blood; their many kings
Led them, thus erring, from their native land;
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings
Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea’s sand,
Fertile in prodigies and lies; ... so there
Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill. (3829-37)

Here the multinational quality of the armies represents an empire’s structure (Turhan). Thus, Shelley hints that the opposing power is the Holy Alliance in Europe, which took place just after the French Revolution and was formed to fight against any kind of revolution threatening monarchy. In spite of its bloodless nature this revolution is still not welcomed by the monarchial power, which is represented as tyrannical and evil by Shelley who describes this union with many negative words from “conspirators” to “wolves and serpents.” Their
action is even abhorred by heaven, nature, he says, as it is unjust. And veil imagery, a very common Shelleyan theme for concealment, is attributed to the tyrant, as he veils, or "robe[s]" himself in "lies":

> For traitorously did that Foul Tyrant robe  
> His countenance in lies,—even at the hour  
> When he was snatched from death, then o’er the globe,  
> With secret signs from many a mountain-tower,  
> With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power  
> Of Kings and Priests, those dark conspirators,  
> He called:—they knew his cause their own, and swore  
> Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars  
> Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven abhors. (3847-55)

Sterrenburg discusses the views of the liberal intellectuals on nature, and shows how, in the above quotation, Nature itself is defined as for revolution (325). Shelley is one of those intellectuals who strongly believed in Nature’s support for the revolution. That’s why, the Holy Alliance and their truce is abhorred. Consistently with this idea, immediately after the king’s armies’ killing and massacring all the revolutionaries, they end up with natural disease, as Cythna and Laon mention many times throughout the poem. Now that tyranny is on the throne, every kind of disaster falls on earth. Thus, after two days of retreat in their cavern, Laon leaves to find some food. He ends up in a village where he meets a mad woman among dead bodies who calls herself "Pestilence." She kisses Laon on the lips and tells him that Famine will be there soon, too. Her act is prophetic of what is going to come next and what will befall Laon in the future:

> Soon as she heard my steps she leaped on me,  
> And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed
With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee,
And cried, "Now, Mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed
The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the draught!

... My name is Pestilence ...—hither and thither
I flit about, that I may slay and smother:--
All lips which I have kissed must surely wither,

But Death's—If thou art he, we'll go to work together!"  (2767-76)

With all the disasters that rule the earth as a result of the king's tyrannical action, the king and his Iberian priest, whom Laon describes as a man who "loathed all faith beside his own" (4079) and who is against "the clear light / Of wisdom and free thought" (4081-82), think that these are all the results of Laon and Cythna's rebellion against authority and their being "unbelievers" (4075). The priest suggests their sacrifice as the only way to end the disasters. He says:

...there is sent a mortal vengeance now
On earth, because an impious race had spurned
Him whom we all adore,—a subtle foe,
By whom for ye this dread reward was earned,

And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturned.  (4103-07)

It is ironic that both sides consider nature's response to be the consequence of a destruction of an order. The king takes it as a response to the revolution of the people against the monarchy, and Laon and the revolutionaries take it as a response to the massacre by the king. Binaries often work in Shelley's ideology, and they are reflected in the characters and places. This eastern empire, the implied Ottoman Empire, is represented as evil and unjust. Yet the Greek revolution started by Laon does not manage to establish the ideal state either. According to
the logic of the binaries that Shelley sets up, the ideal state is represented by America. Although we don’t see the representation of America as ideal, Laon’s wish to send Cythna there shows it as the ideal, in contrast to the evil Eastern empire. When the king decides to kill as a sacrifice, Laon comes in disguise on condition that Cythna be sent to America. He says that then he will tell where Laon is:

...  
In the desert there is built a home  
For freedom. Genius is made strong to near  
The monuments of man beneath the dome  
Of a new heaven; myriads assemble there,  
Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,  
Drive from their wasted homes: the boon I pray  
Is this—that Cythna shall be conveyed there—  
Nay, start not at the name—America!  
And then to you this night Laon will I betray. (4432-40)

Turhan argues about the representation of America and its function in the poem: “the mythic land of America is a counter-balance to despotic Turkey. This idealized vision of America as the ‘home / for Freedom’ is a new Greece, free from the oppression of the Turks as exemplified in their occupation of Constantinople” (121).

At the end of the poem both Laon and Cythna are killed by fire. A question can be asked that if this poem is written by Shelley as the idealized form of the French Revolution, then how come we talk about an ideal at all, if this ideal, bloodless revolution with idealized heroes can fail? First of all, it is important to know that hope in the better things to come is essential for Shelley. Whatever happens, every negative thing will turn out good at the end, he always believed. In other words, according to his belief in the cyclical nature of history, as
Curran calls it, even if the heroes die, their ideas and words will live in people’s minds and
will cause a better future for them, if not a positive situation now. The idealized heroes are the
willing sacrifices for this cause. Secondly, although the revolution takes place as peacefully
and bloodlessly as it can, there still is Shelley’s implicit criticism in the way that it happens.
Revolution in this work is “created in one night,” however, Shelley says in the Preface of the
poem that he believes in the “slow gradual and silent change,” rather than a rapid change in
one night because people are in need of more enlightenment (4). He also criticizes those who
expect once enslaved and ignorant people to be enlightened and reformed all of a sudden. He
asks, “Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded,
forbearing, and independent?” (4). Thus, that’s one of the issues that Shelley implicitly points
out in Revolt. Other than this, Turhan emphasizes that the heroes and their idealism puts them
in an unreachable space: “in the end this revolution does not fail because the Greek cause was
unjust or because Turkish authority deserved to be maintained. In this case the masses were
unable to rise to the level of their leaders because the leaders positioned themselves so highly
as not to see the realities of the situation below them” (119). By dislocating the French
Revolution to an eastern setting, another empire, Shelley criticizes the empire structure at
Europe. His Platonic view on things, dividing them into the real and its shadow, as seen in the
cave parable, leads him to think in binaries in spaces, in concepts, and even in genders.
Although Cythna’s positioning as the ideal leader woman along with Laon is considered
feministic by many like King-Hele, and there are a number of speeches given throughout the
poem about the freedom of woman, that Cythna is still always referred to in relation to Laon
as his second or shadow self proves that binary oppositions exist in his gender classifications,
too, as independent and dependent.
III. The Last Man

The novel is the story of Lionel Verney, the last man surviving from the plague, which takes place at the end of the 21st century and wipes out mankind from the earth. When it was first published, criticism was harsh, ranging from complaints of its being too anatomical in its descriptions of death, ruin, and unpleasantness to comments such as "why not the last woman? . . . She would have known better how to paint her distress at having nobody to talk to" (qtd. in Paley 108). The work has received positive critical attention only since the middle of the 20th century. This novel is usually addressed by the critics as a roman a clef. First, its theme of being alone in the world is reminiscent of Mary's own loneliness in the world after the death of her husband. In her journal entry she writes, "The Last Man! Yes, I may well describe that solitary being's feelings, feeling myself as the last relic of a beloved race, my companions extinct before me" (Luke x). Thus, this personal document confirmed the idea that the novel draws heavily on her life. Secondly, the characters in the novel are very similar to the real-life figures of Mary's household, especially, since the resemblances between Adrian and Percy Shelley, and between Raymond and Lord Byron are hard not to notice. Moreover, as Bennett points out, "Mary Shelley herself noted that in The Last Man could be found 'in Lord Raymond and Count Adrian faint portraits . . . of B(Byron) and S(Sheley) . . . but this a secret'" (qtd. in Bennett 1). Thus, the autobiographical aspect of the novel is undeniably already there.

However, it would be limiting to call the novel just a roman a clef, since many social and political ideals of her time and circle are discussed in the deeper levels of the text. Through Mary's words, we see her retrospection on her time and the ideals that are defined and shaped by romantic ideology, mostly by her philosophical, idealistic husband, Percy Shelley. Mary does not just retell their tale in Italy in this novel for the sake of nostalgia for her past. Rather, she is representing the ideals supported by her circle, and questioning and
reworking them. As Luke notes, characters should be seen as “synthetic (xii)” from their real-life counterparts, rather than as their direct representations or equivalent. For example, as Paley observes, the narrator of the novel Lionel, who is left alone in the world as the last man of mankind, represents Mary in the novel, but her identification is also divided to include his sister Perdita, too (110).

Thus, in the disguise of the characters, Mary Shelley represents not only the real-life figures, but also what they stand for, especially the idealism of her husband. Mary’s simultaneous idealization and criticism of these people and their thoughts is the focal point of this paper. Claiming that she both idealizes and criticizes these figures at the same time may seem contradictory, but the complex ambiguity of her attitude toward these issues will be fully explored. Mainly, I will discuss how Mary Shelley, surviving after the romantic circle of her family and friends, sees and evaluates their lives and ideals during their stay in Italy, and how she reflects these people from her point of view. When I say ideals, I refer especially to the social and political ideals presented by her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his work *The Revolt of Islam*.

The novel opens with an introduction part, which serves as the frame of the whole story. In this introduction the unknown and unspecified “I” narrator visits a cave in Naples with a male companion, and after entering the cave, they realize that it is a Sibylline cave. When they enter the cave, they find Sibylline leaves scattered around, on which are inscribed some known and some unknown languages. At first, they don’t realize that these leaves belong to the Sibyl. It is the male companion of the narrator who identifies the leaves as the Sibyl’s. They select some of the leaves, and first, with the help of her male companion, but later on her own the narrator manages to decipher some of the unknown languages on the leaves and comes up with a story about the prophetic future of mankind, which turns out to be the story of the last man on earth, the only survivor of a plague which wipes humans from the earth.
The "I" narrator never specifies his/her gender, but as in the novel itself, readers tend to think of the narrator as Mary Shelley and of her male companion as Percy Shelley. It is recorded that Mary and Shelley had been around the original place of the cave in Naples, but that she had just passed the cave with Shelley without entering in it (Bennett, 2). That's why the tendency is to identify the "I" narrator with Mary Shelley. Thus, the decipherer and the writer of the story of the novel is this "I" narrator. She can be called not only the interpreter, but also the half-creator of the story. This suggests the idea of the poet as prophet, as discussed in Percy Shelley's poetics (Defence of Poetry). In his view, art is half-creating, instead of simply making, a neutral and direct translation of things. The narrator, then, puts herself into the artistic process and writes of this prophetic, and at the same time, historical event: "Sometimes I have thought, that, obscure and chaotic as they [the leaves] are, they owe their present form to me, their decipherer. . . . Doubtless the leaves of the Cumaean Sibyl have suffered distortion and diminution of interest and excellence in my hands" (4).

Here the story is told by the narrator, so it's her interpretation. The story of Lionel, which takes place in the 21st century, is being told by the "I" narrator in the year 1818. When Lionel records his tale, he has neither reader nor audience, but the prophecy provides him with a reader (Paley 111). The three narrators and the recorder of the events are intermingled in the narrative, which also changes the natural sequence of time as past, present and future. These three narrators are: Lionel, the one who actually lives through the events in the future; Sibyl, who foresees what will come in the future in the past; and the "I" narrator, who reaches the prophetic leaves and interprets them as a writer, making sense of the fragments in the present 1818. Here the "I" narrator is crucial, as she is the key to the two narratives, which depend on her interpretation. Gilbert and Gubar interpret the whole scene as the female writer's finding her artistic creative power. The cave, as Freud pointed out, is associated with woman. By entering the cave, Mary Shelley draws her own artistic power from there, which
was hidden and scattered, just as the Sibylline leaves are, so that she needs to "remember" and "re-member" the pieces. At first, the narrator needs the help of the male companion to decipher the "unknown" languages, but then she does it herself, as she reaches her artistic power in the cave. She does not need any person other than herself once she has access to her creative power because her male companion does not really know the languages. He recognizes some of them, and he points out that the leaves are Sibylline. That's his total contribution, and the rest is up to her. Gilbert and Gubar think that it is sad that not the female, but the male is the one who identifies the Sibylline leaves. Thus, the "I" narrator's struggle to make meaning from the leaves and writing the story hidden there, even half-creating it, corresponds to Mary's own struggle to find her own voice as a writer and reach her artistic power, first through the help of her male companion, Percy Shelley, and then on her own. Gilbert and Gubar, too, cite this crucial turning point for her: "For Mary Shelley, therefore, it is intimately connected with both her own artistic authority and her own power of self-creation. A male poet or instructor may guide her to this place, but, as she herself realizes, she and she alone can effectively reconstruct the scattered truth of the Sibyl's leaves" (97). It is no coincidence that The Last Man is the first novel that is written by Mary Shelley without the guidance of Percy Shelley.

The work is especially important as it is her first trial as a writer on her own. We know that Frankenstein is written with the encouragement and guidance of her husband, as she explained in the Preface of Frankenstein: "He [Percy Shelley] desired that I should write, not so much with the idea that I could produce anything worthy of notice, but that he might himself judge how far I possessed the promise of better things hereafter" (Shelley 260). This quotation is also significant to show how Mary Shelley was insecure as a writer in the beginning. She admits that she has always been involved in using her imaginative power, but she also believed that she wasn't good at writing: "My dreams were at once more fantastic
and agreeable than my writings. In the latter I was a close imitator . . . but my dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody’’ (259). Thus, she does not attempt to write. Instead she is engaged in domestic duties and traveling, as she says in the Preface of Frankenstein. I think here her anxiety as a writer derives from her having writer parents and a husband who is a well-known poet, both intimidating situations, which may be the cause of her delay in her writing career. She said that she was not far from an intellectual environment and that she herself had her own imagination working then, but writing could be a challenge for her, since she may have felt the need to top her parents or her poet husband. Although Percy Shelley encouraged her writing, one cannot help but think about whether he wondered if Mary had inherited the literary power her parents had. It is obvious in the Preface that Percy wants to see if she has it, and to judge, then, whether she is ‘‘worthy’’ of them. It is a well-known fact that even before meeting Mary, Percy was an admirer of her parents and their ideology. His dedication to Mary in his work The Revolt of Islam, I think, confirms the idea: ‘‘thou wart lovely from thy birth, / of glorious parents thou aspiring Child’’ (100-01).

Thus, the two incidents, the narrator’s male companion recognizing the Sibylline leaves and her translating them into a story, are similar to the real-life experiences that explain how Mary Shelley started writing in the first place. First, it is managed through the encouragement of her husband, with ‘‘a companion,’’ and the rest is accomplished alone. Thus, the ‘‘I’’ narrator’s finding her artistic power in this cave and creating something as a result of it is very similar to Mary Shelley’s own journey as a woman writer. The result is The Last Man, which is her first novel written after the death of her husband and without any male encouragement. It becomes her attempt to survive as a writer. Hence, finding the Sibyl’s leaves and making a story out of them has two meanings in this case. First, the unknown, possibly female ‘‘I’’ narrator’s deciphering the language on the leaves stands for her metaphorical contact with her literary powers. In the beginning she does not understand the language written by the Sibyl,
who can be considered as the ancestor of female literary power. Once the narrator is able to achieve the contact and complete the task, she creates a story, a text which is a prophecy of the future. The "I" narrator becomes an author. Mary Shelley and this narrator certainly have a connection in that way. Even if the narrator is not named or specified, this incident is like a specimen of a female writer's struggle to write and to reconcile herself with her literary powers. It explains a lot about Mary Shelley's own inner journey as a writer, even if she had never been in that cave literally. I think that, unnamed or ungendered as the narrator is, the introduction has a more universally representative value, just as Plato's cave of ideas has. It especially signifies Mary Shelley's own interaction with her powers as a writer.

As in Frankenstein, this novel has a frame technique, too. It serves the writer's perhaps unconscious attempt to reveal the meaning of the novel through a story-within-a-story technique. Frankenstein has a framing epistolary format to it. Then the inner narratives of the different characters are presented as circles inside this outer circle. The core narratives are those of Victor Frankenstein and the monster. Here the core narrative is by Lionel Verney. He narrates his story in the annals of Rome after losing everyone around him. He knows that his story will not be read after him, as the plague has left no one living on the earth at the end of the 21st century. However, through the framing technique, in 1818, his story is already written down even before it happened. It may not be read after him, but it will be read before him.

And this inner story is "the story of Lionel Verney--the last man."

The novel is like a Bildungsroman. It starts with Lionel Verney and ends with him, although this end is not his death. Lionel comes from a good family. His father used to be one of the men of the King of England. But when he is involved in gambling and loses his money, he takes his refuge in the North of England. He lives in poverty and dies, leaving his family in poverty. His two children, Lionel and his sister Perdita, live a hard life on the outskirts of Cumberland. Unlike what Wordsworth suggests in his poetry, growing up in natural scenery
does not make Lionel a better person. On the contrary, he is "wild" and "brutal" (12). His life changes when he attempts to assassinate the late king’s son Adrian. Lionel is full of a sense of revenge for the king, not for any political reason, as he later admits that in those times he was not really interested in politics. His reasons are personal. He does not forgive the late king for ignoring his father’s message requesting help. He thinks that the king is the reason for their poverty and the suffering in their life. Thus, he decides with his gang to kill his son, but he is arrested. Adrian goes to visit Lionel and apologizes for what had happened. He had just then received Lionel’s father’s letter. He remembers his father’s talking about Lionel’s father in a friendly way. From then on, with Adrian’s gentle and civilized manners, they become like brothers. Lionel tries to be like him, and he learns everything good and civilized from Adrian. He says, “Doubt me not, Adrian, I also will become wise and good!” (19). This is how his lifetime admiration and devotion for Adrian starts.

Adrian is very much like Percy Shelley. That’s why most critics of Shelley, Luke is one of them, can’t ignore this aspect of the novel. Adrian both physically and ideologically is the representer of Percy Shelley: “In person, he hardly appeared of this world; his slight frame was overinformed by the soul that dwelt within; he was all mind” (18). Mary Shelley was prohibited from writing any kind of biography of Shelley according to the agreement between her and her father-in-law, Timothy Shelley. Thus, she had to watch herself so as not to lose the financial support she received from him for her son. However, she managed to represent Percy in the disguise of Adrian very well. Her simultaneous idealization and criticism of her husband finds its expression in the treatment of this character.

Before she lost Shelley, Mary and Percy had somewhat lost their closeness. She had lost three of her four children in Italy when even they were barely infants, and she blamed Percy for their deaths. This caused coldness between the couple in the later years of their life together. But when Percy drowned, Mary blamed herself for being cold to him. Her bad
conscience also made her remember him in a more idealized image. This was Mary Shelley’s state of mind when she was writing the novel, and this is why the Adrian character appears as he does. Luke says that Adrian is the only character in the novel that does not marry, and the reason for this can be explained as Mary’s attempt to idealize the character more. Mary was also hurt over Percy’s affairs with other women that had taken place from time to time, especially after her growing away from him after the death of her children. Hence, her idealization of the Adrian character may be seen as Mary’s attempt to make it up to Percy Shelley in her mind and art.

Although Adrian is the son of the late abducted king, he truly believes and supports the Republic in England. His mother, the Countess of Windsor, who used to be the ex-queen, is an ambitious lady who has brought up her son with the hope of restoring him to his father’s throne. But as an idealist, he disappoints his mother and supports the republic instead: “He gave not only a brief denial to his mother’s schemes but published his intention of using his influence to diminish the power of the aristocracy, to effect a greater equalization of wealth and privilege, and to introduce a perfect system of republican government into England” (30). Thus, Adrian definitely carries in his character the political idealism of Percy Shelley. Public ideals and the welfare of the people are his priorities more than his royal heritage. However, his idealism seems to be temporarily set aside when he falls in love with a Greek princess named Evadne, who does not return his love. And we find that Adrian goes mad out of his unreturned love for Evadne and removes himself to an unknown place. However, it is not inconsistent with Shelleyan philosophy because his idealism does not apply only to political and social fields. It also includes love which is, according to Shelley, an inseparable part of the improvement of man and society. Adrian says that without love there is no reason for him to strive for anything, adding that wisdom and the mind of man are only useful if love rules them. That is the reason for his seclusion from the society and why he goes mad. Without his
love, other improvements are meaningless: “He entrusted to her [Evadne’s] keeping the treasures of his soul, his aspirations after excellence, and his plans for the improvement of mankind” (30). I think that Adrian’s love for Evadne is not only an idealistic, but also an ideological love. His attraction to her may be caused by his admiration for her ancestors. He reads and admires ancient Greek philosophers and poets, and thus has philhellenist tendencies. With Evadne’s being a Greek princess and Adrian’s being a British aristocrat, he might think of their union as the ideal union of the East and the West, ancient and the modern, because it is not unlike Adrian to think in terms of ideals. This union is not one made to serve political ends. On the contrary, it is an ideal union for its own sake. Adrian is not the kind of person who wants to be the ruler of the world in the way his friend Raymond does. For him, individuals and their improvements are important, not his own concerns. If there is anything he can do for the improvement of mankind, he does it not for fame, for himself or for any personal interest because he “felt that he made a part of a whole. He owned affinity not only with mankind, but all nature was akin to him” (31). This idealism makes him look unrealistic, impractical and like a “dreamer” (34). This is in fact the reason why Evadne does not return his love. She wishes Adrian’s ideas were “more intelligible to the multitudes” (30-1), focused on people rather than abstract ideas.

Raymond is the character who can be contrasted to Adrian. Unlike in the idealistic character of Adrian, in Raymond we see passion and political ambition. He is in fact the Lord Byron of the novel. We can see many resemblances between Raymond and Lord Byron. They are both unconventional aristocrats who fight for the Greeks against the Turks. Raymond’s ideals, unlike Adrian’s, are those concerning himself. He fights for the Greeks certainly for believing in their cause, but he also has an idea of himself as the hero of the war. He is far from being selfless and fighting for some ideals concerning the welfare of people the way that Adrian does. That’s why he is the complete opposite of Adrian; he “looked on the structure of
society as but a part of the machinery which supported the web on which his life was traced” (31). The world and its matters are important to him as long as they serve him in some way. Before he fought in the battlefields for the liberty of Greece, he was a libertine. When he comes back to England with a reputation, the first thing he wants to do is to take his revenge on those who were mean to him before. Thus, he immediately presents himself as a candidate for the Lord Protector title in the Parliament, which is the first important step that should be taken for his Napoleonic dream. He reveals this ambition to Lionel:

My first act when I become King of England, will be to unite with the Greeks, take Constantinople, and subdue all Asia. I intend to be a warrior, a conqueror; Napoleon’s name shall veil to mine; and enthusiasts instead of visiting his rocky grave, and exalting the merits of the fallen, shall adore my majesty, and magnify my illustrious achievements. (40)

It is obvious that, like Napoleon and Julius Caesar, he aims to declare himself a monarch just after his election.

In his political ambition we see masculine ideology. Raymond was first a libertine, then a war hero, and finally, the Lord Protector. Thus, he is far from being involved in domestic life. He is usually after some political ambitions of being a hero (the “victor of Constantinople” (141)) and a conqueror (the “conqueror of Asia” (40)), and avoiding any commitment. His political aim is already shared by Adrian’s ambitious mother, the Countess of Windsor. She supports Raymond’s masculine ideals instead of Adrian’s goals. And her sister Idris is betrothed to Raymond. In that way Raymond would join forces with the powerful Countess. However, although politically ambitious and selfish, Raymond also loves. He is in love with Lionel’s sister Perdita. He tries to deny his love for her, as he has to marry Idris to get one step closer to his political ambition. The inner conflict he lives through between his love for Perdita and his political ambition is in fact the conflict between
masculine ideology and feminine domestic ideology. One is ruled by love and commitment to
the nuclear family, while the other is governed by the demands of duty and heroism. He
knows that once he chooses his love for Perdita, he will have to give up his dream. He calls
his heart a "tyrant" (39). He has to rule it. He cannot accept being its "slave" (45).
However, after long discussions he is defeated by his love and gives up his dream for the sake
of Perdita. By doing that, he chooses the domestic life over masculine heroism.

After the marriage of Raymond to Perdita, Lionel, who has been in love with Adrian’s
sister, Idris, for some time, learns that his love for her is not unreturned. Lionel was desperate
when he had learned that Idris was to marry Raymond not out of love, but for some politics.
When Raymond chooses Perdita over his ambition, Lionel with the approval of Adrian, but
not the Countess, is married to Idris. Adrian is the hero, savior, teacher, brother -- everything
to Lionel. It is no surprise that Lionel, even before meeting Idris, has some feelings for her.
When he hears about the coupling of Raymond to Idris, he feels bad that she will marry
someone who doesn’t really love her. As the disciple of Adrian, Lionel, too, believes in the
priority of love over everything. His attraction to Idris is somewhat connected to his love for
Adrian. Idris is like a female form of Adrian. Lionel’s homosocial bond with Adrian is thus
carried to another level when he marries Idris. Mark Canuel emphasizes the same point that
"...Lionel’s attraction to Idris appears to be mediated through a homosocial relation with
Adrian" (154). In fact, later in the novel Lionel admits, "I was hardly more devoted to my
Idris than to her brother" (65). After that point in the novel, Lionel is with Idris, and Adrian
lives them.

Perdita and Raymond with their daughter Clara live near London, as he is the Lord
Protector. Raymond performs his public duties very well without excluding his domestic
sphere from it. Lots of reforms have been done under his rule. Perdita, instead of being
secluded from his duties, is involved in them. Julie Schuetz describes the scene as the perfect

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example of the triumph of domestic life over masculine ideology. In masculine ideology, the hero excludes everyone from his acts. This was true of the life of Raymond before Perdita. He was the hero of the masculine romantic ideology. In spite of Adrian’s singleness, “the happiest days” of their lives take place during the five years onwards from the point of these two marriages because every character, including Adrian, is in the domestic sphere. This is one of the key issues in the novel: domestic feminine romantic ideology is prioritized over the masculine ideology.

Anne Mellor is the first critic who brings up the problem of masculine and feminine division in romantic ideology. She introduces Carol Gilligan’s “masculine ethic of justice” and “feminine ethic of care” to romantic ideology. Before Mellor, romantic ideology is defined through masculine traits, such as the individual quest of the romantic hero, who is always depicted in his isolated, lonely place, because this was the romanticism reflected in the romantic poets’ work. Female romantic writers were somehow excluded from this formula. However, Mellor says that women writers in the period come up with their “alternative program” which is quite different in its solution: “... the women writers of the Romantic era offered an alternative program grounded on the trope of the family-politic, on the idea of a nation-state that evolves gradually and rationally under the mutual care and guidance of both mother and father” (Mellor qtd in Schuetz 1). Mary Shelley belongs to this school, since her work suggests that, instead of looking for a sociopolitical solution outside of the domestic sphere, one should look for it in the domestic sphere. This is also one of the major themes of *Frankenstein*. The Frankensteins’ life is contrasted to the DeLacey’s domestic family life. Victor is never seen in his home environment, but he is always looking for higher ambition in his scientific work. That’s why the Delaceys find happiness in their happy domestic circle, while the Frankensteins are killed by the lifetime work of Victor. This theme is also the theme of *The Last Man*. Thus, in terms of working on the same theme, which is the superiority of the
domestic sphere and its regenerating power over the destructive, individualistic masculine ideology, *The Last Man* is considered the sequence of *Frankenstein*. This masculine ideology is an essential part of Percy Shelley's idealism. He does not give any space to domestic life in his works. This is what Mary Shelley is against in her husband’s ideology (2).

Thus, in contrast, Mary Shelley delineates even the female characters’ different personality types as adding varied elements to the domestic scene. Lionel compares his sister to his wife in their temperaments. Perdita is “timid and reserved”; Idris is “frank and confiding” (36). The reason for the difference in their temperament is explained through the difference in their growing up. Perdita, he says, grew up in a wild environment in which she had to protect herself, and that made her wild and reserved in her later environment. In Idris’ case, she did not have to witness any hostility or harshness in the world. Lionel further describes Perdita as an imaginative person, saying that she likes to paint. She is not much of a social person, but rather cold and on her own, unlike Lionel, who needs, social company: “I [Lionel] always required the stimulants of companionship and applause. Perdita was all-sufficient to herself” (10). From time to time, we can see Mary Shelley’s personality characteristics divided between Lionel and Perdita. In one of her journal entries she writes that people tend to think “she has a cold heart” (qtd in Luke xiii). In the Preface to *Frankenstein* she had already said that she was always engaged in using her imagination. Lionel’s description of Perdita’s imagination shows that it corresponds to Mary Shelley’s: “Her active fancy wove a thousand combinations; she dreamt of moving accidents by flood and field—she lost herself delightedly in these self-created wanderings, and returned with unwilling spirit to the dull detail of common life” (10). Drawing at least partly from her sense of herself, then, Mary Shelley creates Idris and Perdita to fit the feminine gender roles of the domestic sphere.
Two female characters who are actually outside of the usual gender roles are Countess of Windsor and Evadne. Interestingly enough, both women are outsiders who cannot be part of the inner Circle of the major characters in the novel, and they are from the Eastern part of Europe, compared to England. That may be why they can never get rid of their "otherness" to these "Westemers." The Countess used to be an Austrian Princess, whose quest to take back the political power that her husband lost makes her involve herself in political schemes. She is an ambitious and powerful lady who doesn't carry any domestic virtue. That's why she is mostly portrayed as a negative character in the novel. Another reason for her negative aspect is that she does not approve of Idris' marriage to Lionel, whom she hates. However, this hatred does not spring from a mere class difference, but from her hatred for Lionel's father, who apparently had a homosocial bond to the king and it probably made her jealous. She says, "in those days how often did I hear of his attractions, his widespread conquests, his wit, his refined manners" (59). We understand that she tried hard to separate the king from Lionel's father, which is another reason that she is portrayed as a bad character: she tries to break the homosocial bond between the two men. Moreover, she is crushed for not being domestic, which reveals another aspect of female gender roles in the novel. As a female character, if one is not domestic or worse, somehow trying to be part of masculine ideology, one cannot be welcomed in either of the two. Thus, near the end of the book, after the death of her daughter, the Countess apologizes to Lionel and submits to him: "--take me, and govern me as you will" (263).

Unlike the Countess, Evadne is not specifically portrayed as a negative character. However, she is never part of their circle either. They sympathize with Greece's situation, especially Raymond. He wants to restore her rank as the "superior" against the Turks. As explained above, Adrian idealizes her for her ancestors to whom he feels the Western civilization owes a lot. Obviously enough, she is a Greek princess, and both Raymond and
Adrian are philhellenists. Yet, in general, Evadne is somewhat of a mystery in the novel. She loves Raymond, I think mostly because, just as Adrian idealizes her, seeing her ancestors as the heroes of Western culture, she idealizes Raymond as a hero who shares their trouble. Evadne had already heard of his reputation as a hero even before she met him. She is intellectual enough to evaluate the impractical ideals of Adrian’s political philosophy, and she is artistic enough to draw her own designs for the National Museum. Compared to Perdita, who does paintings on her own, just to pass time, Evadne tries to make money from her art to survive. She is also proud enough to do it anonymously so as not to disturb Raymond’s happiness with Perdita and make him feel sorry for her. This is how she becomes involved with Raymond after his marriage to Perdita. Earlier in the novel, she leaves England because she is already in love with Raymond, and, knowing Adrian’s feelings for her, she does not want to cause trouble for him. She comes back to England because of the Turks, who kill her husband and she consequently loses her wealth, so she needs money to survive. Raymond, as the Lord Protector, looks for an architect, and she anonymously sends her drawings. Intrigued by them, Raymond wants to see the anonymous designer. This is how they meet and become involved in some relationship, but this relationship is never specified, but left ambiguous. Nevertheless, his involvement with Evadne destroys Raymond’s domestic happiness with Perdita. When she learns it, he gives up his public duties and fights against the Turks. Here there is, I think, Mary Shelley’s criticism of masculine ideology. Like an adventurer, Raymond gives up all his responsibilities, domestic and public; instead of saving his family and himself, he finds himself an object outside of himself, the heroic quest to achieve, just to keep himself detached and distracted from his own problem at home. That’s why I don’t think Raymond’s fighting for Greece has to do with his identification with the Greeks’ struggle for independence or anything like that. His motive is selfish, and he makes the Greeks an excuse to restore his fame. The last time he was in Greece, it was in order to earn fame and thus
restore his reputation back in England. He does the same thing this second time without really achieving anything for himself. Evadne is much more down-to-earth in that sense. She fights for her country disguised as a man and dies. She is much more heroic, compared to Raymond.

On the battlefield before she dies, Evadne tells Lionel that Raymond will die, too:

"There is the end! There we meet again. ... I have sold myself to death, with the sole condition that thou shouldst follow me. ...--O my Raymond, there is no safety for thee!"

(131). When Lionel tells it to Raymond, he immediately accepts it but what he thinks is that he will die as a hero: "When Evadne pronounced my death, I thought that the title of Victor Constantinople would be written on my tomb, and I subdued all mortal fear" (141). Instead he dies entering an already empty city just out of an excess of heroism. His entering Constantinople is a symbolic scene. When the Greek soldiers refuse to go into the city, as they are scared of being infected, Raymond gallops into the city on his horse alone. In that scene really apocalyptic events take place, and all the collapsing buildings fall down on him. This is how he dies, and he can't be found for a day. When he is found, he is mutilated. Thus, he does not die as a hero, as he expected. Instead, the masculine romantic quest he tries to achieve is countered by the falling of the huge monumental buildings, with the whole event symbolic of the collapse of masculine idealism. He is crushed under it.

Related to this theme of destruction, there is also pestilence as a large-scale catastrophic event, which is an important motif in the whole novel. Pestilence is interpreted differently by many critics. In Percy Shelley's philosophy and his works, he suggests that pestilence and famine are the first symptoms that the natural order shows when tyranny is in charge. Accordingly, if we accept world politics as a body, if some injustice takes place every part of the body is infected from this illness, so that pestilence, famine and these kinds of disasters spread the infection. This is what happened in The Revolt of Islam. However, there is no such reason for the plague in this novel, which is a worse monster than Frankenstein's, as it is
uncontrollable and Canuel calls it "invincible monster" (166). And the plague is feminine. According to Audrey Fisch, "the plague deconstructs hierarchical social orders, but at the expense of human life. . . . The plague ruthlessly insists on the equal humanity of all and on the spuriousness of categories used to make distinctions" (272). In spite of the destructiveness of the plague, it is true that class division and patriarchal hierarchies disappear. When the plague reaches England, Lionel opens the door of their castle to the emigrants who come from the south of England. He and his family decide to give up some of their luxury. Instead of using quarantine, England welcomes people from all over the world, not everyone though, only her people scattered around the colonies. People find consolation in being together. The nuclear family and its domestic virtues are the only way out from the plague. Some people in the novel, the politician Ryland, for example, try to find the cure by isolating themselves from the company of people. He doesn’t want to be infected, so he retires to a lonely place where he is later found dead alone. Ryland also tells people in England, when plague first appears in Constantinople, that it is not possible for it to come to Europe, as the plague is a "native of the East," and "it never feasts on the pale-faced Celt" (169). Thus, Ryland underscores the Orientalism, to use Edward Said’s term, operating in the Europeans’ perception of the origin and intended victims of this punishing, cannibalistic disease.

With such an implicit, yet nonetheless stinging critique of England’s sociopolitical attitude toward these Eastern others, it is easy to understand that one reason why The Last Man received negative criticism is its political content. At the time women writers were not expected to deal with political issues, and the novel certainly has political issues in the background of it. The most significant issue is that Mary Shelley’s 21st-century portrayal of England presents it as a republic in the future (Bennett 5). The novel was produced in the period of the monarchs’ European Holy Alliance against republican and revolutionary ideas. People, especially the authorities, had just recovered from the terrors of the French
Revolution, and its republican ideals were unacceptable for them. That’s why it was appalling for English readers to see a woman writer deal with political issues concerning the ideals of the French Revolution. The novel opens with the information that in the 2070s, England is a republic. This republic is founded with the peaceful dethronement of the King of England at the time, which is consistent with Percy Shelley’s idea of “bloodless revolution” as it was presented in The Revolt of Islam. The King of England is dethroned by his subjects for a better governmental system. He is given the title Count of Windsor and an estate for his dethronement. His family continues to live in England without any danger. The king’s son, Adrian, is the supporter of a political system. Although he is the rightful heir to the throne, he never considers himself the king, nor does he try to restore his monarchy. Adrian, like Percy Shelley, believes in egalitarian values.

Mary Shelley, herself, believed in these political reforms, too. As a woman writer who grew up in an environment of sociopolitical discussion, she developed her own ideas about political issues. Bennett emphasizes, “A sophisticated observer of the political scene, . . . she . . . publicly voiced her abiding opposition to despotic government and her support of sociopolitical reform” (9-10). Although she never published her novels, starting from Frankenstein, political ideology is inherent in her works. We can draw a sense of her own ideas from her works, especially from The Last Man, as it refers not only to the people of her environment, but also to the political events of her time. In her lifetime she witnessed the French Revolution’s consequences in Europe, Napoleon’s declaring himself emperor, the European monarchs’ gathering counterrevolutionary forces, the Holy Alliance, and Greece’s Independence War against the Ottoman Empire. Sterrenburg compares The Last Man to other contemporary disaster-vision works and finds Shelley’s work the most politically allusive of her time: “Of all . . . disaster visions, Mary Shelley’s The Last Man is probably the most expansive in its allusions to political writings and events from the era of the French
Revolution, the Napoleonic Empire, and the Greek Revolution against the Turks during the 1820s" (327). All these phenomena find their places in Shelley’s futuristic fiction, colored with her own ideology. Most importantly, she witnessed these events with her husband, who dedicated his life to the betterment of society and its political system. Although she was never a political activist the way her husband was, she inevitably developed her own stance, which was not fully revealed until the publication of this work.

When we say her own ideology, it is not formally structured by her, in the way that her husband’s ideology was. Her kind of ideology is called feminine romantic ideology by Mellor, meaning a set of beliefs and ideas which is mainly focused on domestic community as the central concern for society’s improvement. Percy Shelley for the social reform of a society also refers to domestic peace, but his mention of this point is just a single reference in Revolt, and it is not central at all. Domestic places do not even exist in the poem. Its heroes are always in the wilderness. Love is emphasized as necessary among the members of society on the public level, and on the private level, the love of a man and woman is highlighted, which is embodied in its ideal form in the love of Laon and Cythna. This is not the case in Mary Shelley’s fiction, and this creates the central difference between hers and her husband’s ideology for social reform. She implicitly focuses on the necessity of a sound domestic life and its centrality for the benefit of society. This argument makes sense, considering that the moral improvement of an individual can be provided for much better in a domestic, family atmosphere than it can in an idealist poet’s rhetoric directed towards the vaguer audience of a mass of people.
Conclusion

Mary Shelley for many years was known as William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft’s daughter, and the romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley’s wife. Subsequently, her first novel *Frankenstein* brought her fame to the point that her later literary works are still often ignored because of the sudden, huge success of the novel. However, especially with *The Last Man*, which is her first ambitious novel after her husband’s death, she proves herself as a writer on her own account. In this work, she is criticized for creating characters from her own circle, which also caused this work to be ignored for many years. However, unusually for her period, in those characters she does not just reenact events from the lives of her friends, but highlights their sociopolitical stance as a way to convey her own argument implicitly through working with them. She also reflects herself as a character to refer to her journey as a woman writer by using Shelleyan cave imagery with a different emphasis from his. Especially Percy Shelley’s extreme sociopolitical ideals are implicitly criticized in the novel, specifically in the character of Adrian, and in the prominent historical events such as the French Revolution, and the Greek Independence War, which are reenacted in her fictional future in the light of Shelleyan sociopolitical philosophy. In the novel she uses Shelley both as a character to memorialize him and their circle in Italy, and as a vehicle to bring out her criticism of Shelley after his death, of what Mellor calls masculine romanticism. As a woman writer and as a romantic, she superimposes the domestic idealism over Shelley’s heroic-focused, solipsistic idealism, which tends to destroy domestic peace and happiness, as they had already experienced in their own lives. Especially in *The Revolt of Islam*, as presented above, we can see Percy Shelley’s sociopolitical idealism as a reference point to grasp her argument. Likewise, Shelley also represents Mary as his ideal soulmate and dedicates the poem to Mary Shelley. He also represents his union with Mary Shelley in the coming together of the hero and heroine, Laon and Cythna. They both use the East, specifically Constantinople, as their setting, and they
reenact important political events in these works according to the frame of their own sociopolitical argument on the public level and their idealization of their partners on the private level. Percy Shelley’s masculine idealism is significantly inherent in his work, and his Platonic idealism causes him to go after binary opposition in his representation of things. In contrast, Mary Shelley is much more ambiguous, and avoids depicting such clear-cut points in political and gender issues. She is, then, much more practical in her representations, compared to her husband, who remains abstract in his art and impractical in his ideals, which in turn makes him harder to reach, and makes his idealism inapplicable.
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Biography

I was born in Istanbul in 1981. I graduated from Private Sakarya Tansel High School in 1999. I did my major in English Language and Literature in Doğuş University and graduated in 2003. I attended BU-USC Crossings Graduate Program in Bogazici University in 2005. My areas of interests in English Literature are 19th-century English and American literature, Gothic, Romanticism, and Gender Studies.