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Transcending the Gothic: 'The Extravagancies of Blackwood'

Hege Rød Segerblad

Bachelor of Comparative Literature and English

Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy

Department of Scottish Literature
Faculty of Arts
University of Glasgow
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Abstract

Most critics who mention the particular breed of terror fiction found in the early issues of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in the beginning of the nineteenth century, praise them as being extremely influential on writers as famous as Charles Dickens, the Brontë siblings, Henry James and especially Edgar Allan Poe. Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick in their 1995 collection *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine* describe these tales as the missing link between the Gothic tradition of the late eighteenth century and Poe's short horror fiction. However, there exists today next to no analyses on the actual tales themselves.

This thesis focuses in detail on the problems that arise when comparing the *Blackwood's* tales of terror with the eighteenth-century Gothic. By identifying the narrative modes, the themes used, as well as the contemporary political and cultural motivation of the writers, this study endeavours to understand the reasons for why these tales appeared and also flourished, when and where they did. The author explores the idea that the *Blackwood's* tales were not so much a continuation of the Gothic tradition as a conscious move away from it; a shift in the genre from a mode of stylised romance and elevated virtue, to a deeply psychological interest in the darker sides of the human mind that foreshadows famous Victorian works like Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. By looking at contemporary 'street literature', here in the form of broadsides, the analysis identifies popular themes that were used to great success in the *Blackwood's* tales. The thesis shows that the early tales of terror in *Blackwood's Magazine* were sensationalist pieces of fiction elaborately constructed to suit the magazine format and tie in with its high-Tory politics.

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Tusen takk!

Hege

Introduction

The ‘tales of terror’ published in the early years of the Scottish periodical *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* have in recent years gained a reputation for being extremely influential to the works of, amongst others, Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Dickens.¹ These short stories are preoccupied with sensationalism and almost unrestrained detail of description, and often portray the inner thoughts of individuals caught in various kinds of extraordinary situations. *Blackwood’s Magazine* can be seen as a pioneer in encouraging literature of this kind, and the tales are often mentioned by critics in relation to the Gothic genre that arose in the last decade of the eighteenth century. However, when investigating the origins of the tale of terror in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, the perhaps most obvious problem we encounter is how this form of literature, so closely related to the famously radical Gothic movement, could appear in such a strictly high-Tory periodical, and also thrive within it.

When the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*, issued by the bookseller and publisher William Blackwood, appeared in 1817, the literary scene in Edinburgh was ruled by the publisher Archibald Constable and his mighty *Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802. The *Edinburgh Review*, led by Sidney Smith, Francis Horner and Francis Jeffrey, was from the outset intended as a vehicle for Whig views and in addition to its literary reviews (in the early years mainly written by Francis Jeffrey) frequently published articles on economics, travel, science, medicine and education. The *Edinburgh Review* had been an instant success and its circulation had risen to 13 000 by 1818.² However, William Blackwood had a different vision for his periodical. Contrary to the *Edinburgh Review*, Blackwood’s publication would be highly politically conservative, varied in its articles, have a strong emphasis on humour, and publish original, creative works. When his two editors of the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*, Cleghorn and Pringle, were unable to satisfy him, Blackwood turned to two young lawyers, John Wilson and John Gibson Lockhart. Cleghorn and Pringle (described by Alan Lang Strout as ‘a couple of incompetents’³) were forced by Blackwood to leave after the sixth issue of the *Edinburgh Monthly*, and found employment with his rival, Constable. Blackwood renamed his Magazine *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*,

¹ See Michael Allen (1969) and H. P. Sucksmith (1971-2).

² Dickie Spurgeon, ‘The Edinburgh Review’, *British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836* ed. Alvin Sullivan (London: Greenwood Press, 1983) 139-144, 139-141.

³ Alan Lang Strout, *A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood’s Magazine, 1817-1825* (Texas: Texas Technological College, 1959) 3.

and with Wilson, Lockhart, and James Hogg, who had also been a contributor to the *Edinburgh Monthly*, he completely revamped it. Where the *Edinburgh Monthly* had been dull and mediocre, *Blackwood's Magazine* would be launched as, in Margaret Oliphant's words, 'something to sting and startle, and make every reader hold his breath'.⁴

The first issue of the new Magazine did just that. The article that made the most commotion was Hogg, Wilson and Lockhart's *Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript*, a satirical attack in mock-biblical language on Cleghorn, Pringle, Constable and other prominent Edinburgh Whigs. Blackwood was threatened with lawsuits from several of the affronted and was forced in some cases to settle out of court, while Sir Walter Scott persuaded him to leave out the 'Chaldee Manuscript' from new editions. The other two major articles of the issue were Lockhart's attack on Coleridge and the *Biographia Literaria*, and the famous beginning of the series of defamations of the so-called Cockney School of Poetry and Leigh Hunt in particular. These three articles made the first issue of *Blackwood's Magazine* an instant success, and Edinburgh, in Oliphant's words, 'woke up next morning with a roar of laughter, with a shout of delight, with convulsions of rage and offence'.⁵

William Blackwood and his accomplices had shocked Edinburgh into buying his *Maga*, as he fondly called it, and would continue to do so for many years. In addition to venomous reviews and political stabs, a new kind of fiction emerged in its pages: the *tale of terror*. Often labelled by critics as 'Gothic', these stories were a product of the Gothic romances of the 1790s that had continued their popularity into the new century. This string of intense short stories of incarceration, madness, supernaturalism and death seems to have been the perfect accompaniment to the Magazine's otherwise sensationalist output. However, a few problems seem to arise when we take into account the critical history of the Gothic. Most critics saw the Gothic Romance as a 'low' form of literature. It was a commercial genre aimed at the growing middle classes and the immensely popular and, to some extent, critically recognised works by writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis spawned a myriad of lesser imitators. Its coincidence with the French Revolution helped to brand the genre as a vehicle for liberal ideas of reform and transformation. There is a general consensus between critics of the era that the Gothic genre tended to be stamped as an especially Whig literary form because of its seeming liberalism and of its affinity for

⁴ Margaret Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and His Sons, Their Magazine and Friends*, Vol. I (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1897) 114.

⁵ Ibid. 130.

borrowing from German sources, and at first glance it would seem strange that an arch-Tory periodical like *Blackwood's* would embrace influences from a genre that had such liberal connotations.

The Blackwood writers seem to have utilised more than the Gothic genre in order to create sensationalist output. Many of the tales deal with themes that concern aspects of their own contemporary society. This is a feature of the Blackwood tales that seems to be more or less overlooked by critics, but is important in that it shows the basis of which some of the most famous tales in the magazine have been founded upon. It is also in sharp contrast to the Gothic tradition, which tended to be dislocated both in time and place.

This thesis is comprised of three chapters, each analysing three tales published during the first fifteen years of the magazine's existence, the first in 1818 and the last in 1832. Chapter one sets out to ascertain what similarities and differences can be found between the Blackwood tales and the Gothic tradition of the 1790s. The second chapter is devoted to identifying popular contemporary themes that can be found in the stories, by a comparison with broadsides published at the time. The third and last chapter will investigate if and how *Blackwood's Magazine* overcame the political associations with the Gothic genre. Through these approaches, this study will endeavour to discover what influences from the Gothic genre the Blackwood tales build upon, how they differ from it, as well as if and in what way the magazine's writers managed to politically disassociate their tales with the Gothic. This thesis aims to detect the origination and development of the tales for the intention of better understanding such a groundbreaking and influential form of literature.

Chapter One

‘Horror and Terror are So Far Opposite’: Breaking Down the Gothic Structure

Had I, for example, announced in my frontispiece, ‘Waverley, a Tale of other Days,’ must not every novel-reader have anticipated a castle scarce less than that of Udolpho, of which the eastern wing had long been uninhabited, and the keys either lost, or consigned to the care of some aged butler or housekeeper, whose trembling steps, about the middle of the second volume, were doomed to guide the hero, or heroine, to the ruinous precincts? Would not the owl have shrieked and the cricket cried in my very title-page? and could it have been possible for me, with a moderate attention to decorum, to introduce any scene more lively than might be produced by the jocularly of a clownish but faithful valet, or the garrulous narrative of the heroine’s fille-de-chambre, when rehearsing the stories of blood and horror which she had heard in the servants’ hall?⁶

Sir Walter Scott’s satirical attitude towards the Gothic Romance thus shown in the introductory part of his 1814 novel *Waverley*, sheds some light on the way this kind of fiction was being perceived in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* first appeared. The ‘tales of terror’ that soon were to be found in its pages, have been pigeonholed by critics over time as a continuation of the Gothic tradition. However, readers familiar with the Gothic Romance of the 1790s might find it problematic to accept this claim.

Where the traditional Gothic Romance, most famously in the works of Ann Radcliffe (her 1794 novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is the one Scott is referring to in the quotation above) and her chain of followers, strived to separate virtue from vice in a Romantic approach to the sentimental novel, twenty to thirty years later the Blackwood short stories would tend to blur this distinction in a whirlwind of terror and excessive emotions. In her book *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (1921), Edith Birkhead sums up this development as follows:

For the readers of their own day the Gothic romances of Walpole, Miss Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe possessed the charm of novelty. Before the close of the century we may trace, in the conversations of Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, symptoms of a longing for more poignant excitement. It was at this time that Mrs. Radcliffe, after the publication of *The Italian* in 1797, retired quietly from the field. From her obscurity she viewed no doubt with some disdain the vulgar achievements of “Monk” Lewis and a tribe of imitators, who compounded a farrago of horrors as thick and slab as the contents of a witch’s cauldron. Until the appearance in 1820 of Maturin’s *Melmoth*, which was redeemed by its psychological insight and its vigorous style, the Gothic romance maintained a disreputable existence in the hands of those who looked upon fiction as a lucrative trade, not as an art. In the

⁶ Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1985) 33-34.

meantime, however, an easy device had been discovered for pandering to the popular craving for excitement. Ingenious authors realised that it was possible to compress into the five pages of a short story as much sensation as was contained in the five volumes of a Gothic romance.⁷

Birkhead is here referring to short Gothic tales issued in chapbooks, the success of which, she says, was probably what ‘encouraged the editors of periodicals early in the nineteenth century to enliven their pages with sensational fiction.’⁸ However, *Blackwood’s Magazine’s* short-story writers did more than just adapt the Gothic romance into a more concise format: they completely reworked sensationalism. In Tim Killick’s words:

New techniques were learnt for writing short fiction. Instead of compressed novels and stories that read like extracts from romances, short fiction began to pursue its own narrative strategies: folktale tropes, painstaking realist techniques, and powerful yet brief descriptive skills were all part of the melting pot of short fiction in the early-nineteenth-century periodical press.⁹

This is why, upon close reading, it becomes fairly obvious that not many of the typical features of the Gothic Romance are kept in the Blackwood tales of terror, and to use the term *Gothic* to describe them seems quite problematic. In his article ‘The Secret of Immediacy: Dickens’ Debt to the Tale of Terror in *Blackwood’s*’, H. P. Sucksmith defines a method of writing that Dickens owes, he says, to the tales of terror in the early issues of *Blackwood’s Magazine*. What differentiates the Blackwood tales from earlier Gothic writing, according to Sucksmith, is the change from ‘a purely romantic terror through vague suggestion’ to ‘a realistic terror through precision of descriptive detail’.¹⁰ Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick, in their introduction to *Tales of Terror from Blackwood’s Magazine*, also remark that

Certain kinds of ‘terror’, or at least of anxiety, were developed in quite sophisticated ways by Radcliffe and other Gothiccists in the late eighteenth century, primarily through ominous suggestion and the careful evocation of ‘atmosphere’. The *Blackwood’s* authors differ markedly from the Gothiccists not

⁷ Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1921) 185.

⁸ Ibid. 186.

⁹ Tim Killick, *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century: the Rise of the Tale* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008) 29.

¹⁰ H. P. Sucksmith, ‘The Secret of Immediacy: Dickens’ Debt to the Tale of Terror in *Blackwood’s*,’ *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* ed. G. B. Tennyson, Vol. 26 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971-72) 145-157, 145-6.

just in their concise scope but also in their sharper and more explicit rendering of terror.¹¹

In his book *The Literature of Terror* (1980), David Punter identifies a common objective for authors of Gothic literature: they are all *investigating* ‘the extremes of terror’,¹² and as this chapter will show, the Blackwood tales take the extreme to a very different level than the 1790s Gothic novels did. Perhaps the most influential and important novel of the 1790s Gothic Revival, Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, provides this analysis with a nearly perfect example of the differences between this genre and the tales of terror in *Blackwood’s Magazine*. Radcliffe is the author who gets the credit of making the late eighteenth-century Gothic romances mainstream publishing successes, thus making her works in many ways typical of this literary movement. In his introduction to the Oxford edition of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Bonamy Dobrée observes that

...For some years after its publication in 1794 – one may hazard fifty years – *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was a ‘must’, or in the phrase of today, ‘required reading’, for anybody who had any pretence at all to being a person of education, or culture, or even of popular reading habits.¹³

The Blackwood authors writing in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century were certainly familiar with Radcliffe’s novels, and it can safely be assumed that the magazine’s readers were too. Another example of the 1790s Gothic used in this chapter is Matthew Gregory Lewis’ infamous novel *The Monk* (1796). Perhaps the most shocking and sensational of all the novels of the Gothic Revival, *The Monk* deals with gruesome themes like rape, incest and murder. So much commotion was caused by the (then) explicit renderings of these events that Lewis was ordered by a court of law to censor the fourth edition of his novel. Radcliffe’s final novel *The Italian* (1797) is seen by several critics as a riposte to the popular sensation of *The Monk*. E. J. Clery, in her book *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction: 1762-1800*, establishes an interesting approach to the Gothic genre. Instead of identifying works like *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Monk* as examples of the early Gothic novel, Clery sees them rather as ‘breakthroughs in

¹¹ Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick, eds. *Tales of Terror from Blackwood’s Magazine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) xv.

¹² David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1980) 133.

¹³ Bonamy Dobrée, ‘Introduction,’ *The Mysteries of Udolpho* Ann Radcliffe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) v-xiv, v.

the difficult overcoming of barriers to the fictional use of the marvellous'.¹⁴ Clery describes the shift in critical acceptance of terror fiction thus:

The year 1800 announces the end of one particular struggle over the boundaries of fictional representation and the beginning of an era of acceptance [...]. By the beginning of the nineteenth century literary tales of terror were being affirmed as manifestations of an autonomous realm of the aesthetic, detached from the didactic function which had guaranteed the social utility of the realist novel.¹⁵

By Clery's definition, then, the 1790s Gothic Romances can be seen to have helped to pave the way for the nineteenth century's portrayal of the horrible in fiction. By the time *Blackwood's Magazine* arrived on the scene, this change in attitude had clearly begun. In his review of E.T.A Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixir*, published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in July 1824, John Gibson Lockhart argues for an inclusion of the horrible as an accepted source of poetic influence:

The *horrible* is quite as legitimate a field of poetry and romance, as either the pathetic or the ludicrous. It is absurdity to say that Mrs Radcliffe has exhausted this. That very clever lady had not brains to exhaust anything – and she no more worked out horror, than she did the scenery of the Apennines. [...] Nothing that is a part, a real essential part, of human nature, ever can be exhausted – and the regions of fear and terror never will be so. [...] So long as this feeling, this painful feeling, as to the reality of such things continues, the human mind will continue to receive a tragic pleasure from the skilful use made of them in works of imagination.¹⁶

Here Lockhart is advocating the usage of the horrible for its own sake. It will become clear upon examining the Blackwood tales, that the manifestations of terror has thus shifted from being sporadic hints of supernatural agencies or superficial descriptions of horrific events, to taking centre stage. The horrible is now being explored in detail, and its extremes investigated.

David Punter neatly summarises the main motives of the Gothic romance as 'an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters and the attempt to deploy

¹⁴ E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction: 1762-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 1.

¹⁵ Ibid. 2, 9.

¹⁶ John Gibson Lockhart, 'The Devil's Elixir,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 16.90 (July 1824) 55-67, 55-56, accessed 25.01.10. <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e940-1824-016-90-002920:2>.

and perfect techniques of literary suspense'.¹⁷ Using this approach as a basis, the following chapter will take a look at three of the tales of terror and see what differences and similarities one can find between the Gothic narratives of the 1790s and the shorter tales from *Blackwood's*. The stories 'Extracts from Gosschen's Diary, No. 1' by John Wilson, 'The Mysterious Bride' by James Hogg, and 'The Spectre-Smitten' by Samuel Warren are all narratives with specific Gothic attributes; however, they also have certain traits common to the Blackwood mode that set them apart from the more traditional Gothic texts.

The famous archaic setting of the 1790s Gothic romance, mostly associated with Radcliffe's fondness for ruinous Italian castles, is almost non-existent in the typical Blackwood tale of terror. The short story format does not easily allow for lengthy descriptions of breathtaking mountain landscapes and awe-inspiring fortresses with a myriad of secret passageways. Supernatural events are occurring, but most of the stories are mainly concerned with portraying the terrifying in more or less realistic terms. The highly stereotyped characters, as shall be shown later, are more or less absent from the Blackwood tales. However, the first story analysed in this chapter – and one of the first 'tales of terror' published in *Blackwood's* – has a few features in common with the Gothic tradition, and can certainly be seen to be 'investigating the extremes of terror.' The story is called 'Extracts from Gosschen's Diary, No. I' and was published in the August 1818 issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Alan Lang Strout has attributed the authorship of this tale to Blackwood's chief contributor, John Wilson,¹⁸ while in the original issue the identity of the author is anonymous.

The main narrative of 'Gosschen's Diary' starts off quite similarly to a traditional Gothic story. The opening paragraph is a summary explaining how a woman named Maria von Richterstein had recently been murdered, and her murderer was convicted on the grounds of circumstantial evidence; 'but no sooner was his doom sealed, and the day fixed for his execution, than a great change took place in the public feeling'.¹⁹ The convict's 'sullen silence'²⁰ had brought people to believe he could be innocent, but he had so far refused to speak to the confessors that had been sent in. In the second paragraph the mood of the story

¹⁷ David Punter (1980) 1.

¹⁸ Strout, 44.

¹⁹ John Wilson, 'Extracts from Gosschen's Diary,' *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine* eds. Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 19-24, 19.

²⁰ Ibid.

changes as we become cognisant of the existence of the hitherto concealed first-person narrator: 'It was near midnight when a message was sent to me by a magistrate, that the murderer was desirous of seeing me'.²¹ The narrator and priest, Gosschen, is compelled to go and see the murderer on the eve of his execution. Thus intimately placed, he is free to recount his experience in a subjective and powerful way. Most of the story takes place in the murderer's gloomy prison dungeon, which does impart a strong Gothic feel to the text. Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick, in their collection *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine*, leave out the preface to the story, which it was originally published under:

The following striking narrative is translated from the MS. Memoirs of the late Rev. Dr Gottlieb Michael Gosschen, a Catholic clergyman of great eminence in the city of Ratisbonne. It was the custom of this divine to preserve, in the shape of a diary, a regular account of all the interesting particulars which fell in his way, during the exercise of his sacred profession. Two thick small quartos, filled with these strange materials, have been put into our hands by the kindness of Count Frederick von Lindénbäumenberg, to whom the worthy father bequeathed them. Many a dark story, well fitted to be the groundwork of a romance,—many a tale of guilty love and repentance,—many a fearful monument of remorse and horror, might we extract from this record of dungeons and confessionals. We shall from time to time do so, but sparingly, and what is still more necessary, with selection.

EDITOR²²

The Gosschen series did not continue, although Wilson clearly promises more extracts from this diary. The preface is in the traditional Gothic vein, recalling the first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* from 1764. Walpole's novel originally pretended to be a translation of an old Italian manuscript, but following the success of the first edition Walpole claimed authorship and admitted the hoax, causing indignant reviewers to condemn his work where they before had been positive.²³ 'Gosschen's Diary', then, is quite clearly also giving the appearance of being a true story, and this method, if successful, will perhaps render the story's contents even more terrifying to the reader. Upon examining Walpole's preface, the similarity between the two is conspicuous: 'The following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family...' ²⁴ begins *The Castle of Otranto*. This is, likely as not, an intentional reference, if not specifically to *Otranto*, then to the genre in general. Radcliffe's *The Italian* has a similar framing. 'Many

²¹ Ibid.

²² Anon., 'Extracts from Gosschen's Diary, No. I,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3.17 (August 1818) 596-598, 596.

²³ Emma Clery, 'Against Gothic,' *Gothick Origins and Innovations* eds. Allan Lloyd Smith and Victor Sage (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1994) 34-43, 34.

²⁴ Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 5.

a dark story, well fitted to be the groundwork of a romance' – there can be no doubt that Wilson had the Gothic romance in mind when writing this story.

However, the 'discovered' manuscript was not only a feature of the Gothic genre, but also one that was popular with eighteenth-century antiquarians. From James Macpherson and his 'Poems of Ossian,' via Robert Burns' vernacular poetry to Walter Scott's historical fiction, antiquarianism prevailed well into the nineteenth century and came eventually to be embraced by *Blackwood's Magazine* as part of their nationalist agenda.²⁵ As such, the 'discovered' manuscript had been an integral part of both Scottish and Gothic writing for more than half a century. The first part of a discontinued series, 'Gosschen's Diary' represents the past as mysterious and fragmented. As Susan Manning observes in her chapter 'Antiquarianism, the Scottish Science of Man, and the Emergence of Modern Disciplinarity' from *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Duncan, Lewis and Sorensen, 2004):

Antiquarian procedures facilitated a rather suspect form of engagement with history, recently described as "affectionating" the past, [which] evoked sentimental and proprietorial responses, often of a very personal nature. [...] They concerned themselves with the past as recuperable only in ruined form, not as part of a chain of progress.²⁶

As a fragment, 'Gosschen's Diary' works on a level with the antiquarian methods described by Manning. It is tempting to surmise that if a whole series were realised, it would altogether more have resembled a Gothic story.

The German setting of 'Gosschen's Diary' is a strong nod towards the sensational German literature introduced to Britain at the end of the eighteenth century, and that was continuing to be praised in *Blackwood's Magazine* for many years after the publishing of 'Gosschen's Diary', and is also reminiscent of the obvious German influences in Lewis' *The Monk*. The Gothic romances of the late eighteenth century seem to be almost unanimously against the Catholic Church, portraying monks as villains and describing the cruelties of the Inquisition. In Walpole's privately printed Gothic drama *The Mysterious Mother* from 1768, an exclamation from the protagonist shows this attitude quite clearly; 'Consult a holy

²⁵ Ian Duncan, Leith Lewis and Janet Sorensen, 'Introduction', in Ian Duncan, Leith Lewis and Janet Sorensen (eds.), *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-19, 2-3.

²⁶ Susan Manning, 'Antiquarianism, the Scottish Science of Man, and the Emergence of Modern Disciplinarity,' in Ian Duncan, Leith Lewis and Janet Sorensen (eds.), *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 57-76, 63-64.

man! Inquire of him! | – Good father, wherefore? What should I inquire?’²⁷, and both Radcliffe and Lewis show similar views. In ‘Gosschen’s Diary’, however, the attitude towards the Catholic Church seems to be quite different. The narrator is a Catholic priest, whom we have no reason to believe is anything other than a good person, intent on giving the criminal his final absolution. Arguably, the choice of Gosschen’s religion and nationality provide the narrative with a feeling of otherness so common to the Gothic romance.

Several devices used in ‘Gosschen’s Diary’ have thus been seen to have similarities to the Gothic romance, however, when it comes to highly stereotyped characters and the portrayal of evil, ‘Gosschen’s Diary’ differs from the conventional, early Gothic. This has much to do with the first-person narration and how the reader is inside Gosschen’s mind, and also with the way in which he describes the murderer, whom he knew from infancy:

I had known this youth—had sat with him at his father’s table—I knew also that there was in him a strange and fearful mixture of good and evil—I was aware that there were circumstances in the history of his progenitors not generally known—nay, in his own life—that made him an object of awful commiseration—and I went to his cell with an agitating sense of the enormity of his guilt, but a still more agitating one of the depth of his misery, and the wildness of his misfortunes.²⁸

This is a deeply psychological description of a murderer, who is seen by Gosschen as someone who has in him ‘a strange and fearful mixture of good and evil’. He is an ambiguous character, anticipating the tormented personae of later Scottish works like Robert Wringhim from James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), and most famously Robert Louis Stevenson’s Dr Henry Jekyll from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). The murderer is therefore a multifaceted character, and not a conventional stereotype. Later in the story, Wilson is letting Gosschen recount the murderer’s confession in the murderer’s own words, and thus the murderer’s story is also being told to us via the intimate mode of a first-person narrative. This device has by far the highest impact on the reader’s perception of the nightmarish events, and perhaps the one that sets it apart the furthest from the Gothic romance. As Elizabeth MacAndrew observes in her book *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*:

²⁷ Horace Walpole, *The Mysterious Mother*, in *Five Romantic Plays* eds. P. Baines and E. Burnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 2-69, 1.1.381-2.

²⁸ Wilson (1995) 19-20.

The earliest Gothic romances are literary fantasies embodying, for didactic purposes, ideas about man's psychology that were the culmination of a century of philosophical speculation on the subject. In them, good and evil are starkly differentiated absolutes, but as succeeding works delved deeper into the idea of evil as psychological, evil quickly began to be seen as relative and, in no time, its pleasures were being explored.²⁹

Gosschen's uncanny description of the murderer as someone both good and evil, stands in sharp contrast to Radcliffe's characters, which are uniformly either virtuous or corrupted. Radcliffe herself is clearly conscious of this, as shown in this extract from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:

“‘You may find, perhaps, Signor,’ said Emily, with mild dignity, ‘that the strength of my mind is equal to the justice of my cause; and that I can endure with fortitude, when it is in resistance of oppression.’
‘You speak like a heroine,’ said Montoni, contemptuously, ‘we shall see whether you can suffer like one.’”³⁰

Explicitly labelling her main character as a heroine in the text gives it somewhat of a meta-literary feel and estranges the reader further from identifying with the characters. The omniscient, third-person narrator of Radcliffe seems constructed and artificial compared to the intimate first-person narrator in Wilson's story, and the ways in which the two authors let their readers 'know' their characters are thus completely different. The difference between, for example, the first time we meet Schedoni (the main villain of Radcliffe's *The Italian*), and Gosschen's first impression of the murderer in his dungeon, is significant. Radcliffe:

His figure was striking, but not so from grace; it was tall, and, though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth, and as he stalked along, wrapt in the black garments of his order, there was something terrible in its air; something almost super-human. His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face, encreased [sic] its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror.³¹

And 'Gosschen's Diary':

I entered his cell, and the phantom struck me with terror. He stood erect in his irons, like a corpse that had risen from the grave. His face, once so beautiful, was pale as a shroud, and drawn into ghastly wrinkles. His black-matted hair hung over it with a terrible expression of wrathful and savage misery. And his

²⁹ Elizabeth MacAndrew, *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) 4.

³⁰ Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) 381.

³¹ Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 34-5.

large eyes, which were once black, glared with a light in which all colour was lost, and seemed to fill the whole dungeon with their flashings.³²

It becomes clear that Gosschen's narrative feels much *closer* to the reader than Radcliffe's, and therefore creates a stronger sensation of terror. The depiction of Schedoni as 'something almost super-human' weakens opposed to the murderer who is a 'phantom' and 'like a corpse that had risen from the grave'. Just from these examples it is clear to see the difference in detailed description between Radcliffe and Wilson. 'Gosschen's Diary' is an excellent example of the manner in which the Blackwood writers went to greater extremes in their depiction of horror. However, Radcliffe's works represent perhaps the milder version of the 1790s Gothic romance, whereas Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* stands as an example of the Gothic Revival's darker side. This excerpt from Lewis's novel narrates the raping of the beautiful virgin Antonia by the wicked monk Ambrosio:

He stifled her cries with kisses, ...proceeded from freedom to freedom, and in the violence of his lustful delirium, wounded and bruised her tender limbs. Heedless of her tears, cries and entreaties, He gradually made himself Master of her person, and desisted not from his prey, till He had accomplished his crime and the dishonour of Antonia.³³

Although describing a dreadful event, Lewis does so almost without resorting to explicit details. Compared to the murderer of Maria von Richterstein's account of his crime in 'Gosschen's diary', the difference in detail and explicitness is great:

'Do you think there was no pleasure in murdering her? I grasped her by that radiant, that golden hair,—I bared those snow-white breasts,—I dragged her sweet body towards me, and, as God is my witness, I stabbed, and stabbed her with this very dagger, ten, twenty, forty times, through and through her heart. (...)'³⁴

The murderer seems to have derived a rape-like pleasure from the repeated stabbing of the poor Maria. He is clearly fixated with her naked body, and the stabbing can be seen to be representing sexual penetration. Whereas Lewis' depiction of the raping of Antonia is arguably more disturbing in a melodramatic sense, Wilson spares no detail in his murderer's realistic account of his crime, and unlike Lewis' Ambrosio, Wilson's character displays no remorse:

³² Wilson (1995) 20.

³³ Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 383-4.

³⁴ Wilson (1995) 21.

‘I laid her down upon a bank of flowers,—that were soon stained with her blood. I saw the dim blue eyes beneath the half-closed lids,—that face so changeable in its living beauty was now fixed as ice, and the balmy breath came from her sweet lips no more. My joy, my happiness, was perfect. I took her into my arms—madly as I did on that night when I robbed her of what fools called her innocence—but her innocence has gone with her to heaven—and there I lay with her bleeding breasts prest to my heart, and many were the thousand kisses that I gave those breasts, cold and bloody as they were, which I had many times kissed in all the warmth of their loving loveliness, and which none were ever to kiss again but the husband who had murdered her.’³⁵

The strength of Wilson’s story seems to lie in the first-person mode of narration, without which the horrific details would perhaps come across as even more grossly exaggerated. It is easy to see how the Blackwood writers, here represented by Wilson, can seem to be far more interested in portraying the *extremes* of terror, whereas in Radcliffe’s novels the feeling of terror is created by the superficial descriptions of the evil characters’ actions, or also by hints of supernatural agencies. Even the extremities of *The Monk* fall short of the Blackwood tales’ detailed portrayals of evil.

Radcliffe employs a machinery of characters and events to a didactic purpose: to show how a virtuous mind will conquer evil, and that supernatural events are nothing more than imaginary notions of the fanciful mind. In *Blackwood’s Magazine’s* fiction, supernaturalism was also a common feature, and to show the difference in its portrayal of the supernatural, this chapter will use as its main example James Hogg’s story ‘The Mysterious Bride’. Although clearly more a traditional ghost story than what might be seen as a conventional tale of terror, ‘The Mysterious Bride’ has been included in this analysis to give a more nuanced view of the magazine’s short-story content, and to supply this study with a greater source of supernatural material. James Hogg was in his thirties when he started gaining a reputation in literary circles for his poetry. He published his first novel, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, in 1818, and from then on started spending more time writing prose. His most important contribution to *Blackwood’s Magazine*, ‘The Shepherd’s Calendar’, a series of prose articles and tales, appeared in the periodical between 1819 and 1828. Some are accounts of his experiences as a shepherd, while others are ‘short stories in which Hogg attempts to re-create on paper the manner and the content of the traditional oral tales which he had been used to hearing in the long dark winter evenings during his childhood and youth in Ettrick Forest’³⁶. Although ‘The Mysterious Bride’ was not

³⁵ Wilson (1995) 21.

³⁶ Douglas Mack, ‘Introduction’, *James Hogg: Selected Stories and Sketches* ed. Douglas Mack (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press Ltd, 1982) vii-x, vii.

technically a part of ‘The Shepherd’s Calendar’, it stands in effect as a continuation of it.³⁷ ‘The Mysterious Bride’ is also related by a first-person narrator, who claims the events depicted are real and from his own memory. The narrator thus imbibes the function of a traditional oral storyteller, which suits the folkloric theme of the story. Both ‘Gosschen’s Diary’ and, as shall be seen later in this chapter, Samuel Warren’s ‘The Spectre-Smitten’, are written in the first person perspective by a character involved in the stories’ actions. On the other hand, the narrative of ‘The Mysterious Bride’ is similarly told by a first-person narrator, but a narrator that is not a part of the story and is merely retrospectively relating a local tale. In the introduction to their book *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (2004), Ian Duncan, Leith Lewis and Janet Sorensen claim that ‘*Blackwood’s* founded a modern (Romantic) discourse of cultural nationalism,’³⁸ and Hogg’s contributions to the magazine seem to imbibe the features of this discourse:

The cultural breach with Enlightenment, defined by the antagonistic formation of a “Romantic ideology,” came late in Scotland, with the founding of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1817: the post-war battle over Reform precipitated rival, Whig and Tory ideological constellations, Romanticism as (at last) Counter-Enlightenment. In programmatic contrast to *The Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood’s* formally embraced the nationalist discourse of the post-Enlightenment – *antiquarianism, vernacular poetry, prose fiction*.³⁹

Drawing upon local legend and language in prose format, ‘The Mysterious Bride’ is an excellent example of *Blackwood’s Magazine’s* advocacy of a Scottish national discourse. ‘The Mysterious Bride’ was published in the December 1830 issue of *Blackwood’s*, under Hogg’s well-known signature ‘The Ettrick Shepherd’. Hogg’s tale is set in the Scottish countryside, 50 years back in time, and begins on the Eve of St Lawrence 1777. The Laird of Birkendelly is riding home when he sees a beautiful young woman. She disappears behind a hill, the Birky Brow, before he catches up to her. Even though he can see all around from the top of the hill, she is nowhere to be seen. He sees her twice more on the same spot but the same thing happens. After this he tries to find her every day, without success. His obsession makes him ill, and his friend M’Murdie and his doctor persuade the Laird to go visit his sister in Ireland to recover. In Ireland he becomes infatuated with his youngest sister-in-law, who he imagines has some resemblance to the mysterious woman. While still in Ireland, the Laird again sees the object of his obsession, and succeeds in

³⁷ Ibid. ix.

³⁸ Ian Duncan, Leith Lewis and Janet Sorensen, ‘Introduction’, in Ian Duncan, Leith Lewis and Janet Sorensen (eds.), *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-19, 13.

³⁹ Ibid. italics mine.

talking to her. All of a sudden they are standing on Birky Brow, the very same spot where he first saw her. She tells him that her name is Jane Ogilvie, and that he can only meet her there on every St Lawrence Eve for the next three years, after which they will marry. They exchange rings, and part ways. The Laird awakens in his sister's house, not knowing how he got there, but with the beautiful woman's ring still on his finger. His old nurse, who still lives with his sister, recognises the ring and shrieks out in terror, before falling down dead. The Laird returns to Scotland to meet Jane on St Lawrence Eve, after which he starts to shun human company. Then, in 1781, he starts to make preparations for his marriage. On the day of their nuptials, the Laird and Jane Ogilvie are seen riding at great speed through the countryside, but on the following morning his horse is found dead outside his own door and the corpse of the Laird found lying on the Birky Brow. It is then remembered that his father and his grandfather were both found dead on the same spot, and through the memory of an old woman recently returned to her native parts, the community learns of the death of Jane Ogilvie, a beautiful woman who was betrothed to the first Laird, but when he instead became the lover of the heiress of Birkendelly, the poor Ogilvie disappeared under mysterious circumstances. They discover her remains buried at the very spot on the Birky Brow where the three generations of Lairds had all been found dead.

The ride of the Laird and his bride is strongly reminiscent of the immensely popular Gothic poem 'Lenore' by the German author Gottfried August Bürger. This poem was first and most famously translated to English in 1790 by William Taylor of Norwich, and circulated in manuscript until its publication in 1796. The same year, four other translations of the same poem appeared, and it was celebrated by British readers as 'something wholly original and extraordinary'.⁴⁰ In the poem, a spectral bridegroom comes back to claim his bride and rides with her into the land of the dead. Walter Scott was among the translators, and his version appeared in Matthew Lewis' *Tales of Wonder* in 1801. Another publication similar to 'Lenore' is the poem 'Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogine' that can be found in Lewis' *The Monk*, also from 1796. The driving rhythm, the explicit imagery and horrifying detail of Bürger's 'Lenore' sets the poem apart from other publications of the era, for example the poems found in Radcliffe's novels, and made it a huge success. The supernatural bridegroom is not discovered to be a living dead until near the end of the poem, thus creating doubt and suspense throughout, just like the mysterious Jane Ogilvie in Hogg's tale. Just like the murderer in 'Gosschen's Diary', the character of Jane Ogilvie

⁴⁰ James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic, Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 72-73.

is ambiguous, being both an object of love and of terror; and in this way creating an uncanny atmosphere. The Laird himself seems to have a vague feeling that something is wrong with her, but he is too much infatuated with her beauty to care.

In the July 1826 issue of *Blackwood's Magazine*, three of the main characters in the magazine's iconic series of dialogues, 'Noctes Ambrosianae', discuss jokingly, but with a serious undertone, the effects of supernatural occurrences in literature:

TICKLER. I never had any professed feeling for the super or preter-natural in a printed book. Very early in life, I discovered that a ghost, who had kept me in a cold sweat during a whole winter's midnight, was a tailor who haunted the house, partly through love, and partly through hunger, being enamoured of my nurse, and of the fat of ham which she gave him with mustard, between two thick shaves of a quartern loaf, and afterwards a bottle of small-beer to wash it down, before she yielded him the parting-kiss. After that I slept soundly, and had a contempt for ghosts, which I retain to this day.

SHEPHERD. Weel, it's verra different wi' me. I should be feared yet even for the ninth part o' a ghost; and I fancy a tailor has nae mair; -but I'm no muckle affecket by reading about them – an oral tradition out o' the mouth o' an auld grey-headed man or woman is far best, for then you canna dout the truth o' the tale, unless ye dout a' history thegither, and then, to be sure, you'll end in universal skepticism.

NORTH. Don't you admire the romances of the Enchantress of Udolpho?

SHEPHERD. I hae nae doubt, sir, that had I read Udolpho and her ither romances in my boyish days, that my hair would hae stood on end like that o' ither folk, for, by nature and education baith, ye ken, I'm just excessive superstitious. But afore her volumes fell into my hauns, my soul had been frichtened by a' kinds of traditionary terrors, and mony hunder times hae I maist swarfed wi' fear in lonesome spats in muirs and woods, at midnight, when no a leevin thing was movin but mysel and the great moon. Indeed, I canna say that I ever fan' mysel alane in the hush o' darkened nature, without a beatin at my heart; for a sort o' spiritual presence aye hovered about me – a presence o' something like and unlike my ain being – at times felt to be solemn and nae mair – at times sae awfu' that I wushed myself nearer ingle-licht – and ance or twice in my lifetime, sae terrible that I could hae prayed to sink down into the moss, sae that I might be saved frae the quaking o' that ghostly wilderness o' a world that was na for flesh and bluid!

NORTH. Look – James – look – what a sky!

SHEPHERD. There'll be thunder the morn. These are the palaces o' the thunder, and before day-break every window will pour forth lichtnin'. Mrs Radcliffe has weel described mony sic, but I have seen some that can be remembered, but never, never painted by mortal pen; for after a', what is ony description by us puir creturs o' the works o' the Great God?

NORTH. Perhaps it is a pity that Mrs Radcliffe never introduced into her stories any real ghosts.

SHEPHERD. I canna just a'thegither think sae. Gin you introduce a real ghost at a', it maun appear but seldom – seldom, and never but on some great or dread account – as the ghost o' Hamlet's father. Then, what difficulty in makin' it speak with a tomb-voice! At the close o' the tale, the mind would be shocked unless the dead had burst its cearments for some end which the dead alane could have accomplished – unless the catastrophe were worthy an Apparition. How few events, and how few actors would, as the story shut itself up, be felt to have been of such surpassing moment as to have deserved the very laws o' nature to have been in a manner changed for their sakes, and shadows brought frae

among the darkness o' burial-places, that seem to our imaginations locked up frae a' communion wi' the breathin' world!

NORTH. In highest tragedy, a Spirit may be among the *dramatis personae* – for the events come all on processionally, and under a feeling of fate.

SHEPHERD. There, too, you *see* the ghost, and indifferently personated though it may be, the general hush proves that religion is the deepest principle o' our nature, and that even the vain shows o' a theatre can be sublimed by an awe-struck sadness, when, revisiting the glimpses o' the moon, and makin' night hideous, comes glidin' in and awa' in cauld unringin' armour, or unsubstantial vapour, a being whose eyes aince saw the cheerful sun-light, and whose footsteps aince brought out echoes from the flowery earth.

NORTH. In this posthumous tale of Mrs Radcliffe – I forget the name – a real ghost is the chief agent, and is two or three times brought forward with good effect; but I confess, James, that, agreeably to your excellent observations, I became somewhat too much hand-in-glove with his ghostship, and that all supernatural influence departed from him through too frequent intercourse with the air of the upper world.

TICKLER. Come, James, be done with your palaverin' about ghosts, you brownie, and “gie us anither sang.”⁴¹

What Christopher North and the Shepherd, or James Hogg, agree on in this discussion of the supernatural in fiction, is that too frequent and familiar use of these phenomena render their effect as objects of terror nearly useless. In a sense, they are vaguely differentiating between terror fiction and what would later become the genre *fantasy*, in which fantastic agents are matter-of-fact parts of the real world. In ‘The Mysterious Bride’, Hogg effectively makes the ghost of Jane Ogilvie an object of terror by merely hinting at her supernatural qualities. Even after her buried remains have been discovered, the reader can not be absolutely certain that the Laird had not imagined everything and been driven to his death by madness; perhaps because of some subconscious knowledge of his family history. The story invites the reader to accept the supernatural events as real, especially in the end, and this makes a great contrast to Radcliffe’s novels.

In one of the most famous scenes from Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the servant Ludovico volunteers to spend the night in a chamber of the castle said to be haunted. At this point in the story, after several hints have been dropped regarding the haunting of the castle, the reader will be impatiently awaiting some form of supernatural occurrence:

Ludovico, having finished this story, laid aside the book, for he felt drowsy, and, after putting more wood on the fire and taking another glass of wine, he reposed himself in the arm-chair on the hearth. In his dream he still beheld the chamber where he really was, and, once or twice, started from imperfect slumbers, imagining he saw a man’s face, looking over the high back of his

⁴¹ ‘Noctes Ambrosianae No. XXVII’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 20.114 (July 1826) 90-109, 106-107, accessed 22.01.10.

<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e940-1826-020-14-010526:17>.

arm-chair. This idea had so strongly impressed him, that, when he raised his eyes, he almost expected to meet other eyes, fixed upon his own, and he quitted his seat and looked behind the chair, before he felt perfectly convinced, that no person was there.⁴²

Radcliffe indeed succeeds in the building up of atmosphere so that just a little hint of supernaturalism seems scary, and when Ludovico the next morning is found to have mysteriously disappeared, there seems no doubt as to whether or not the chamber really is haunted. However, when it is revealed later in the novel that the chamber was haunted only by a gang of bandits, who upon fear of being discovered kidnapped Ludovico, the illusion is broken to the probable disappointment of the reader. In Walter Scott's words,

In working upon the sensations of natural and superstitious fear, Mrs Radcliffe has made such use of obscurity and suspense, the most fertile source, perhaps, of sublime emotion... To break off the narrative, when it seemed at the point of becoming most interesting – to extinguish a lamp, just when a parchment containing some hideous secret ought to have been read – to exhibit shadowy forms and half-heard sounds of woe, are resources which Mrs Radcliffe has employed with more effect than any other writer of romance. It must be confessed, that in order to bring about these situations, some art or contrivance, on the part of the author, is rather too visible... A principal characteristic of Mrs Radcliffe's romances, is the rule which the author imposed upon herself, that all the circumstances of her narrative, however mysterious, and apparently superhuman, were to be accounted for on natural principles, at the winding up of the story. It must be allowed, that this has not been done with uniform success, and that the author has been occasionally more successful in exciting interest and apprehension, than in giving either interest or dignity of explanation to the means she has made use of.⁴³

As Tzvetan Todorov argues in his book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970), the first-person narrator is especially suited for 'fantastic' literature because its status as both character and narrator creates *hesitation* in the reader – a necessary condition for the fantastic to work. This hesitation is generated by the narrator's ambiguous nature; 'we are not told that the narrator is lying, and the possibility shocks us "structurally": but this possibility exists – since he is also a character'.⁴⁴ Todorov goes on to identify a mode of composition that distinguishes the time of perception in the fantastic narrative from most other types of narratives; a sort of irreversible plot structure that makes the fantastic narrative impossible to read out of order and makes the second reading of it 'a

⁴² Radcliffe (1966) 557.

⁴³ Sir Walter Scott, 'Introduction,' quoted in *The Gothick Novel: A Casebook* ed. Viktor Sage (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990) 56-63, 60.

⁴⁴ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* translated by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975) 86.

meta-reading, in the course of which we note the methods of the fantastic instead of falling under its spell'.⁴⁵

If the reader was to discover the ending of Hogg's 'The Mysterious Bride' before the beginning and unfolding of the story, the uncertainty (or *hesitation*) regarding Jane Ogilvie would be spoiled. Moreover, upon a second reading, the story will have lost its impact as a chilling ghost story, as the hesitation would be spent. A comparison between Hogg's ghost story and Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* under this approach, yields two similar but also different results. Radcliffe's novel carries the same unfolding of hesitation, and the plot structure is very close to Hogg's. However, where Hogg's story upon the finishing of the narrative still retains, and in fact encourages the reader to accept, a supernatural explanation of events, Radcliffe destroys all pretence of supernaturalism and creates a sort of anti-climax. This means that Radcliffe's finished narrative contains no further interest, while Hogg's story preserves an uncertainty and ambiguity even after the story has been read.

'On the Supernatural in Poetry' (1826) is a posthumously published text by Radcliffe in dialogue form, in which two characters discuss the different uses of the supernatural, and famously distinguish between 'horror' and 'terror':

Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend, that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first [terror], respecting the dreaded evil?⁴⁶

Radcliffe's main technique of suspense in her narratives, as observed above, was to introduce seemingly supernatural occurrences, shrouded in obscurity, and to maintain these as a source of mystery throughout the narrative and then explain them by natural means in the end. As E. J. Clery observes in her introduction to the 1998 Oxford edition of *The Italian*, Radcliffe's 'only serious challenge [apart from *The Monk*] came from the German

⁴⁵ Ibid. 86-90.

⁴⁶ Ann Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820* eds. E. J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 163-171, 168.

schauerromane, or ‘terror fiction’, which dealt in unrestrained sensationalism’.⁴⁷ It can seem to be from this vein that the Blackwood writers seem to have found many of their influences, because as scandalous as it must have been in the 1790s, compared to ‘Gosschen’s Diary’ Lewis’ novel is quite tame. In the German E.T.A Hoffmann’s short story ‘The Sandman’ (1816) for example, the descriptions of events are much more detailed and horrifying. Hands are substituted for feet and vice versa, bloody eyes are thrown across the floor and corpses have terrible, distorted faces. Ann Radcliffe’s explained supernaturalism weakens when opposed to Hogg’s murderous ghost-woman. As mentioned above, it is apparent that Hogg’s story has more in common with texts like Bürger’s ‘Lenore’.⁴⁸

Another Blackwood tale dealing with supernaturalism is Samuel Warren’s ‘The Spectre-Smitten’. This story was published anonymously in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in February 1831, as the seventh part of Warren’s popular *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician* (August 1830-August 1837). Like Wilson’s ‘Extracts from Gosschen’s Diary’, the story claims to be part of a diary; in Warren’s case it is related by a doctor. Warren’s *Passages* were very popular, and already in 1832 Blackwood published a collection of them in two volumes. The reviewers of this collection in *The Athenaeum* and *The Literary Gazette* both assumed their readers to be already well acquainted with Warren’s stories, and *The Athenaeum* especially spent few lines announcing the publication:

The extensive circulation of Blackwood's Magazine, made these papers known far and wide; and to the general commendation with which they were received, we may attribute their being thus collected. It therefore, only remains for us to announce the republication in two very neat volumes.⁴⁹

The Literary Gazette’s review shared the same point of view, but also affected to describe Warren’s style and to explain why his *Passages* had become so popular:

We do not wonder at the great popularity obtained by these papers, blending as they do at once novelty and reality. Sickness and the sorrows therunto [sic] belonging come home to every heart; and the author now before us has a singularly graphic power of investing his fictions with life. Faults, and those of

⁴⁷ E. J. Clery, ‘Introduction’, in Ann Radcliffe: *The Italian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) vii-xxxi, vii.

⁴⁸ I will be returning to German sensationalism in Chapter Three.

⁴⁹ Anon., ‘Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician’, *The Athenaeum*, nr. 24, March 1832, 191, accessed 15.03.10.
<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e932-1832-000-30-033429:1>.

a young writer, there certainly are; the style is often florid, the descriptions too ornate, and there is a tendency to exaggeration; but there is at the same time a freshness and strength about these tales which at once attracts and fixes the attention. It is useless making extracts from pages which have been so widely circulated as these, which have already appeared in Blackwood's Magazine. We have only to state, that they now form two neat volumes, and are illustrated with some amusing notes.⁵⁰

These words serve to confirm Lockhart's view expressed in his review of *The Devil's Elixir* quoted earlier in this chapter, that 'so long as this feeling, this painful feeling, as to the reality of such things continues, the human mind will continue to receive a tragic pleasure from the skilful use made of them in works of imagination'.⁵¹ There can be no doubt, therefore, that Warren's stories were highly popular and well-liked. In an undated letter, presumably from October/November 1830, D.M. Moir wrote to Blackwood:

The Physician is as formerly very good, especially in the second story [...] he is much more unmedical than in any former one of the series, and lengthy to a degree. [...] His own most prominent characteristic is that he writes by the sheet. You should give him a hint about condensation.⁵²

As Moir notes, Warren's stories are rather lengthy, and are perhaps something between a series of short stories like Hogg's and a serialised novel. Warren's physician narrates the case of a Mr M—, a law student with a rich imagination, who upon returning to his rented chambers after a party, sees the ghost of his recently deceased neighbour sitting in a chair in his room:

The first object visible, was a figure sitting in the arm-chair. It was that of a gentleman, dressed in dark-coloured clothes, his hands white as alabaster, closed together over his lap, and the face looking away; but it turned slowly towards M—, revealing to him a countenance of a ghastly hue – the features glowing like steel heated to a white heat, and the two eyes turned full towards him, and blazing – absolutely blazing – he described it – with a most horrible lustre.⁵³

After falling senseless to the floor, he is eventually discovered by a maid, put to bed and the doctor is called. The doctor-narrator here is practising a very nearly omniscient

⁵⁰ Anon., 'Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician', *The Literary Gazette*, 791, March 1832, 168, accessed 15.03.10.
<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e761-1832-000-91-033887:1>.

⁵¹ Lockhart (1824) 55-56.

⁵² D. M. Moir, Letter to William Blackwood (1830) National Library of Scotland, M.S. 4028.

⁵³ Samuel Warren, 'The Spectre-Smitten,' *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine* eds. Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 215-241, 217.

narration, as he is not himself present during the first part of this story. When he does arrive, his patient is seized by a violent fit, which keeps recurring over the next few days, described by the doctor thus:

It was a fearful thing to see him lying in such a state – grinding his teeth as though he would crush them to powder – his livid lips crested with foam – his features swollen – writhing – blackening; and, which gave his face a peculiarly horrible and fiendish expression, his eyes distorted, or inverted upwards, so that nothing but the glaring whites of them could be seen – his whole frame rigid – and his hands clenched, as though they would never open again!⁵⁴

It becomes clear that Mr M–’s neighbour, Mr T–, had died just before M– returned home, and there was apparently no way he could have known this before seeing the apparition in the chair. The doctor goes on to relate the development of his patient’s malady, during which he tries to kill himself with a razor, attempts to violently murder his keeper, and dictates a romance. This latter instant is a humorous slandering of the typical Gothic novel:

Really it was inconceivable nonsense, rhapsodical rantings in the Maturin style, full of vaults, sepulchres, spectres, devils, magic – with here and there a thought of real poetry. It was piteous to peruse it! [...] His brother committed the *whole* to the flames a week after.⁵⁵

Slowly, the madman recovers, and is finally able to relate to the doctor what occasioned his madness. But the doctor is not convinced his patient has made a full recovery, and his fears are realised five years later when he hears that M– has committed suicide – ‘in a manner too horrible to mention!’⁵⁶ The narrative contains several explicit descriptions of the particulars of M–’s madness, and through the voice of the doctor-narrator, although himself a professed sceptic, the reader is invited, if not encouraged, to interpret M–’s behaviour as a reaction to the ‘spectre’ he had witnessed, and not just plain madness. Warren’s physician is a good example of an unreliable narrator, and this ambiguity in the narrative makes it difficult to believe its veracity, if any reader should be inclined to do so. However, by retaining the possibility of supernatural agency, Warren lets ‘The Spectre-Smitten’ keep its charms as a Blackwood tale of terror. ‘The Spectre-Smitten’ is included in this chapter because it has close parallels to ‘Gosschen’s Diary’, but at the same time shows a development within the Blackwood tales; it seems that by the late 1820s/early 1830s, the tales go from pretending to be accounts of real events, to being more obviously

⁵⁴ Ibid. 220.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 233-234.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 241.

fictional pieces of literature. The next two chapters will comment further on this development.

By the time these tales were published, the horrible seems to have grown to become a more accepted subject in fiction, and the Blackwood writers approached it in a very different way to the 1790s Gothic authors. As shown in this chapter, the Blackwood tales of terror differ from the Gothic romances most clearly in the intimacy and the portrayal of horror for horror's sake. The first-person narrators give the tales a subjectivity which renders the events much more intimate to the reader. Perhaps the most striking difference between the Blackwood tales and the Gothic romance is their characters: Where in Radcliffe's novels the characters are almost without exception two-dimensional and unchanging, in the Blackwood stories the frequent first-person mode of narration and/or the psychological interest in the protagonist serve to render their characters more intricate and human than any to be found in Radcliffe's gallery of personae, and as a result, make the stories far more frightening. As already mentioned above, a common feature of the 1790s Gothic was the typical dislocation of time and setting. The next chapter will explore common themes found in early nineteenth-century society, by investigating a popular mode of street literature, the *broadsides*, and identify themes that are also to be found in the tales of *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Chapter Two

‘A Contemplative Descent Into the Untimely Grave’: Delving Into the Urban Mind

‘The enclosed person, by a sudden and violent effort, thrust off the lid of the coffin, with her arms hanging on each side, with eyes wide open and rolling in their sockets.’

Broadside entitled ‘Wonderful’⁵⁷

‘...the demonstrator took the knife, and pierced me on the bosom with the point. I felt a dreadful crackling [...] throughout my whole frame—a convulsive shuddering instantly followed, and a shriek of horror rose from all present. The ice of death was broken up—my trance ended.’

John Galt, ‘The Buried Alive’⁵⁸

In the previous chapter, John Gibson Lockhart was seen to argue for the inclusion of the horrible as a legitimate fictional motive. The stories analysed, ‘Gosschen’s Diary’, ‘The Mysterious Bride’, and ‘The Spectre-Smitten’, utilised a more generic horror springing from murder, madness and supernaturalism. However, in this chapter, the chosen writers seem concerned with drawing upon horrific themes from their contemporary society. A certain popular mode of street literature has been chosen to identify the popularity of these themes in early nineteenth-century Britain, namely the *broadside*. This chapter seeks to identify some of the major themes that were most popular in the early nineteenth-century society by looking at surviving broadsides, and explore how these themes were adapted into the magazine format by the contributors to *Blackwood’s Magazine*. By exploring the Blackwood tales ‘The Buried Alive’ (1821), ‘Le Revenant’ (1827) and ‘The Executioner’ (1832), this analysis will try to determine the differences and similarities between the two aforementioned formats in order to show how the Blackwood writers were influenced by and treated the popular material of their contemporary society, to fit into one of the most talked-about magazines of the day.

⁵⁷ Broadside entitled ‘Wonderful’ (Glasgow: William Carse, 1821). The National Library of Scotland online database. Accessed 04.10.
<<http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/16600>>.

⁵⁸ John Galt, ‘The Buried Alive,’ *Tales of Terror from Blackwood’s Magazine*, eds. Robert Morrison, and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 35-38, 38.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, one of the chief vehicles for conveying information to the mass public was the broadside. Broadside were contemporary tabloids, a one-sided piece of paper that was sold for a penny or even put up on walls around town, containing local news and information about events. Quite a few published popular ballads, songs and stories, both traditional and anonymous. The broadsides were the chief source of information for the many who were too poor to afford newspapers and periodicals.⁵⁹ These publications were of no regular size, and thus were very simple and cheap to produce. Occasionally, to add a bit of visual appeal, they would display woodcut illustrations.⁶⁰ The broadside started as a vehicle for printing royal proclamations, acts and official notices, but evolved into containing political views and popular culture like the ballad. A vast increase in the output of street literature because of the mechanisation of the printing industry in the early 19th century made the broadside even more easily accessible, but by the middle of the century its marketplace was beginning to be conquered by the cheap newspaper and the sensational novels called ‘penny dreadfuls’. With the reducing and gradual lifting of the newspaper tax in 1855, the newspaper soon became a working-class commodity. The increasingly literate public were demanding better quality reading material, and by the 1850s the broadside was not good enough anymore as the penny used to purchase it could now buy a part issue of a novel or a cheap newspaper or weekly magazine.⁶¹

However, in the period with which we are concerned, the broadside was still extensively published, and carried articles about murders, executions, apparitions and medical marvels. This one-sheeted ‘newspaper’ would more often than not contain popular ballads on various themes, but sometimes (and increasingly) also small pieces of prose – sensational accounts of accidents, crimes committed, trials commenced and executions effected. These articles read more like pieces of fictional narrative, have a frequent use of strong epithets and a chronological unfolding of the storyline. Robert Collison comments on this phenomenon in his book *The Story of Street Literature*: ‘The fact was that in the first part of the nineteenth century, the penny chapbooks and the penny broadsides were always at

⁵⁹ Peter B. Freshwater, ‘Introduction,’ *Sons of Scotia, Raise Your Voice: Early 19th-century Scottish broadsides from a collection in Edinburgh University Library*, ed. Peter B. Freshwater (Edinburgh: The Friends of Edinburgh University Library, 1991) 2-3.

⁶⁰ Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide, from the Beginning of Printing to the Year 1897* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd. 1977) 123.

⁶¹ ‘Background,’ *The Word on the Street*, The National Library of Scotland online database, accessed 04.10. <<http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/background.html>>.

hand in the city streets, where they fluttered on the walls to tempt passers-by.’⁶² Both the Blackwood contributors and their audience would therefore be well acquainted with these types of articles.

In his book *Poe and the British Magazine Tradition* (1969), Michael Allen sets up a model for what he calls ‘The *Blackwood’s* Pattern,’ an elitist formula that

...retained the air of exclusiveness and authority which had characterised the Reviews; it incorporated the curious and esoteric learning which was a feature of the more respectable older miscellanies like the *Gentleman’s*; but it fused these elements into a more relaxed, personal, and intimate ethos which permitted the inclusion of more blatant sensationalism, literary gossip, and fiction for the less erudite reader.⁶³

Allen continues to state that ‘for all its affected elitism, the magazine was careful to maintain its relationship with the popular audience.’⁶⁴ In his sub-chapter ‘The “Few” and the “Many”’, Allen shows that the audience which publications like *Blackwood’s Magazine* sought to reach would be comprised of two types of readers. ‘On the one hand,’ says Allen, ‘there were the climbers in social scale... On the other hand were those who had been longer established.’⁶⁵ These two groups of readers Allen describes as the ‘many’ and the ‘few,’ and in his own words, ‘all the major publishing ventures of the early nineteenth century aimed at uniting the popularity which would attract readers of the first type... with the prestige and “quality” which would retain the more influential readers of the second kind’.⁶⁶ To further quote Allen,

Probably, at the deepest level, the success of a magazine results from the creation of an ethos which represents something of the inner desires of an audience and their idea of themselves, an ethos which draws them together into an imagined intimacy with the writers of the magazine, assimilating writers and readers to a common image and setting them apart from the uninitiated. At this level, *Blackwood’s*... was certainly a success, displaying continually the kind of assurance which depends on the known approbation of the readers. (...) The *Blackwood’s* editorial statements usually claimed the approbation of the highest circles; but they also involved dedications to the wider public and boasted about the size of the circulation.⁶⁷

⁶² Robert Collison, *The Story of Street Literature* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1973) 1.

⁶³ Michael Allen, *Poe and the British Magazine Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) 23.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 23.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 20.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 22-23.

For his circulation figures of the early years of *Blackwood's Magazine* Michael Allen turns to Margaret Oliphant's *Annals of a Publishing House*, which gives the numbers as rising steeply from 3700 in 1817 to over 8000 in the 1830s.⁶⁸ 'Even when one remembers that several people would see each copy of the magazine, and that many more copies would be bought in bound volumes, this may seem a very small circulation... to have achieved such influence,' says Allen.⁶⁹ However, he goes on to explain that 'in pre-Reform Britain the educated classes were a small percentage of the population, and influence was directly proportionate to status in a steep social hierarchy. Both "few" and "many"... were located in the upper half of the social pyramid.'⁷⁰ This would be the audience then, which the Blackwood short-story writers were catering for. The following analysis will show how the Blackwood tales appropriate popular contemporary themes for a magazine that sought to reach Allen's definition of the 'few' and the 'many'.

An early tale of terror published in *Blackwood's Magazine* that deals with a popular contemporary theme, is 'The Buried Alive'. This story is written by John Galt (1779-1839) and forms a part of a chapter in his serialised novel *The Steam-boat* (Maga February-December 1821). Galt had already been publishing, amongst other things, a different serial in *Blackwood's Magazine*, the popular *Ayrshire Legatees* (June 1820-February 1821), and the first instalment of *The Steam-boat* appeared in the same number as the last instalment of *Ayrshire Legatees*. The *Legatees* tells the story of a Scottish west-country family (the Pringles) visiting London for the first time, whose letters home constitute the narrative.⁷¹ However, into the letters Galt wove, in Erik Frykman's words, 'reports on topical events,' which Galt seems to have considered the most important part of his publication.⁷² Frykman seems to consider *The Steam-boat* a much inferior work to the *Legatees*, but as he observes, 'like the Pringle story written with the obvious intention of appealing to the Scottish interest in what was going on in London... interspersed [with] tales and anecdotes, most of them deplorably poor, told to the narrator by people he meets in the course of his

⁶⁸ Margaret Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and His Sons, Their Magazine and Friends*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1897) 70-102.

⁶⁹ Allen, 22.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Erik Frykman, *John Galt's Scottish Stories, 1820-1823* (Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri, 1959) 33-35.

⁷² Ibid.

jaunts'.⁷³ 'The Buried Alive' would be one such tale, however, it certainly doesn't deserve being called 'deplorably poor'.

'The Buried Alive' was initially published anonymously, outside of the *Steam-boat* serial, in the October 1821 issue of *Blackwood's Magazine*, probably so as to have a greater effect on the reader by its professed truthfulness. Related by the protagonist himself, the story is an intimate first-person narrative about a man who goes into a catatonic state and ends up being buried alive. The protagonist says he had been ill with a fever for 'some time', but says that while his physical strength became weaker, his 'sense of life' seemed to grow and, by the time his friends proclaimed him dead, he was still very much alive yet unable to move so much as an eyelid.⁷⁴ The protagonist retains his sense of hearing and can still feel when he is being touched and moved around:

When my eyes were closed, I heard by the attendants that my friend had left the room, and I soon after found, the undertakers were preparing to habit me in the garments of the grave. Their thoughtlessness was more awful than the grief of my friends. They laughed at one another as they turned me from side to side, and treated what they believed a corpse, with the most appalling ribaldry.⁷⁵

In this horrible state he is made ready to be put in his coffin, and when the day of his interment arrives the coffin is lowered into the prepared grave:

Soon after, a few handfuls of earth were thrown upon the coffin – Then there was another pause – after which the shovel was employed, and the sound of the rattling mould, as it covered me, was far more tremendous than thunder. But I could make no effort. The sound gradually became less and less, and by a surging reverberation in the coffin, I knew that the grave was filled up, and that the sexton was treading in the earth, slapping the grave with the flat of his spade. This too ceased, and then all was silent.⁷⁶

It is not long, however, before he hears noises outside his coffin, 'I heard a low and under-sound in the earth over me, and I fancied that the worms and the reptiles of death were coming – that the mole and the rat of the grave would soon be upon me,'⁷⁷ but he soon understands by sound and motion that he is being dug up, lifted out and carried away by body snatchers. The narrator feels himself carried into a room and placed naked on a table,

⁷³ Ibid. 36.

⁷⁴ Galt, 35.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 36.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 37.

and overhears that he is about to be dissected. Anatomy students and their demonstrator come in and undertake a galvanic experiment, the second shock of which throws his eyes open, and he can now see the people around him, some are familiar faces and seem disturbed when they recognise him. When the demonstrator grabs a knife and starts cutting the narrator in the chest, his trance ends with a crackling and a shuddering, and he is restored to normal within an hour. The story ends thus abruptly, and we are left to wonder what happened to the man, how long he lived after this event and if he suffered from it in any way. The final words of Galt's story are: 'The ice of death was broken up – my trance ended. The utmost exertions were made to restore me, and in the course of an hour I was in the full possession of all my faculties.'⁷⁸

In his book *Poe, Death and the Life of Writing* (1987), J. Gerald Kennedy refers extensively to Galt's 'The Buried Alive' as a major influence on Poe, but also as a tale that had tremendous effect on what Kennedy calls 'the underground memoir,' as it 'provided a model of self-narrated "death" and burial.'⁷⁹ By quoting a passage from the story concerning the protagonist's burial, a part of which is quoted above, Kennedy shows that it

...holds a compelling interest that is bound up not with the specific content nor with the point of view, but with the paradoxical relationship between them. In its unfolding the "death" and sepulture of a subject, "The Buried Alive" violates the logic of writing, for the account is inscribed by the very subject whose absence the burial certifies.⁸⁰

The perhaps most uncanny and frightening thought inspired by Galt's story is the idea that this happens to everyone who dies; their bodies shut down, but their 'souls' continue to exist, trapped in a dark coffin under ground, waiting to decompose and be devoured by worms. The image of rats and worms feeding on the narrator's body while he is still conscious is a fearful reminder of the frailty of human condition. No matter how civilised, man is still but another animal in death. This idea would reach out to any reader, regardless of their social status.

Kennedy places 'The Buried Alive' as perhaps the single greatest influence on Poe's similar works, and Poe's humorous description of Galt's tale in 'How to Write a

⁷⁸ Ibid. 38.

⁷⁹ J. Gerald Kennedy, *Poe, Death and the Life of Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) 45.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 46.

Blackwood Article,’ while obviously being a piece of satire, describes Galt’s tale with a touch of admiration:

There was ‘The Dead Alive,’ a capital thing! – the record of a gentleman’s sensations, when entombed before the breath was out of his body – full of taste, terror, sentiment, metaphysics, and erudition. You would have sworn that the writer had been born and brought up in a coffin.⁸¹

Poe resorts to the theme of premature interment in several of his stories and pieces of satire, and while this recurrence cannot be said to be wholly dependent on the influence of ‘The Buried Alive’, it testifies to the continued importance of this theme in his time.

While Kennedy seemingly fails to identify the author of ‘The Buried Alive’ as Galt, he does not doubt that it describes fictional events. He says that recent medical research (Kennedy is writing in the 1980s) ‘lends a curious plausibility’ to the tale, but he is at a loss when it comes to ‘clarify the more intriguing problem of how the writer came to describe these phenomena with such accuracy.’⁸² Kennedy is here touching upon the central appeal of this story. ‘The Buried Alive’ is a detailed, almost clinical observation of the body made by the victim himself, and gives the narrator the curious pretence of speaking from ‘beyond the grave’. It describes events that would occur in most people’s worst nightmares with a touch of sincerity and plausibility, which make it unsettling to the point of being nervously frightening. Recalling Poe’s words, ‘you would have sworn that the writer had been born and brought up in a coffin,’ satire is never as effective as when it has got a hint of truth.

Premature interment was something greatly feared at the time of this story’s publication. As Kennedy mentions, pamphlets and reports were published in the early nineteenth century that must have contributed to a general fear of the possibilities of premature interment. Kennedy also observes that by this time, due to the growing population in the cities, the burial rituals had changed with the removal of cemeteries from the vicinity of the churches, shortage of burial space and problems with over-filled cemeteries where the smell of decay was becoming increasingly intolerable; ‘interment had become an increasingly secular event’ that helped ‘making the thought of burial (premature or

⁸¹ Edgar Allan Poe, ‘How to Write a Blackwood Article,’ *The Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2004) 310-317, 312.

⁸² Kennedy, 45-46.

otherwise) more troubling and fraught with horror than it had previously been'.⁸³ In his book *Buried Alive*, Jan Bondeson describes this phenomenon and claims that the danger of premature burial 'had become one of the most-feared perils of everyday life' in Britain by the nineteenth century⁸⁴:

..a torrent of pamphlets and academic theses were dedicated to this subjects by writers all over Europe. In almost every country, a literature on this gruesome topic was readily available, ranging from the solemn medical thesis to pamphlets written by fanatics who claimed that more than one-tenth of humanity was buried alive, and to horror-mongering compilations of bugaboo stories like that of the notorious Köppen. The British nation had managed to resist the Continental obsession with premature burial in the late eighteenth century, but in the 1810s the French pamphlets invaded the British Isles, provoking a good deal of magazine writing on the subject.⁸⁵

Both Kennedy and Bondeson mention a book written by a Joseph Taylor called *The Dangers of Premature Interment* that was published in London in 1816. With this book, Taylor seems to want to change the contemporary British burial rituals in order to save more lives from what he obviously views as – or for reasons of horror-mongering wants to convey as – a very real threat. One of his more valuable suggestions in this text is a practical system for the keeping up of cemeteries, though how revolutionary his ideas are can probably be contested. Taylor sets out to prove the threats of premature interment by listing an impressive list of what he claims are 'remarkable instances' from 'historical records'.⁸⁶ His examples are many and uncritically selected, as some are cases where the victim is purposely buried alive, some are failed hangings or near-drownings, and some are pieces of old legend adapted into a slightly different form. The ultimate effect of Taylor's book, however, is most likely to have contributed largely to this paranoia of being buried alive. In his book, Bondeson is able to dismiss most of the more interesting of Taylor's recorded cases of premature interment by the way of modern science and medical knowledge, but in the nineteenth century they were still consigning unsettling situations like post-burial childbirths and corpses with distorted faces and gnawed-off fingertips to premature interment, and it is rather easy to understand how frightening the prospect of being in such a situation must have seemed.

⁸³ Ibid. 36-37.

⁸⁴ Jan Bondeson, *Buried Alive* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001) 167-157.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Joseph Taylor, *The Danger of Premature Interment* (W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1816) The National Library of Scotland, shelfmark Bh.7.20, title page.

A quite blatantly sensational text called *Thesaurus of Horror; or, the Charnel-House Explored* by John Snart, was published the year after Taylor's, in 1817, and Bondeson describes this book as 'the most ludicrous and gruesome book ever to appear in its particular genre'.⁸⁷ The title page would be proof enough to validate Bondeson's claim:

THESAURUS of HORROR;
 Or, the
 CHARNEL-HOUSE EXPLORED!!
 Being an historical and philanthropical inquisition
 Made for
 THE QUONDAM-BLOOD OF ITS INHABITANTS!
 By a contemplative
 DESCENT INTO THE UNTIMELY GRAVE!
 Shewing, by a number of awful facts that have transpired as well as from
 philosophical inquiry, the re-animating power of
 FRESH EARTH IN CASES OF SYNCOPE, &c.
 And the extreme criminality of
 HASTY FUNERALS:
 With the surest methods of escaping
 THE INEFFABLE HORRORS OF PREMATURE INTERMENT!!⁸⁸

The *Thesaurus of Horror* was reviewed in *Blackwood's Magazine* in June 1819, according to Strout most likely by John Wilson.⁸⁹ 'Nothing', says Wilson humorously, 'can be more delightful than the philosophical, poetical, and historical variety of the title-page.'⁹⁰ Wilson is clearly not taking Snart's book seriously:

It would appear from his statements, that most people are buried alive, and that as matters are now conducted, any lady or gentleman who is interred, perfectly dead, has good reason to consider her or himself unusually fortunate. [...] If we are to believe Mr Snart, and his reasoning seems unanswerable, a vast number of worthy people are at this very moment in no enviable situation; and though before this article has gone to press, all will be over with them [...].⁹¹

Snart's book is filled to the brim with ridiculous exclamations of horror, and seems to be not so much written for enlightenment as for frightening his audience:

⁸⁷ Bondeson, 158.

⁸⁸ John Snart, *Thesaurus of Horror; or, the Charnel-House Explored* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1817) 1.

⁸⁹ Strout, 54.

⁹⁰ John Wilson, 'Thesaurus of Horror; or, the Charnel-House Explored!! &c,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, June 1819) 334-337, 334.

⁹¹ Wilson (1819), 335-337.

Reader, here is a *matchless tragedy indeed!* Not founded upon *fiction*, but upon *facts!* A subject of supreme misery and superlative distress! One that will justify *any* mode of expression, and for which, instead of *suppressing* the exuberance of thought and intensity of description, it requires a pen dipped in *liquid fire* to depict.⁹²

As ridiculous as the *Thesaurus of Horror* seems to Wilson and the modern reader, a less critical and more easily influenced reader of the early nineteenth century would very likely be readily frightened by such forceful and dramatic language, and elevate their fear of having something similar happen to them or someone they loved even further. There is evidence in surviving broadside literature to prove that this sensational fear of premature burial existed, and thrived, also in central Scotland. In early October 1821, William Carse, one of several prominent publishers in the Saltmarket area of Glasgow, printed a broadside entitled 'Wonderful'.⁹³ This publication is narrated by someone calling themselves a 'British Traveller' and is described thus:

Account of a Woman who was buried alive, and who broke open the coffin while they were laying her in the grave, which so frightened the company that they fled in every direction; also, a copy of the interesting Dream which she had in that state.⁹⁴

The first part of the narrative is written in the first person and from the point of view of an onlooker to a funeral. As he watches the funeral proceedings, a sound is heard that seems to come from the coffin, but the people attending the funeral are, after their initial scare, convinced it must have come from elsewhere, and the funeral continues. When the coffin is lifted and being lowered into the grave, more noises are heard and ultimately the lid of the coffin is forced open and the poor woman inside is revealed, 'with her arms hanging on each side, with eyes wide open and rolling in their sockets'.⁹⁵ Her mourners are terrified and run away, but return after a while to help her out of the grave. 'I understand,' says the witness, 'from the surgeon who attended her, and whom I have seen this morning, that she has had a very good night, and is likely finally to recover. – She is a widow, and had she "slumbered in the arms of Death", would have left 10 children wholly unprovided for.'⁹⁶ The credulity of a complete stranger looking up the woman's physician to enquire after her

⁹² Snart, 87.

⁹³ Broadside entitled 'Wonderful' (1821).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

health, is perhaps not the greatest, and it declines further when learning that the same printer published a broadside called 'Wonderful Account' probably some time later, that is also said to be 'copied from the British Traveller'.⁹⁷ The name of the poor woman, the setting of the story, as well as the dates have changed, but the story is the same, almost word-by-word. She is now called the Widow M'Kenzie, is said to have had five, not ten, children, and was being buried on the 19th of February (no year is given anywhere on the sheet). Her dream is exactly the same as the one the woman from Chelmsford was reported to have had. An interesting addition has been made at the bottom of the page, where the British Traveller is again relating an incidence of premature interment, this time from Chelsea:

Many similar cases could be adduced, and, one in particular, which happened a few weeks ago at Chelsea. A Lieutenant in the army being supposed dead, was put into his coffin, and carried with all the military honours to his grave, in which he was laid, and it was not till the first volley was fired over him, that he struck violently against the coffin, and on the opening of which he was found alive, and walked with some assistance home, to the no small terror of his wife and other female friends, who thought he had been consigned to the tomb.⁹⁸

It is evident from the repetition of this story and the addition of a similar case, that this theme was a popular one. In his book *Popular Literature, A History and Guide*, Victor E. Neuburg says that the broadsides shamelessly plagiarised popular items to suit the local fancy,⁹⁹ and it is interesting to see that the same printer would go as far as to produce the same material on a popular subject several times. As Bondeson claims in the quote above, the theme of premature interment hit the magazines in the early nineteenth century, and 'The Buried Alive' is no doubt a product of the hysteria around the subject.

It is amusing to discover that while magazine stories can seem to be in varying degrees influenced by sensational street writing, sometimes the street literature show signs of being influenced vice versa. A blatant example is a broadside entitled 'Extraordinary Case!' that was printed in Edinburgh for James Mathewson around 1825 and was sold for a penny. This broadside claims to tell the shocking story of a Mrs Jane Tomkinson, and to be related by herself. The story, however, is almost a word-by-word plagiarism of Galt's 'The Buried Alive', apart from the use of female pronouns and a little paragraph added at the end, that seemingly affects to add a stronger traditional Gothic feel to the text:

⁹⁷ Broadside entitled 'Wonderful Account' (Glasgow: William Carse, approx. 1830) The National Library of Scotland, shelfmark RB.el.9(1).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Neuburg, 139.

Notwithstanding the trials I had undergone, I found myself sufficiently strong to rise on my seat upon the table. Many of the students left the room precipitately; the demonstrator, with several others remained, watching, with the most profound attention, every movement I made. The power of speech had not yet returned, and efforts to speak were unavailing.—Conscious of the indelicacy of my situation, being surrounded with men, and being only partly covered with my shroud, I got off the table, and walked to-wards the door, in hopes of meeting some female who might procure a decent covering. The students followed in silent amazement. I passed down a long lobby, and entered an apartment at the farther extremity, where some person was in bed ; I approached and drew the curtain ; at this moment I found myself again able to speak, and I implored the person, who proved to be a male servant of the house, to conduct me to a room where I might find the company of a woman, but the person was so petrefied [sic] by fear as to be un-able to answer; the demonstrator and the students, however, were in a body behind me and in a few minutes every necessary was procured, and the utmost exertions were made fully to restore me. —In the course of an hour I was again in the bosom of my family.¹⁰⁰

Here the unfortunate woman morphs into the typical Gothic heroine in distress. The blatant sexual undertones are amusing and add further sensationalist appeal to the story. An instance has been found, too, of a part of Galt's story being reproduced in a broadside for the sake of religious propaganda. The broadside, entitled 'Wonderful Case!' was printed in Edinburgh for Francis M'Cartney and the approximate year of publication is 1830. The victim of the death trance here is an old clergyman, who, in his paralysed state, has a dream with a religious message. He never gets so far as to be put in a coffin and buried, but wakes up on his own accord and manages to relate his dream before he passes away for good:

...I fain would have entered into heaven's gates, but I could not; they desired me to go from whence I came, and tell to the people what things I had seen and heard ; to tell them that I had got a sight of both good and evil, and lastly, to give them an account of the commotions that will shortly take place in different kingdoms of the world, and of times that are near at hand for the welfare of Britain and Ireland, in not having any War, but that peace and plenty will be in the land for every creature.¹⁰¹

Notwithstanding the hysteria surrounding premature interment, the most recurrent theme in early nineteenth-century broadsides was still crime, in particular trials and executions. Robert Collison remarks that 'the reporting of crime was a staple of the chapbook and

¹⁰⁰ Broadside entitled 'Extraordinary Case!' (Edinburgh: James Mathewson, approx. 1825) The National Library of Scotland online database, accessed 04.10.
<<http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/14561/transcript/1>>.

¹⁰¹ Broadside entitled 'Wonderful Case!' (Edinburgh: Francis M'Cartney, approx. 1830) The National Library of Scotland online database. Accessed 04.10.
<<http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/14619/transcript/1>>.

broadsheet industry,¹⁰² and later he observes that when a murder was committed, the broadside reports would ‘almost inevitably’ contain ‘the condemned man’s dying confession, a letter to his mother, or a verse account of his crime which skated over the details given in small print in the lengthy report of the trial.’¹⁰³ Neuburg observes that the prose and verse forms of these broadsides were largely stereotyped, and their illustrations, if any, exaggerated to the incredible. This was of course purely sensational ‘journalism’, with the sole aim of selling as many items as possible. One can speculate that in order to meet this demand for sensational output, printers would increasingly resort to fictional material where real life events would not be found shocking enough. Of the writers of broadside texts, Neuburg claims they were for the most part unknown hacks from the very working class their writings were meant for. As a broadside article or ballad would be very short-lived in the market because of the extensive amount of plagiarism, writing for a broadside would not be about literary aspirations, but a means of acquiring a very small amount of supplementary income.¹⁰⁴

Neuburg also comments upon the increasing importance of fiction in popular literature, and especially sensational and romance fiction:

Its growth... amongst unsophisticated and working-class readers was phenomenal. Well below the reach of the three-volume novel, the circulating library and the world of literature there existed an immense sub-literary public for novels which were sold in penny parts, and even at a penny for a complete novel.¹⁰⁵

It is tempting to surmise that while magazines, reviews and ‘serious’ literature were financially out of bounds to the working class, popular working-class literature was equally out of the question for the more well-to-do readers, for reasons of social standing and literary elitism. However, on a fundamental level people would still be drawn to literature by a natural fascination for the same themes, and as Robert Collison comments, street literature was a much more immediate way of getting news than waiting for the periodical publications: ‘The well-to-do could read vivid accounts of the latest murders and robberies in the *Annual Register* and the *Gentleman’s Magazine*; but even so, they shared also the

¹⁰² Collison, 31.

¹⁰³ Collison, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Neuburg, 137-42.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 144.

more instant – if less accurate – versions produced by the printers nearby.’¹⁰⁶ The narrator in Henry Thomson’s ‘Le Revenant’ explicitly comments on this fascination for what he calls ‘extraordinary narratives of fact’:

An account of a shipwreck in which hundreds have perished; of a plague which has depopulated towns or cities; anecdotes and inquiries connected with the regulation of prisons, hospitals, or lunatic receptacles; nay, the very police reports of a common newspaper—as relative to matters of reality; have always excited a degree of interest in my mind which cannot be produced by the best invented tale of fiction.¹⁰⁷

‘Le Revenant’ was published anonymously in the April 1827 issue of *Blackwood’s Magazine*, and the author has been identified as one Henry Thomson, of whom little is now known.¹⁰⁸ The story is about a man who gets convicted for a crime and sentenced to death by hanging, only to mysteriously emerge alive after the ordeal. The main part of the story concerns his inward sufferings while waiting for his execution. It is written in the first person perspective and the narrator says that his reason for going public with his story is that it will ‘afford very high gratification’ to readers with ‘a temper of [his] own’.¹⁰⁹ There is no doubt, then, that the story is claiming to be true, and the narrator even directs the reader to a particular list of capital convictions in the year 1826 as further proof. He apologises in the end for having related his story in ‘too much length’, his reason for this being ‘it is not easy for those who write without skill, to write briefly’.¹¹⁰ This kind of affected humility is nothing new to literature, and occurs very frequently in Gothic romance writing.

Thomson’s narrator is a working-class man on a salary of 50 pounds a year, who was sentenced to death for swindling his employer of almost two hundred pounds after he fell in love with a very poor girl. The language of the story is simple and concise, but with a touch of poetic skill that makes the narrative both gripping as a sensationalist story and as a piece of literature:

¹⁰⁶ Collison, 31.

¹⁰⁷ Henry Thomson, ‘Le Revenant,’ *Tales of Terror from Blackwood’s Magazine*, eds. Robert Morrison, and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 74.

¹⁰⁸ Morrison and Baldick, 283.

¹⁰⁹ Thomson, 74.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 87.

I have been HANGED, and am ALIVE—perhaps there are not three other men, at this moment, in Europe, who can make the same declaration. Before this statement meets the public eye, I shall have quitted England for ever; therefore I have no advantage to gain from its publication. And, for the vanity of knowing, when I shall be a sojourner in a far country, that my name—for good or ill—is talked about in this,—such fame would scarcely do even my pride much good, when I dare not lay claim to its identity.¹¹¹

‘Le Revenant’ has been described as a big influence on both Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Dickens.¹¹² The theme is similar to Galt’s ‘The Buried Alive’, in that both of their protagonists both emerge alive after seeming to die. As mentioned above, in Joseph Taylor’s *The Danger of Premature Interment*, there are examples related of people having been hanged but found to be breathing after having been cut down. The survival of Thomson’s narrator is shrouded in mystery, which is in no doubt the central appeal of the story, and sets it apart from the kind of ‘medical’ stories mentioned in Taylor’s book, where the highest emphasis is given to show how such a situation can arise and how to revive the victim. This enigma surrounding the narrator’s apparent death and survival gives ‘Le Revenant’ an uncanny atmosphere bordering on the supernatural, and is what constitutes it as a ‘tale of terror’ rather than a more run-of-the-mill criminal’s confession like those featured in broadside literature. Thomson’s protagonist is depicted as a dead alive, almost a zombie, someone who has died but is still walking on the living earth. ‘Le Revenant’ certainly must have caused quite a stir, as it is one of the few earlier tales from *Blackwood’s* it has been possible to find mentions of. In a letter to William Blackwood from Thomas Hood (1827), Hood writes humorously “‘Le Revenant’ [...] is talked of by every body I know, – pray bid him (the author) [unintelligible] again: – Beheading is yet undescribed.’¹¹³ Charles Lamb was also struck by Thomson’s story, and wrote this to his publisher William Hone in 1827:

There is in Blackwood this month an article MOST AFFECTING indeed called Le Revenant, and would do more towards abolishing Capital Punishments than 400000 Romillies or Montagues. I beg you read it and see if you can extract any of it. *The Trial scene in particular*.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Ibid. 73.

¹¹² See J. Gerald Kennedy and H. P. Sucksmith.

¹¹³ Thomas Hood, Letter to William Blackwood (1827) National Library of Scotland, M.S. 4019.

¹¹⁴ Charles Lamb, letter to Willam Hone, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, Vol. III, ed. E.V. Lucas (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. and Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1935) 78.

Lamb's letter testifies that 'Le Revenant' can be seen as a political comment on capital punishments, and shows that the Blackwood tales of terror were more than just sensational pieces without any substantial content. In his book *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868* (1994), V. A. C. Gatrell outlines the extent to which executions were carried out in the United Kingdom during this time. Gatrell seeks to identify the attitudes of the public towards capital punishment. 'Public opinion alone,' says Gatrell, 'would not end the bloody code; no tory politicians in the 1820s would defer openly to it. But the notion that there was an opinion was increasingly difficult to ignore.'¹¹⁵ Tim Killick, in his chapter on didactic tales, 'Improving Stories', in the book *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century: the Rise of the Tale*, states that 'even *Blackwood's* took an occasional break from its fascination with Tales of Terror to publish stories with a softer centre'.¹¹⁶ Killick seems to overlook, however, that many of the Blackwood horror tales also carry, to some degree, moral messages, and can be seen to contribute to contemporary debates. Galt's 'The Buried Alive', Thomson's 'Le Revenant', and, as shall be shown, Godwin's 'The Executioner', are good examples of this.

There are thousands of surviving broadsides containing descriptions of trials and executions. Of the ones encountered during this research, one entitled 'Trial & Execution of a Murderess' especially stands out. This broadside was printed by John Muir of Glasgow in 1824 and contains an account of the trial and execution of a woman called Honora Concannon. The story is introduced like this:

..a young woman about 24 years of age, who was executed at Clare on Friday last the 6th day of August, 1824, for the most horrid murder of W. Higgins, a poor old man, who was asleep in her house, by cutting his body into pieces, and throwing it into a river; with an account of her outrageous conduct at the place of execution, where she kicked and bit the Executioner in the most violent manner, being an account of one of the most awful transactions ever recorded.¹¹⁷

Even though this incident has little in common with Thomson's narrative, it serves to show how sensationalist and preoccupied with horrendous crimes and grisly executions broadside literature was at this point in time, and these are themes that are recurrent also in magazines like *Blackwood's*. As mentioned above, Thomson's story is for the main part

¹¹⁵ V. A. C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 325-6.

¹¹⁶ Killick, 86.

¹¹⁷ Broadside entitled 'Trial & Execution of a Murderess' (Glasgow: John Muir, 1824) National Library of Scotland, shelfmark: RB.el.9(3).

located in the narrator's prison cell, where he describes his agonies with detail. He is pitiable and believable, and these are character traits that serve to keep the reader's interest in wishing to learn the circumstances of his fate:

I would have died – coward as I was – upon the rack, or in the fire, so I could have but left her safe. I did not ask so much as to leave her happy! Oh then I did think, in bitterness of spirit, if I had but shunned temptation, and staid poor and honest! If I could only have placed her once more in the hard laborious poverty where I had first found her! It was my work, and she never could be there again!¹¹⁸

Among the myriad of surviving broadsides entitled 'Execution', one has been found concerning the fate of one Thomas Black that brings similar feelings of pity to the reader. This broadside, dated 1823, tells the story of Black, only seventeen years of age, who together with a John Reid was caught and tried for housebreaking and theft. They were both, despite their young age, sentenced to death for their crime. Reid, however, received a reprieve soon after, while Black, for reasons unknown, was executed regardless. The broadside relates how Black sincerely repented of his crime, and partook calmly in all the religious preparations for his death on the scaffold. He behaved with perfect dignity all along, even during his final minutes. The broadside is concluded with these words: 'We sincerely trust that the premature and shameful end of this young man, who was only about seventeen years of age, be a warning to all who saw him, or heard of his awful fate.'¹¹⁹ There are probably many other, possibly better, examples out there, but it will hopefully suffice to show that there are similarities, however vague, and that the broad themes of both broadside and magazine writing are in some instances very similar.

Another tale that can be seen as a commentary on capital punishments is William Godwin the Younger's tale 'The Executioner'. This story is one of the longer short stories published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and was printed in two parts in the February and March issues of 1832, over the signature 'Syphax'. It is also presented as a true story, but the language, length of events and structure of the plot carry an increased fictional awareness. As Morrison and Baldick comment in their note on the text in *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine*, the narrative has notable resemblances to the Gothic novel *Things as They Are, or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), by Godwin's father of

¹¹⁸ Thomson, 79.

¹¹⁹ Broadside entitled 'Execution.' 1823. The National Library of Scotland online database. Accessed 04.10. <<http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/15445/transcript/1>>.

the same name.¹²⁰ Indeed, in a letter to William Blackwood quoted by Morrison and Baldick, Godwin the Younger confesses that his 'style of writing' is formed 'hardly so much... on my father's publications, as on [his] general intercourse with him'.¹²¹ In the previous chapter, a certain development could be observed within the three tales that were analysed. Wilson's 'Gosschen's Diary' and Hogg's 'The Mysterious Bride' were seen to be more written with the intention to make readers believe they were accounts of true events; Wilson's story pretended to be a real diary written by a German clergyman, and Hogg's narrative was written in the traditional style of a rural ghost story. Warren's 'The Spectre-Smitten' from his popular *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician*, however, displays a greater preoccupation with style and literary references. In this chapter, both Galt and Thomson's narratives follow what has been called above the Blackwood mode; intimate, first-person psychological relations (or confessions) of singular situations professed to be true events. The same can also to some degree be said of Godwin's tale, however, there is a definite development to be traced within his narrative.

'The Executioner' is a nineteenth-century *Oedipus the King*, a violent tale of patricide and betrayal. It has a rather intricate plot that deserves a close retelling. The narrator, Ambrose, is a young man who, having been isolated in a little house on the moors his entire life, suddenly runs away when the woman who was his only companion expires of old age. The two had been kept alive by monthly visits and provisions from his father, whom Ambrose now sets out to find. The name Ambrose is reminiscent of Lewis' Ambrosio in *The Monk*, and the two are alike in that they were both shielded from the outside world until manhood, and thus more (if not wholly) inexperienced and very susceptible to its influences. After his flight, Ambrose is wandering starving about the countryside, and is at length caught and imprisoned under the vagrant act:

...to a fortnight's imprisonment and hard labour in the jail of the town. [...] The first lesson which I there learned was, that the criminal and the offender of the laws were better fed than the harmless, wretched wanderer, whose only sin was that of being hungry in obedience to nature's ordinances. [...] I tried to account for the phenomenon, but in vain; it was too much for my philosophy. It did not, however, tend to ease the cankering hatred against mankind that was fast eating into the very core of my every sensation.¹²²

¹²⁰ Morrison and Baldick, 292.

¹²¹ William Godwin the Younger, Letter to William Blackwood, National Library of Scotland, MS. 4033, quoted in *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine*, eds. Robert Morrison, and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 292.

¹²² William Godwin Jr, 'The Executioner,' *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine*, eds. Robert Morrison, and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 131-179, 143.

As chance has it, he meets his father, whose name he now learns is Stephen Lockwood, in the prison, and who arranges for them to meet when they are both released. Upon his release, Ambrose meets his father as planned, and hears a horrific account of how he came to be placed in his solitary home with no other company but an old woman, and how his father in the meantime had been busy in contriving the revenge upon his enemy, one Edward Foster, who stole his wife more than two decades ago, and indirectly caused her suicide. The poor, naïve Ambrose is greatly affected by his father's story, and when he is asked to volunteer for the office of executioner, in order to be the one who takes his father's enemy's life, he readily obliges, but not without moral qualms. When the appointed day arrives, Ambrose meets Foster for the first time, and the latter forgives the youth for what he is about to do. Ambrose reluctantly does the deed, but is left broken and full of guilt. In the crowd of onlookers he passes the only person who was kind to him when he was starving, a young man of eighteen or nineteen, and learns that this man was Foster's son. This leaves Ambrose feeling even more dejected and guilt-ridden, and hearing the evil laugh of his own father in the multitude he grows to despise him for what he made him do. Here ends the first instalment of the two-part story and it stands alone well enough.

When the narrative picks up again we learn that Ambrose, several months later, has been wandering around alone again. His father left him some money, and scheduled a new meeting after the course of six months. In the meanwhile, Ambrose took up drinking, and was thrown out of town after town because he would be heard rambling about his hangman-experience under the influence of brandy. Ambrose himself was for a while unaware that he himself confessed to this, but thought instead that rumour preceded him uncannily everywhere he went:

What could it mean? Was I pursued through all my winding paths and labyrinth of ways by some treacherous spy, that only tracked me to betray, and hold me up to the detestation of mankind? I was bewildered by the confusion of ideas that my still half-intoxicated brain presented in solution of the riddle, when a few words that dropped from one of my groaning pursuers told me. Having launched after me a deep and ferocious shout, he exclaimed, 'Beast, be wise at least in future! If you must drink, do it where there are none to hear you blab your hangman secrets.'¹²³

When the time comes for him to meet up with his father, in the very town where he committed the atrocious act, a letter is waiting for him, bidding him to come at once to a

¹²³ Godwin Jr. (1995) 160.

place where further revenge would be taken. It turns out that Lockwood, knowing that Foster's son, Charles, has been sentenced to death, wants Ambrose to repeat the deed he did to Charles' father. Upon hearing this, Lockwood's power over his son is finally broken, and Ambrose firmly refuses to spoil a hair on Charles Foster's head. A twist in the narrative occurs here; Ambrose is horrifyingly told that Edward Foster was his own father, and that Charles is his brother. Lockwood never had any claim to his mother, but drove her to her untimely death and stole her and Foster's eldest child. Through this *anagnorisis*, Ambrose now decides to do all he can to save his brother's life, and, volunteering for the office of executioner once again, is able to contrive Charles' escape from an undeserved death. As it turns out, Lockwood had set Charles up so as to suit his own evil plans. The wily Lockwood almost ruins Ambrose's plan at the last minute, but Ambrose knocks him down, suffocates him in the mud and allows Charles to run safely away. Ambrose is writing his confession in a prison cell, probably serving time for the murder of Lockwood and the escape of a sentenced criminal, and in his own words, 'counted by my fellow-men among the maniacs of the earth'.¹²⁴

Plainly, Godwin's tale is a much more detailed piece of narrative and not focused on one specific incident, it has an intricate plot structure that stands out from the other Blackwood tales analysed in this chapter, and, although it is written as a confession, is much harder to believe as a true story. Literary references, to for example Shakespeare, occur in the narrative, and do not concur with the narrator's professed unschooled upbringing. There is no reason to believe that this narrative was ever meant to be understood by any reader as a true story, but rather as a first-person related Gothic tale of family disputes, treachery and death. The same development that we saw occurring through the three tales in the previous chapter can therefore also be found here; from the unsettling straight-forwardness of Galt's 'The Buried Alive' and Thomson's 'Le Revenant' in the 1820s, to the more elaborately construed and more obviously fictional narrative of Godwin Jr. The themes, however, remain the same throughout this transformation. Godwin's tale also contains crime, executions and escape from death.

Both 'Le Revenant' and 'The Executioner' have strong messages of morality. Arguably, so does 'The Buried Alive' when describing the atrocious acts of grave robbers and the physicians who pay them, but their deeds ultimately cause the protagonist to be rescued from an untimely grave, and the message is perhaps somewhat blurred by the 'happy'

¹²⁴ Ibid. 179.

ending. As mentioned previously, the greater part of 'Le Revenant' is dedicated to the sinner's repentance in his cell. He sorely regrets his actions, and knows that what he did was wrong and that his sentence was just. The greatest cause of the psychological pain Thomson's narrator experiences in his misery, while waiting for his execution, is the thought of his beloved Elizabeth and the absolute poverty his acts have ended up causing her. But, because he committed a crime that didn't directly hurt anybody, and of his motive of improving the life of the woman that he loved, the reader will find his survival at the gallows more tolerable. He is pitiable, and when he lives, the reader will rejoice at his second chance and his marriage to his beloved Elizabeth. In 'The Executioner', the moral messages are more frequent and apparent. They include the unjust treatment of poor, starved beggars, the evils of excessive alcohol consumption, and the dangers of unfair trials. Godwin jr. is writing with a higher literary awareness, which is what sets his story apart from the others, and allows him to treat these themes more openly. While 'The Buried Alive' and 'Le Revenant' can in one way be seen as stylised versions of the crude street literature, Godwin's tale is a piece of fiction quite different, and has more in common with the Gothic genre his father's work belonged to.

The stories analysed in this chapter show an anxiety regarding depersonalisation; in an urban society life is becoming cheaper and the individual does not appear to count anymore. The growing mass market seems to be encouraging death and misfortune as a new aesthetic, and the Blackwood writers take contemporary themes, as the ones found in the street literature of the period, to a new extreme in their short fiction. The narrator of 'The Buried Alive' notices how his acquaintances among the anatomy students shudder when they recognise him on the dissecting table, however they coldly go ahead with their experiments regardless. Thomson's protagonist in 'Le Revenant' similarly feels the apathy of society when his efforts to ensure his lover's future wellbeing are thwarted, and Godwin's young narrator in 'The Executioner' experiences first-hand the desolation of having nothing and being an outcast in a society where he finds little or no understanding for his situation.

It has been observed previously that shocking the audience was what initially helped Blackwood secure a place on the market for his magazine. By choosing to publish stories with popular, sensational themes that would give his readers something to talk about, Blackwood could ensure that the interest in his magazine would be held up, and more forcefully, by a wider audience than the great Reviews would entertain. It could also seem that, as *Blackwood's Magazine* got a firm foothold in the market, and started to get more

and more famous for its publications of original fiction, the magazine's short-story authors would turn to a more decidedly obvious fictional form of writing rather than anonymous, blatantly sensational tales that would earn them little literary credit.

All three of the Blackwood writers being analysed in this chapter, are writing in the first-person mode of narration. All three protagonists are male, and, for different reasons, are placed in some kind of extraordinary personal situation. 'The Buried Alive' is very similar to the tales discussed in the previous chapter, in that the protagonist is completely isolated from the rest of the world and left wholly to his own thoughts and despair. The narrator of 'The Executioner' is also isolated from society, not physically but rather for social reasons. He begins a beggar, and ends up a despised outcast. The protagonist in 'Le Revenant' similarly ends up being an outcast of society, having survived his own execution and fleeing the country lest he should be recognised. The following chapter will explore in further detail the introversion and subsequent alienation of the Blackwood protagonists, and investigate the idea that the Tory politics of the magazine can be seen to be a factor in its reinvigoration of terror fiction.

Chapter Three

‘Abandoned to the Mercy of a Thousand Demons’: Isolating the Individual

‘I wept tears of rage and despair; and thrusting my fingers in the sockets of the empty skulls, to wrench them from the wall, I clutched their bony edges till the blood sprung from my lacerated hand.’ **Daniel Keyte Sandford**, ‘**A Night in the Catacombs**’ [1818]¹²⁵

‘There was not a fibre of my soul it did not thrill through: it entered my very soul; thought and reflection were almost utterly banished; I only retained the sensation of agonizing terror.’ **William Maginn**, ‘**The Man in the Bell**’ [1821]¹²⁶

‘The future stood unveiled before him, ghastly and appalling. His brain already feels the descending horror,—his bones seem to crack and crumble in the mighty grasp of the iron walls!’ **William Mudford**, ‘**The Iron Shroud**’ [1830]¹²⁷

Quoted above are three examples of the Blackwood writers’ preoccupation with individual psychology. This chapter will deal specifically with the tales these quotes represent; three similarly themed narratives, starting with Daniel Keyte Sandford’s ‘A Night in the Catacombs’ (1818), continuing with William Maginn’s ‘The Man in the Bell’ (1821) and William Mudford’s ‘The Iron Shroud’ (1830). These three tales are extraordinary narratives of entrapment and solitary despair, and clearly show a change from the abstraction of the earlier Gothic to a strong preoccupation with psychology and the power of the human mind which lets the tales stand in accordance to the magazine’s high-Tory politics.

What this chapter will attempt to show is that the periodical negotiated to some degree between its conservative politics and the Gothic genre, which was infamous for its supposed radicalism. The Blackwood contributors seem to have reshaped the terror aspect of the Gothic into a literary form that suited the sensationalism and ultra-Toryism of the magazine while also appealing to the rapidly growing literate public. In her account of the

¹²⁵ Daniel Keyte Sandford, ‘A Night in the Catacombs,’ *Tales of Terror from Blackwood’s Magazine*, ed. Robert Morrison, and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 25-33, 30.

¹²⁶ William Maginn, ‘The Man in the Bell,’ *Tales of Terror from Blackwood’s Magazine*, ed. Robert Morrison, and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 61-66, 62.

¹²⁷ William Mudford, ‘The Iron Shroud,’ *Tales of Terror from Blackwood’s Magazine*, ed. Robert Morrison, and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 101-114, 111.

Gothic in the Victorian era, Alison Milbank sums up the themes of the Radcliffean Gothic originating in the troubled 1790s as ‘the politics of liberty and progressivism, freedom from the past, and the entrapped heroine’.¹²⁸ Although her article deals with a later period than this thesis is concerned with, 1830-1880, she mentions *Blackwood’s Magazine* and its tales of terror in a way that is relevant to issues at hand in this chapter:

Since an understanding of national developments as organic, *à la* Edmund Burke, precludes organized change, a conservative Gothic eschews an extensive symbolization of Britain as the prison that one finds in more radical writers. Instead the short stories in the Conservative periodical *Blackwood’s Magazine* display a new preoccupation with individual psychology.¹²⁹

As was shown in the first chapter, in the Blackwood tale there is a turn inwards from the wider continental perspective of Radcliffe et al, to the *individual*. Mostly placed in extreme situations, it seems that the protagonists of the Blackwood tale are fighting battles within themselves rather than with oppressive organisations like the Catholic Church or the Inquisition as can be found in Radcliffe, Lewis and later, to some degree, Maturin. Seen through the eyes and mind of its protagonist, the typical Blackwood tale of terror has an intimacy and closeness to the reader unequalled in earlier Gothic narratives. Where Radcliffe’s third-person protagonist stereotypically would be a damsel in distress, placed in a world where a larger machinery of events threaten to oppress her, the Blackwood protagonist can seem to be more or less detached from an historical awareness and doomed to fight a battle within his own head.

The literary movement known as the Gothic Revival of the 1790s coincided with, and to a certain degree interacted with, the Revolution in France, overall displaying in varying degrees Whig ideas of emancipation and anti-Catholicism. The rise of the Gothic Romance, which, it is important to note, had existed since the publication of Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* in 1762, may not have been wholly dependent on the events in France, but its popularity and growth owed a great deal to the contemporary political turmoil. As Maggie Kilgour argues in *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (1995), ‘it gained new life with the French Revolution, as the Terror proved fertile for a literature of terror.’¹³⁰ With growing anxieties about reform and revolution in Britain, the Gothic romance was to be seen as a

¹²⁸ Alison Milbank, ‘The Victorian Gothic in English Novels and Stories, 1830-1880’, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 145-165, 145.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 150.

¹³⁰ Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995) 23.

political threat. The uniform condemnation of the Gothic Romance by the upper-class critic, as James Watt shows in his book *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict 1764-1832*, was highly connected to its popularity and widespread circulation amongst an increasingly literate public, and the dangers this was thought to bring, especially in the works of the Whig MP Matthew ‘Monk’ Lewis. Lewis’ novel *The Monk* as well as his other publications is highly influenced, if not permeated, by German sources. James Watt claims that ‘critics and reviewers in the 1790s were far more likely to stigmatise a work as ‘German’ rather than ‘Gothic’’.¹³¹

The term ‘German’ undoubtedly retained a certain cachet, into the nineteenth century at least, as a marker of horror and mystery, hence the desire of so many writers and publishers to claim German descent for their novels and tales. Certainly after the Illuminati controversy of the late 1790s, though, a mythical Germany became associated with a deluded revolutionary idealism, almost to the same extent as France, and ‘German’ fiction became almost universally associated with a potentially dangerous excess.¹³²

German literature was introduced to an English audience in the late 18th century, by translations of works by authors such as Goethe, Schiller, Grosse and Bürger. It was seen as particularly wild and original, and had an intensity and vitality that was by some found wanting in contemporary English writing. Watt goes on to argue that ‘some German works were already being savaged for their absurdity in the mid 1790s, especially in the Tory press, but by the end of the decade, this abuse became far more indiscriminate.’¹³³ Watt claims that this kind of condemning critique is in severe contradiction to earlier opinions that tended to be favourable towards English and German literature in the 1780s and early 1790s and, in Watt’s words, that vein of writing ‘was to be popular again, especially among conservatives, some ten to fifteen years after the hysteria about German influence-as-infection had died down.’¹³⁴

In his article ‘Walter Scott, James Hogg and Scottish Gothic’ (2000), Ian Duncan defines a ‘Scottish Gothic’ that according to him is ‘a distinctive Scottish tradition of romance-revival fiction [...] that originates in James Macpherson’s Ossianic poetry in the 1760s and culminates in the work of Scott, James Hogg and the contributors to *Blackwood’s*

¹³¹ Watt, 68.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid. 74.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 77.

Edinburgh Magazine in the 1820s'.¹³⁵ Duncan claims that Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*, was the one who formally introduced the Gothic to Scottish literature via a paper read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1788. The paper was on German drama, and Mackenzie had thus opened up 'a potent aesthetic alternative to politically suspect French taste'.¹³⁶ Even though German literature's reputation would change over the next decade, one who never wavered from its influence in these years was the young Walter Scott. In the very beginning of his career he joined a German study group, and his first publication was an adaptation of the German ballads of Gottfried Bürger in 1796. He also contributed to Matthew 'Monk' Lewis' collection *Tales of Terror* (1797).¹³⁷ Throughout his career, Scott would in one way or other resort to Gothic features in his works, and it is tempting to suggest that his majestic influence might have contributed to making German literature respectable and 'safe' again: perhaps especially in his native Scotland. Scott himself seems to have harboured an ambivalent relationship to Gothic and German fiction; as Michael Gamer argues in his article 'Gothic Fictions and Romantic Writing in Britain' (2002), Scott would alternately condemn Gothic fiction in his reviews as a low form of literature while writing poems such as 'Marmion', which Gamer describes as 'featuring a host of Gothic effects'.¹³⁸ Gamer suggests that at the turn of the nineteenth century, the critics' view of Gothic fiction changed from being preoccupied with political and moral messages, to questions of literary taste and social class.¹³⁹

In his dedicated and informative book *A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine, 1817-1825* (1959), Alan Lang Strout observes that 'much of the material dealing with German literature in *Blackwood's Magazine* appears in the first eighteen volumes, particularly in the *Horae Germanicae*, a series of twenty-seven numbers which extend from November, 1819, to August, 1828'.¹⁴⁰ Articles on Germany and translations of German poetry in the magazine appeared very early and were a big part of *Blackwood's Magazine's* collective output almost from the start. Thomas De Quincey, John Gibson

¹³⁵ Ian Duncan, 'Walter Scott, James Hogg and Scottish Gothic,' *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000) 70-80, 70.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 73.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Michael Gamer, 'Gothic Fictions and Romantic Writing in Britain,' *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 85-104, 90.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Strout, 14.

Lockhart and Robert Pearse Gillies were among the chief contributors of these articles. As Roger P. Wallins observes in his article on *Blackwood's Magazine* in the book *British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836* (1983), '*Blackwood's* legitimately claimed credit for being the first periodical in Great Britain to do 'justice' to German literature.'¹⁴¹ Indeed, Aidan Day in his book *Romanticism*, observes that German literature of the Romantic period is hardly classifiable as radical:

It is difficult to describe German Romanticism as having been politically radical. It is better characterized as having been, broadly speaking, a counter-revolutionary phenomenon which reacted against the rationalist and materialist tendencies of Enlightenment and Revolutionary France. It stressed the need for a revival of religion and made a cult of introversion. In its opposition to the classical taste of Republican France it made an ideal of mediaeval sensibility and aesthetic form.¹⁴²

Blackwood's Magazine then, more likely than not, realised this. Their pioneering championing of the German Romanticists included publishing original works by their own contributors which happily drew upon German sources, blatant examples being 'Gosschen's Diary' which was analysed in the first chapter, and Robert Macnish's 'The Metempsychosis' (1826), amongst others.¹⁴³

The end of the war with France helps to explain this newly found tolerance of German literature. The years between the Gothic Revival of the 1790s and the emergence of *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1817 were obviously tainted by the French Wars. The long and weary conflict with France ended with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, but it had brought with it a new feeling of national identity in Britain.¹⁴⁴ Now that Britain again was an imperial power, full of nationalism and pride, maybe it was possible to once more appreciate continental literature without an immediate fear of revolutionary ideas. As Watt observes, 'the obvious anxiety of many of the attacks on German literature was surely amplified by this perceived need to dissociate what was 'English'... from what was 'German'.'¹⁴⁵ Perhaps, with the victory over the French and an overall stronger sense of

¹⁴¹ Roger P. Wallins, 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine', *British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836*, ed. Alvin Sullivan (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983) 45-53, 47.

¹⁴² Aidan Day, *Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 1996) 151.

¹⁴³ Although not included in this thesis, 'The Metempsychosis' is a Faustian tale of soul-swapping and making deals with the Devil.

¹⁴⁴ Simon Bainbridge, 'The Historical Context,' *An Oxford Guide to Romanticism*, ed. Nicholas Roe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 15-26, 21.

¹⁴⁵ Watt, 77.

nationalism, it was easier for British literary critics not to see continental culture as a threat, but as something that could be appreciated by the public without worrying too much about the deprecating influences it could hold. Also, according to Tim Killick in his book *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century: the Rise of the Tale* (2008), ‘the economic upsurge following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, combined with new strategies of audience-making, helped the fiction market to expand amongst the newly wealthy and the newly literate.’¹⁴⁶ He continues:

The early nineteenth century was a period during which literary vacuums were regularly discovered, and which the market then rushed to fill. Magazine publishers found that ghost stories, comic tales, and descriptive sketches could be extremely popular, and rival titles were quick to latch onto new trends. [...] Short fiction was the beneficiary of a swelling market for fiction of all kinds and of a fundamental shift in the way that periodicals began to view themselves and their readerships.¹⁴⁷

With a new market for short stories, and a declining prejudice against continental literature, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* would quickly become the leading periodical in the publishing of original terror fiction. ‘A Night in the Catacombs’ is one of the earliest tales of terror in the magazine and was published in the October 1818 issue of *Blackwood’s Magazine*. It takes the form of a letter addressed to ‘S—’ from ‘H—’ and the main storyline is written retrospectively. The letter is introduced by a note signed D.K.S., thought by Alan Lang Strout to be Daniel Keyte Sandford (1798-1838).¹⁴⁸ If Strout’s judgement is correct, this would seem to be the first contribution made by Sandford in the magazine. The introductory note claims that the tale is a true story:

Mr Editor,
If you consider the following pages as possessed of interest, I should be happy to see them inserted in your Miscellany. The story may not be so thrilling as some of those you have already given to the public, but I can answer for its truth; and I dare say if old Jerome, who used to shew the catacombs in Paris, be yet alive, he will recollect the handsome Englishman, with brown hair, and dark-blue eyes full of meaning, whom he released one morning from a night’s imprisonment in those gloomy vaults. I shall only add, in behalf of my friend, whose letter I transcribe, that he is a person of the most unsullied honour and veracity; and that the fine powers of his mind, however warped and weakened by superstitious fears in his youth, have since completely recovered their proper tone and elasticity.
Your’s, &c. D.K.S.

¹⁴⁶ Killick, 36-37.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Strout, 45.

H—, the signee of the letter submitted by Sandford, is the story's protagonist, and the narrative is following a pattern that stands out among *Blackwood's Magazine's* terror tales; a confession or revelation of a horrible, personal secret. The protagonist is conscious of his authorship and clearly anticipating the publishing of his story: 'how will the curious tourist of the present day smile as he peruses this confession, if you give my story to the public!'¹⁵⁰ This device suggests again to the reader that the story is true, and other similar methods are used to further impose its supposed truth; fragmented names and the specific setting in time and place. H— is, during a trip to Paris in the Peace of Amiens (March 1802 – May 1803), accidentally lost and locked inside the catacombs while attending a guided tour. Early during the tour he feels stifled by the presence of the other visitors, flees unnoticed down a separate passage and is left all to himself, 'to feed in solitude the growing appetite for horror'.¹⁵¹ Entering into a sort of trance, he is finally awakened by his torch burning his hand. He drops it and the light goes out. At length he understands his situation – he has been locked in the catacombs, alone in the darkness, alone with his fears and imagination; 'abandoned to the mercy of a thousand demons.'¹⁵² The protagonist first seeks out the horror and then is overcome by it.

Growing up without a father in a Welsh gothic mansion, H— was under the care of an old nurse who was 'well stored with legend and tradition', and would tell him stories and scare him 'into obedience... with threats of supernatural interference'.¹⁵³ His private tutor 'did not apply himself to correct the wild tissue of absurd and superstitious notions... in my bosom'.¹⁵⁴ He describes his mother as 'too much absorbed in her own recollections' and 'her own mind was too much weakened by affliction to have suggested any salutary restoratives for mine'.¹⁵⁵ H— suggests that being surrounded by women in his boyhood made him more susceptible to superstition and 'nervous sensibility'. When he is trapped in the catacombs, this aspect of his personality rises immediately to the surface and takes over

¹⁴⁹ Sandford, 19.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 27.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 29.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 26.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 25-26.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

his whole being: 'All the ideal terrors I had cherished from my childhood, exalted to temporary madness by the sense and certainty of the horrid objects that surrounded me, rushed at once upon my soul'.¹⁵⁶ Far from being threatened with actual dangers, Sanford's character is himself generating them through his excessive superstition and imagination, creating a fear far more terrible than any real-life objects could arouse:

Part of these awful excavations are said to have been once haunted by banditti; but I had no fears of them, and should have swooned with transport to have come upon their fires at one of the turnings in the rock, though my appearance had been the instant signal for their daggers.¹⁵⁷

Sanford's story is therefore primarily the protagonist's account of his own psychological state during his captivity in the catacombs. It is almost a clinical observation of his mind and its functions during a traumatic experience, which is mainly brought about by his own superstitious tendencies. 'A Night in the Catacombs' can thus be seen as a conservative, Quixotic narrative of warning against excessive indulgence in preternatural material. Like Cervantes' Don Quixote, Sanford's protagonist substitutes reality for the fictional tales he is accustomed to hearing. However, the potential unreliability of the first-person narrator and the epistolary form of his narrative may make the reader hesitant about his intentions.

Before his incident in the catacombs, Sanford's character feels estranged and isolates himself from the people he meets:

I was too reserved to enter into intimacy with any of those to whose acquaintance my guardians introduced me. Proud, shy, and sensitive, I was fearful of their penetrating into the weaknesses of my character, which I felt were far from harmonizing with the general opinions of mankind.¹⁵⁸

This feeling of alienation from society ends after his traumatic experience in the catacombs:

By a strange and singular anomaly of circumstances, the wild fancies I had imbibed in the free air of my native hills, and among the cheerful scenes of romantic nature, I unlearned in the dreary catacombs of Paris. If I still am fanciful, you will not charge me with extravagance; if I still have sensibility, I trust it does not verge on weakness; – and, as I have proved my personal courage on more than a single trial, I may be allowed to smile, when I hear in future some boisterous relater of my narrative condemn me for a coward.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 29.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 31.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 27.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 32-33.

One could argue that the Parisian catacombs in Sandford's tale can be seen as a metaphor for the threat constituted by France in the years surrounding the narrative's setting; the British were metaphorically trapped within a shadow of fear as revolutionary France spread ideas of reform, and later a devastating war that would last for years. The only release was to cast off this fear and emerge better and stronger on the other side, just like H—. Read in this way, Sandford's story gains more substance and conservative political meaning, and thus suits the agenda of the magazine. H— is initially attracted to the horror of the catacombs, which can be seen as a metaphor for the French ideas of reform, but as he delves deeper they cause him nothing but nightmares. As Sandford's protagonist generated these nightmarish fantasies in his own imagination, he is eventually able to escape them when his mind becomes disillusioned. This aspect of the story might be suggesting that the fears of revolution are not real, but simply an imagined terror.

A similar kind of self-imposed fear found in 'A Night in the Catacombs' is also a major theme in William Maginn's 'The Man in the Bell' (November 1821), although Maginn's protagonist, Jack, has a far more physical threat to his life than H—. Also relating his story retrospectively and in the first person, Jack recounts his 'singular accident'¹⁶⁰ briefly but with a strong force of narrative. Maginn's protagonist is practising bell-ringing for the local Cathedral as part of a club, while one Sunday he has a dangerous misadventure. His companion leaves the tower while Jack is employed in removing a muffler from the clapper, and another club member comes in and starts ringing for the Sunday service not knowing that Jack is inside the bell. Jack hurriedly jumps down and lays himself flat down on the insecure floor, where one wrong movement would mean his certain death:

Over me swung an immense mass of metal, one touch of which would have crushed me to pieces; the floor under me was principally composed of crazy laths, and if they gave way, I was precipitated to the distance of about fifty feet upon a loft, which would, in all probability, have sunk under the impulse of my fall, and sent me to be dashed to atoms upon the marble floor of the chancel, an hundred feet below.¹⁶¹

Thus isolated and trapped in the church belfry, underneath the massive, swinging bell, Jack's mind generates visions and fears far removed from the actual situation; 'the roaring of the bell confused my intellect, and my fancy soon began to teem with all sort of strange

¹⁶⁰ Maginn (1995) 61.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 62.

and terrifying ideas.¹⁶² This recalls the ideas of Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757): 'Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror'.¹⁶³ 'At first,' says Jack:

...my fears were matter of fact. I was afraid the pullies above would give way, and let the bell plunge on me. At another time, the possibility of the clapper being shot out in some sweep, and dashing through my body, as I had seen a ramrod glide through a door, flitted across my mind. The dread also... of the crazy floor, tormented me, but these soon gave way to fears not more unfounded, but more visionary, and *of course* more tremendous.¹⁶⁴

Jack's hallucinations in this dreadful situation are more terrifying to him than the physical threat to his life. Thus, the story becomes another study of the psychological, like Sandford's. Both are trapped, isolated and desperate, and visions take over their whole beings. The stories explore the power of the mind over the body:

But the most awful of all the ideas that seized on me were drawn from the supernatural. In the vast cavern of the bell hideous faces appeared, and glared down on me with terrifying frowns, or with grinning mockery, still more appalling. At last, the devil himself, accoutred, as in the common description of the evil spirit, with hoof, horn and tail, and eyes of infernal lustre, made his appearance, and called on me to curse God and worship him, who was powerful to save me.¹⁶⁵

A while after the bell stops swinging, Jack slowly recovers his senses and is able to finally escape from the belfry. He is found, in a horrible state, in the bell-ringer's room by his companions a couple of hours later:

They were shocked, as well they might, at the figure before them. The wind of the bell had excoriated my face, and my dim and stupefied eyes were fixed with a lack-lustre gaze in my raw eye-lids. My hands were torn and bleeding; my hair dishevelled; and my clothes tattered. They spoke to me, but I gave no answer. They shook me, but I remained insensible.¹⁶⁶

Maginn's protagonist suffers for some time from delirium and haunting dreams following his accident in the bell tower, and has to be removed to a house in the country where the

¹⁶² Ibid. 63.

¹⁶³ Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 75.

¹⁶⁴ Maginn (1995) 63, italics mine.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 66.

sound of church bells cannot reach him: 'Time cured this, as it does the most of our follies; but, even at the present day, if, by chance, my nerves be unstrung, some particular tones of the cathedral bell have power to surprise me into a momentary start.'¹⁶⁷

Maginn's deadly bell is a clear forerunner of the terrifying pendulum in Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Pit and the Pendulum' (1842). It has already been noted in the previous chapter that Poe was an eager reader of *Blackwood's Magazine*; his parodic 'How to Write a Blackwood Article' (1838) is proof in itself. This piece of satire presents aspiring writer Psyche Zenobia, who consults Blackwood himself on the methods of terror-writing. Poe's Blackwood explains:

And then there was 'The Man in the Bell,' a paper by-the-by, Miss Zenobia, which I cannot sufficiently recommend to your attention. It is the history of a young person who goes to sleep under the clapper of a church bell, and is awakened by its tolling for a funeral. The sound drives him mad, and, accordingly, pulling out his tablets, he gives a record of his sensations. Sensations are the great thing after all. Should you ever be drowned or hung, be sure and make a note of your sensations – they will be worth to you ten guineas a sheet.¹⁶⁸

Poe might be poking fun at Maginn's story in 'How to Write a Blackwood Article', however there is no doubt that he highly valued it. The following quotation is from a letter Poe wrote to editor Thomas W. White in 1835, after the latter had rejected his tale 'Berenice' on the grounds that the subject was too horrible. Poe is affecting to agree with White, but at the same time expresses his view that in order to reach out to the masses, a writer has to employ sensationalist themes, and he uses 'The Man in the Bell' as one of his examples of such writing:

The history of all Magazines shows plainly that those which have attained celebrity were indebted for it to articles *similar in nature* – to *Berenice* – although, I grant you, far superior in style and execution. I say similar in *nature*. You ask me in what does this nature consist? In the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: the fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought into the strange and mystical. You may say all this is bad taste. [...] But whether the articles of which I speak are, or are not in bad taste is little to the purpose. To be appreciated you must be *read*, and these things are invariably sought after with avidity. They are, if you will take notice, the articles which find their way into other periodicals, and into the papers, and in this manner, taking hold upon the public mind they augment the reputation of the source where they originated. Such articles are the "M.S. found in a Madhouse" and the "Monos and Daimonos" of the London New Monthly – the "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" and the "Man in the Bell" of Blackwood. [...] Thus the first men in [England] have not thought writings of

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Poe, 'How to Write a Blackwood Article,' 312.

this nature unworthy of their talents, and I have good reason to believe that some very high names valued themselves *principally* upon this species of literature. To be sure originality is an essential in these things – great attention must be paid to style, and much labour spent in their composition, or they will degenerate into the turgid or the absurd.¹⁶⁹

In making the case for his own story, Poe argues that sensationalist themes are popular with the magazine-reading audiences. He stresses the need, as a writer, to be *read*, and recognises that *Blackwood's Magazine* successfully published tales of this kind. In her article 'Gothic and the Romantics' (2007), Emma McEvoy claims that Poe, in stories such as his aforementioned tale 'The Pit and the Pendulum', 'transforms the Gothic short story, exploring the experience of a moment through the intense focus of terror. In tale after tale he explores the subjective nature of terror, blurring the subject/object divide [...]'.¹⁷⁰ It is evident, from Allen's research or just a glance at 'How to Write a Blackwood Article', that it would be wrong to assign this reinvention of the Gothic short story to Poe alone, when the very features that McEvoy mentions are the ones Poe blatantly borrowed from *Blackwood's Magazine*.

As is well known, *Blackwood's Magazine* was no stranger to satire, and would even print articles that parodied earlier contributions published in the magazine. William Maginn wrote to Blackwood in 1822: 'Your last No was excellent, equal & the best of any time. Wilson is worth all your contributors kneaded into a lump. I suffer the 'Singular escape from Death' is a quiz on my [difficult to make out, might be 'fraud spending' or 'sounding'] stuff about the 'Man in the Bell'.'¹⁷¹ The article Maginn refers to was in reality called 'Singular Recovery from Death' and published in the December 1821 issue, only a month after his own 'The Man in the Bell'. Alan Lang Strout speculatively attributes the authorship of this article to D. M. Moir, although proof is lacking for this conjecture.¹⁷² Whoever wrote the tale, the 'Singular Recovery' is no doubt a satirical swing at Maginn's story. The narrator experiences a mysterious fit and goes through similar, but very much exaggerated, emotions and hallucinations. He is seemingly about to die when he is suddenly returned to his senses, and it turns out he was just incredibly drunk. Satire aside,

¹⁶⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, Letter to Thomas W. White, *The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. I, ed. John Ward Ostrom (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948) 57-59, 57-58.

¹⁷⁰ Emma McEvoy, 'Gothic and the Romantics,' *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, eds. Catherine Spooner, and Emma McEvoy (London: Routledge, 2007) 19-28, 27.

¹⁷¹ William Maginn, Letter to William Blackwood, 1822, National Library of Scotland: M.S. 4009.

¹⁷² Strout, 89.

Maginn's story must have been a popular one, judging from this review of a collection of Maginn's works in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of June 1859:

Dr. Mackenzie has [...] catered well for his readers by including in his selections some of the short stories which were among the happiest of Maginn's effusions. [...] The story of 'The Man in the Bell,' which has been thought worthy of Victor Hugo, is, we believe, without a parallel in any English tale of similar length for deep, absorbing, overpowering interest and awe, arising out of sympathy with emotions which are not unnatural or exaggerated in themselves, and not excited by improbable circumstances in the hero of the adventure. It is, in fact, as effective as any passage of equal length in the "Last Days of a Condemned," and far less visibly an effort of elaborate art.¹⁷³

The last part of the final sentence of this quotation epitomises the appeal of 'The Man in the Bell'. It is a simple piece of narrative, yet Maginn manages through his skills as a writer to make it extremely captivating, thus fulfilling the demands Poe mentioned in his letter above.

Notwithstanding the obvious link between Maginn's bell and Poe's pendulum, the latter's perhaps most famous tale of terror has more in common with William Mudford's 'The Iron Shroud', published in *Blackwood's Magazine* August 1830. Both protagonists are isolated in mysterious prisons by oppositional forces and are by ingenious contrivances doomed to die horrendous deaths. 'The Iron Shroud' tells the story of Vivenzio, held captive by the Prince of Tolfi, and the captive is certain his adversary intends to have him killed. The method of execution, however, is unknown to him. Trapped in an iron cell, Vivenzio slowly realises his enemy's plan. Every day, one of the seven original windows mysteriously disappears; the cell is steadily shrinking, menacingly closing in on its helpless captive. When two windows remain, Vivenzio discovers a piece of writing on the wall. It is written by the man who contrived and built the 'iron shroud' and who was to be its first victim. The message constitutes an obvious reference to the Labyrinth of Crete and Daedalus, its maker, the only difference being, of course, Daedalus' magnificent escape:

'I, Ludovico Sforza, tempted by the gold of the Prince of Tolfi, spent three years on contriving and executing this accursed triumph of my art. (...) Miserable wretch, whoe'er thou art, that readest these lines, fall on thy knees, and invoke, as I have done, His sustaining mercy, who alone can nerve thee to meet the vengeance of Tolfi, armed with his tremendous engine which, in a few hours, must crush *you*, as it will the needy wretch who made it.'¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Anon. 'Maginn's Miscellanies,' *Gentleman's Magazine*, 206, June 1859, 559-566, 564, accessed 11.03.10.

<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e591-1859-206-00-105952:6>.

¹⁷⁴ Mudford, 111.

The most striking difference between ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’ and ‘The Iron Shroud’ is that Poe’s character is saved in the end, whereas Mudford’s Vivenzio is agonisingly being crushed between the steadily closing walls of his iron prison. Mudford’s tale is written in the third person as opposed to Poe’s more immediate first person perspective. Arguably, the intensity lost by the third person point of view is regained by the sheer horror affected by Vivenzio’s terrifying death. Another Poe story, ‘The Masque of the Red Death’, is also in several ways reminiscent of Mudford’s tale, taking up the themes of confinement (albeit voluntarily) and unavoidable death for all within, and also similar details like gates of iron and seven rooms instead of seven windows.

‘The Iron Shroud’ is, as previously mentioned, written in the third person, but still manages to evoke a feeling of intimacy much like the other first-person narratives. This is mainly because of the force of Mudford’s narration; the story progresses with an intensity much like Poe’s, and the reader feels as close to Vivenzio as if he was telling the story himself (which of course is a near impossibility because he is killed in the end):

The night came; and as the hour approached when Vivenzio imagined he might expect the signs, he stood fixed and silent as a statue. He feared to breathe, almost, lest he might lose any sound which would warn him of their coming. While thus listening, with every faculty of mind and body strained to an agony of attention, it occurred to him he should be more sensible of the motion, probably, if he stretched himself along the iron floor. He accordingly laid himself softly down, and had not been long in that position when—yes—he was certain of it—the floor moved under him! He sprang up, and in a voice suffocated nearly with emotion, called aloud. He paused—the motion ceased—he felt no stream of air—all was hushed—no voice answered to his—he burst into tears; and as he sunk to the ground, in renewed anguish, exclaimed,—‘Oh, my God! my God! You alone have power to save me now, or strengthen me for the trial you permit.’¹⁷⁵

The dashes and question marks drive the narrative forward in a hurried pace, representing the desperate thoughts of the poor, entrapped Vivenzio. Adding to the feeling of desperation are the jumps between the past and present tense. Twice Mudford resorts to using the present tense throughout the narrative, both instances occur when Vivenzio shockingly gets his horrible method of execution confirmed: ‘Suddenly he stopped, and his eyes were riveted upon that part of the wall which was over his bed of straw. *Words are inscribed there! A human language, traced by a human hand! He rushes towards them; but*

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 110.

his blood freezes as he reads.'¹⁷⁶ After learning that he has no hope of escape, the despair seizes Vivenzio in full. This is where Mudford again narrates in the present tense:

His brain already feels the descending horror,—his bones seem to crack and crumble in the mighty grasp of the iron walls! Unknowing what it is he does, he fumbles in his garment for some weapon of self-destruction. He clenches his throat in his convulsive gripe, as though he would strangle himself at once. He stares upon the walls, and his warring spirit demands, 'Will they not anticipate their office if I dash my head against them?' An hysterical laugh chokes him as he exclaims, 'Why should I? He was but a man who died first in their fierce embrace; and I should be less than man not to do as much!'¹⁷⁷

The all-knowing narrator and the rest of Mudford's narrative techniques combine to make 'The Iron Shroud' an intimate text, arguably as intimate as any other of *Blackwood's Magazine's* tales of terror, and certainly at least as forceful and terrifying. The omniscient narrator is skilfully used to portray Vivenzio's inner thoughts and feelings, and the changes in narrative tense and dramatic use of dashes and punctuation compliment his growing desperation. Mudford's tale has a specific setting and the named protagonist is tied up with (feigned) historical events, which is not always the norm when it comes to the Blackwood tales. The Sicilian setting and obvious classical references are devices that are nodding back in direction of the 1790s Gothic Romance, however the intimacy and fervency of language that characterises 'The Iron Shroud', even though a third-person narrative like most of the 1790s Gothic, is very typical of *Blackwood's Magazine*.

It is probably safe to say that the only 1790s 'Gothic' novel that comes close to *Blackwood's Magazine's* preoccupation with individual psychology, is William Godwin's *Things as They are; or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). Godwin's novel seems almost universally to be seen by critics as a Gothic novel, mainly because of the theme of persecution and the uncanny omnipotence conducted by the character of Mr. Falkland. *Caleb Williams* is a highly psychological novel, written in the first-person and related by the main character. Godwin himself explained his choice of narrative voice thus:

I began my narrative, as is the more usual way, in the third person. But I speedily became dissatisfied. I then assumed the first person, making the hero of my tale his own historian; and in this mode I have persisted in all my subsequent attempts at works of fiction. It was infinitely the best adapted, at least, to my vein of delineation, where the thing in which my imagination revelled the most freely, was the analysis of the private and internal operations of the mind, employing my metaphysical dissecting knife in tracing and laying bare the involutions of motive, and recording the gradually accumulating

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 111, italics mine.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

impulses, which led the personages I had to describe primarily to adopt the way of proceeding in which they afterwards embarked.¹⁷⁸

In spite of the first-person perspective and Godwin's preoccupation with psychology, the published version of Godwin's novel is still not as intense and detailed as the Blackwood stories. However, the language of the original ending to *Caleb Williams*, published in the Oxford World's Classics edition as an appendix, has a stronger resemblance to the Blackwood tales. In the surviving manuscript fragment, Falkland does not admit to his crime and Caleb Williams is again imprisoned, slowly going mad in his final confinement:

Well then, – It is wisest to be quiet, it seems – Some people are ambitious – other people talk of sensibility – but it is all folly! – I am sure I am not one of those – was I ever? – True happiness lies in being like a stone – Nobody can complain of me – all day long I do nothing – am a stone – a GRAVE-STONE! – an obelisk to tell you, HERE LIES WHAT WAS ONCE A MAN!¹⁷⁹

This stream-of-consciousness extract from Godwin's discarded manuscript is very similar to Mudford's pace of narration towards the end of 'The Iron Shroud', and a comparison between the two shows that although narrating outside of his protagonist's mind, Mudford still manages to convey a similarly forceful intimacy to his reader. Godwin's Williams is here writing a letter to someone on the outside, and is thus not as completely isolated as Mudford's Vivenzio, who cannot even get in touch with the elusive warden who delivers his food and water.

Sandford and Maginn's choice of relating the story through a first-person narrator is a continuation of a trend started in the magazine's terror tales by none other than Walter Scott in his 1818 story 'Narrative of a Fatal Event' (March issue). In her article 'The Victorian Gothic in English Novels and Stories, 1830-1880', Alison Milbank claims that the first person perspective is 'rarely used'¹⁸⁰ in *Blackwood's Magazine's* tales. This is not a legitimate claim, at least not when we consider the first fifteen years of the Magazine. If we look at Morrison and Baldick's collection *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine* only, 12 out of 17 stories use the first person, thus making it not only a notable, but also a quite important, feature. As was observed in the first chapter, this mode of narration was not a common feature in the Gothic Romance. As the two previous chapters also

¹⁷⁸ William Godwin, 'Godwin's Account of the Composition of Caleb Williams,' *Things as They are; or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams*, William Godwin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 335-341, 339.

¹⁷⁹ William Godwin, 'Manuscript Ending of Caleb Williams,' *Things as They are; or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams*, William Godwin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 327-334, 334.

¹⁸⁰ Milbank, 150.

commented on in varying degrees, many of the Blackwood tales were published as anonymous letters to the editor of the magazine and thus pretending to be true stories. This seems to have been a common feature of stories of the period and it is unlikely, although not impossible, that readers would actually believe the tales to be depictions of real events. The claim of truthfulness was a common feature of the Blackwood tales and indeed one that had long been implemented in the Gothic genre. The authors likely realised that their stories would cause a much greater effect if the reader believed, or even half-believed, the situation described had happened in real life. Sandford's story is a good, and quite convincing example of this. According to Alan Lang Strout, Maginn also claimed 'The Man in the Bell' was true and was told to him by a 'Jack F.'¹⁸¹ 'The Iron Shroud', however, is decidedly a fictional text, and does not attempt to disguise itself as anything else. Whether the stories are genuine or not, claiming that the tales are real-life events lends an idea of urgency to the stories, which intensifies the feeling of intimacy and compliments the often fervent language. As was also observed within the six tales analysed in the first two chapters, there is in these three tales a chronological development towards a more decidedly literary approach on behalf of the authors. Both 'A Night in the Catacombs' and 'The Man in the Bell' are early publications of the magazine and both claim to a large extent to be real events, whereas 'The Iron Shroud' with its classical setting is clearly just a piece of invention. It has already been observed that in 'A Night in the Catacombs', Sandford's protagonist is inflicting himself with imaginary fears. It is entirely his own fault that he is locked in the catacombs, and nothing that happens to him while incarcerated has any basis in reality. In 'The Man in the Bell', Maginn's Jack is accidentally trapped under the bell, and experiences both real and imaginary threats. A real, human enemy, however, intentionally imprisons Mudford's Vivenzio. In this way, the internal development of the stories seems to be going backwards in direction of the 1790s Gothic, much like what was observed in the previous chapter.

Returning to the tales' preoccupation with the individual psyche, all three tales analysed in this chapter are perfect examples of this feature; and it is also a feature that is frequently mentioned by critics. According to Alison Milbank:

¹⁸¹ Strout, 86.

This turn to the psychological is often hailed as an advance, whereby the unwieldy Gothic machinery of the previous century gives way to a more modern and sophisticated conception of a purely internal drama. However, it must be realized that the turn inwards here serves the project of a Tory rereading of a Whig literary form. It is an inherently conservative turn that avoids the radical implications of the full-length Gothic novel at the time [...].¹⁸²

It seems that Milbank claims this ‘turn to the psychological’ is being brought about mainly by politics rather than a conscious literary choice and a greater and/or different preoccupation with the human psyche: ‘It is such undercurrents that drive the short tale of individual incarceration that is popular in *Blackwood’s* and confines its Gothic to a case of individual injustice rather than a broader Whig narrative of liberation and progress.’¹⁸³ The three stories analysed in this chapter all have what the tales in the previous chapter lacked; a more or less recognisable, typical Gothic setting. The skeleton-filled catacombs, the sonorous church belfry, and the Italian island far removed in time as well as place. However, as was pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, the setting and plot of the narratives are both overshadowed by the emphasis of the authors on their protagonists’ psychological states in their isolation. Aidan Day, when talking about the Romantic poets, mentions the literary period’s concern with the individual’s psychology:

Wordsworth’s and, for that matter, Coleridge’s later emphasis on spiritual matters, on the ultimate value of the individual imagination, is something which squares not with political radicalism but rather with political conservatism, either explicit or implicit. The emphasis on interiority may be seen as part of a reactionary, counter-revolutionary impulse.¹⁸⁴

However, it may also be argued that the Blackwood writers’ preoccupation with interiority is more a political detachment than a clear shift from the one to the other. The magazine’s political agenda was unequivocal from the outset, and with the ultra-Tory messages permeating its other articles, the need for a political voice in its short fiction was perhaps not as strong. By this Romantic turn inwards, then, the Blackwood writers are escaping the potential liberal connotations of the German/Gothic genres, and seemingly providing a break from the otherwise explicit political agenda of the magazine.

The Blackwood writers merge the Gothic with the subjectivity of Romanticism and vice versa to create a new breed of psychological horror fiction. This development can be seen

¹⁸² Milbank, 151.

¹⁸³ Ibid. 150.

¹⁸⁴ Day, 176.

to be an organic progress of a genre made possible by the Romantic ideas of the time and the magazine's conservative politics. The isolation of the protagonists helps to concentrate the focus on their individual perceptions to effectually escape the liberal connotations of the Gothic machinery.

Conclusion

This thesis started by defining the problematic relationship between the Blackwood tales and the 1790s Gothic. By setting aside David Punter's perhaps less important Gothic features, as the medieval/dislocated settings and stereotypical characters, and focusing on the 'emphasis on portraying the terrifying' and 'the supernatural', and the 'attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense',¹⁸⁵ the relationship becomes clearer. It is through these characteristics that literary works as different as Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* have been placed in the same genre, and this approach also serves to explain to some extent why the Blackwood tales of terror repeatedly get classified within the 'Gothic' too. While *Udolpho* is packed with static characters and only interesting while the hints of supernatural occurrences are permitted to go unexplained, *Caleb Williams* is a psychological mind-game ahead of its time, and, as the Blackwood tales, does not employ the Gothic features of medieval settings and seemingly haunted castles. However, by breaking down Punter's characteristics and removing some of the most iconic features of the traditional Gothic, there is little left of the genre and it seems difficult to justify placing all of the Blackwood tales of terror within it. Therefore, it seems more helpful to adopt E.J. Clery's description of the 1790s Gothic as 'breakthroughs in the difficult overcoming of barriers to the fictional use of the marvellous'¹⁸⁶ rather than a fixed genre like the 'Gothic'. Upon extending Clery's description to include the portrayal of the horrible as well as the marvellous, it makes even more sense to this analysis. Horror in fiction prevailed in popularity among the reading public after the French Revolution and would grow to become more and more respectable as it was slowly dissociated with revolutionary ideas, and the Blackwood writers' view on the use of the horrible was readily admitted in the above extract from the 'Noctes Ambrosianae'.

By Clery's definition, then, the Gothic and German works popularised in the end of the eighteenth century helped pave the way for a new breed of detailed, sensational, psychological horror stories first found in the pages of the newly published *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. As already seen, 'Gosschen's Diary' (1818) by John Wilson was one of the first tales of terror published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and is a story of murder and

¹⁸⁵ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, London: Longman Group Limited, 1980, 1.

¹⁸⁶ E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction: 1762-1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 1.

insanity set in a gloomy German prison dungeon. As such it has perhaps more in common with the Gothic tradition than most of the following tales, but it is mainly a recognisable Blackwood tale because of the first-person narrator and the obsession with horrific details and individual psychology. The typical Blackwood tale was published anonymously, had an intimate, first-person narrator which so often pretended to be a real person, and as such the tales embody a form of moral ambiguity, an ambiguity that becomes a scene for this new kind of terror fiction. The ultra-Tory magazine, not shy of filling its pages with political propaganda and anti-Whiggish mockery, would in its prose fiction turn inwards into the individual psyche. 'A Night in the Catacombs' (1818) by Daniel Keyte Sandford is the earliest of the examples in *Blackwood's Magazine's* terror fiction of the isolated protagonist. Locked in the Parisian catacombs, Sandford's narrator is driven temporarily mad by his own imagination, and is never harmed by any outside agent, yet the story is at least as terrifying as if he was to be physically surrounded by murderers, ghosts and devils. 'The Man in the Bell' (1821) by William Maginn shows the psychological strain on the protagonist in a situation of extreme physical danger. Trapped under the giant bell, Maginn's terrified protagonist imagines seeing the devil himself and being offered to save his life in exchange for his soul. The Blackwood writers continued to explore the diversity of the human psyche in a variety of ways, often employing a first-person point of view that generated a closer, more intimate relationship between the reader and the text. This intimacy is perhaps the strongest feature of the Blackwood tales, and one that survived beyond the remembrance of the writers who made use of it.

Drawing upon popular contemporary sensational themes and at the same time personalising them and detaching them from explicit political implications, the Blackwood authors found a recipe for original short stories that would attract a wide range of audiences and influence many of the greatest writers of the rest of the century. 'The Buried Alive' (1821) by John Galt draws upon the widely dreaded theme of premature interment, but has a clever twist; the narrator is himself the one being buried alive. In a time when street literature was teeming with stories on this theme, 'The Buried Alive' was a shocking magazine narrative published under the pretence of being a true story. In 'Le Revenant' (1827), Henry Thomson also makes use of popular nineteenth-century themes: trial, execution and, as in Galt's story, 'surviving death'. Thomson's narrative is written in the form of a professed true story and even though there are no horrible details described in the narrative regarding his dying and resurrection, the idea of having 'a living dead' in society comes to be terrifying in itself. By masking their fiction as true stories, the Blackwood

writers utilised the value of astonishment also created by contemporary street literature, while the medium of the magazine suited the form by reaching out to a wide audience.

Over the years, the Blackwood short stories would develop from being blatantly sensational pieces pretending to be accounts of real events, to more decidedly fictional pieces written with a greater eye for literary aesthetics. The necessity to shock the audience that permeated *Blackwood's Magazine* from the very beginning, becomes gradually watered down and roughly by the 1830s, the authors seem more preoccupied with creating lasting pieces of literature (with varied success) rather than pieces of sensationalism – quick to shock and quickly forgotten. In this respect it seems almost like the Blackwood authors around the start of the 1830s move stylistically backwards towards the older ‘Gothic’ writing tradition, as features of the texts analysed above by Godwin jr, Mudford, Warren, and possibly Hogg illustrate. ‘The Executioner’ by William Godwin the Younger is, like Thomson’s, a story about crime and execution, but like Godwin senior’s *Things as They are, or: The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, the plot structure is marked by persecution and helplessness. Godwin the Younger’s 1832 narrative is a good example of the seeming internal development in Blackwood terror fiction, as it is a much more deliberately fictional text. ‘The Spectre-Smitten’ (1831) by Samuel Warren is a doctor’s clinical observation of a man gone mad. Through the doctor’s narrative, however, the reader is invited to believe that the apparition which drove the unfortunate man insane was real, even though the doctor simultaneously seems to be making a case against it. There is an ambiguity in the narrator’s voice that creates a space for terror in a decidedly more ‘literary’ text.

‘The Iron Shroud’ (1830) by William Mudford is interesting in that it is a third-person narrative, but with the intensity of a first-person one. Its fast-paced language corresponds to the protagonist’s desperate situation and provides a good portrayal of his psychological state without his own testament. Despite the third-person narration it retains the greater angle of subjectivity common to the Blackwood mode. It is gruesome in its description of the poor protagonist’s agonising end, and deserves its status as one of the most celebrated Blackwood tales. ‘The Mysterious Bride’ (1830) by James Hogg stands stylistically closer to traditional folk tales, but has layers of meaning that point backwards to Hogg’s novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and that create more interesting, multifaceted characters. Hogg’s use of the supernatural sets it further apart from the Gothic tradition. Like in *The Justified Sinner*, the question of a supernatural agent is left open but with many events that are difficult to explain naturally. Hogg’s story is

perhaps not a typical example of a Blackwood tale of terror, but including it in this analysis shows that there was a broader range of themes in the magazine and that country ghost stories can be just as chilling as a detailed description of a lunatic murderer. By the early 1830s, with *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* established as a reputable outlet for fiction, the need to shock and churn out sensationalism seems to have almost disappeared. As psychological realism gradually became an established field of fiction, the Blackwood writers started to employ their devices in a different way. However, the legacy they left behind for writers as diverse as, amongst others, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens, The Brontë-sisters and Henry James, cannot be denied.

All of the tales analysed in this chapter are to be found in Morrison and Baldick's collection *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine*, and were deliberately chosen as the more famous and influential of the magazine's collective fictional output. While Morrison and Baldick's collection is expertly chosen, there is at least one story that could have been successfully added to it, perhaps at the expense of one of the three instalments included of Warren's *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician*. The tale in question is Robert Macnish's 'The Metempsychosis', which was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in May 1826. Macnish's story is strongly reminiscent of the German legend of Faust, the unhappy scholar who sells his soul to the Devil for unlimited knowledge and physical pleasures. In 'The Metempsychosis', a German university student suddenly finds that his soul has been swapped with that of a fellow student, with the help of a Mephistopheles-like agent. The tale is unlike any of the assortment in *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine*, and because of its links or references to works like Goethe's *Faust* (1806-32), as well as Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, would seem to be an interesting addition to it.

It has been noted throughout this thesis that many of the Blackwood tales of terror are difficult to classify as 'Gothic' in the traditional sense, and that they are more suitably described as 'Gothic' in the sense that they couldn't have existed without the influence of the Gothic Revival of the 1790s. The Gothic description seems to be in some cases too readily applied to a variety of texts that have little connection to the original corpus of Gothic novels. While this is in most instances certainly the effect of an organic development of a genre, more refreshing approaches as Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* are needed to shed a more nuanced light on a species of writing that is too often obscured by the darkness of its own dungeons. This thesis has shown that the Blackwood tales of terror are a product of the Gothic because the Gothic authors facilitated later

writers with the ability to put more emphasis on the portrayal of the horrible. Combined with the magazine format which encouraged short fiction, *Blackwood's Magazine's* political viewpoint and the Romantic concern with interiority, as well as the employment of popular contemporary themes, their Gothic precursors thus enabled the Blackwood writers to create a new species of sensationalist horror fiction that continues to startle readers today.

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