

***Of Fears and Bodies in Early Romantic Poetry***

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**Abstract**

This thesis approaches psychophysical expressions of different and changing fears in the Romantic poetry of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This period was chosen because of the immediate and rapid effects of the French Revolution on the formation and perception of the English nation, along with the newfound need to search for meaning that many people felt within a rapidly changing world. The writings of the Romantic poets under question in this thesis, namely William Blake, William Wordsworth, Mary Robinson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Joanna Baillie, and Anne Bannerman, reflect this quest to understand personal and political fears, as well as the coping mechanisms that take fear as a dominant emotion of the times and turn it into a Gothic space for the exploration of personal and political anxieties through Gothic bodies and the interaction between bodies of fear and bodies in fear presented within the spectrum of terror and horror.

More specifically, I will explore the interaction between the self and Gothic bodies of fear in different psychophysical manifestations in a selection of Gothic poetic texts. For these writers, the fears generated through the contact with abject bodies that haunt self and nation can destabilise preconceived ideas of self and society and facilitate healing and re-evaluation. To this end, I will follow contemporary theorisations of varying fears to acknowledge the fact that fear comes in many shapes, degrees, and kinds for these writers, and so do the Gothic bodies that reside in their writings, from Blake’s horror bodies to the spectral bodies that haunt the poetry of Baillie and Bannerman. The importance of fear as an emotion in this context is related to its strong physical impact and its relevance for the contemporary socio-political arena in matters of personal and political threat, safety and control. This thesis will focus on the various responses of early Romantic writers to these anxieties.

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**Declaration**

*I, the author, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University’s Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (*[*www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means*](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means)*). This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.*

**Table of Contents**

Page

**Introduction**

**i.** The Literature of Fear and the Body

……………………………………………………………………………………. 7-26

**ii.** Fear and Trembling: Psychophysiological Manifestations

……………………………………………………………………………………. 26-32

**iii.** “Fear Cuts Deeper Than Swords”: Fear and the Body in the Romantic Gothic

……………………………………………………………………………………. 32-35

**Chapter One: William Blake: The Visionary Poet and Horror Bodies**

* 1. Blake and Physical Horror

…………………………………………………………………………………… 36-48

**1.2.** Fear and Vampirism in Blake’s *The French Revolution*

…………………………………………………………………………………… 49-77

* 1. Monsters of the Apocalypse: Re-collecting William Blake’s *Jerusalem*

…………………………………………………………………………………… 77-100

**Chapter Two:** **A Ghost of One’s Own: Spectral Psychopathologies in the Poetry of Joanna Baillie and Anne Bannerman**

**2.1.** Baillie, Bannerman, and the Poetry of Haunting

……………………………………………….………………………………. 101-103

**2.2.** ‘To make fear, to make oneself fear’: The Politics of Haunting

……………………………………………….………………………………. 103-108

**2.3.** Joanna Baillie and the Diagnostics of Fear

……………………………………………….………………………………. 108-136

**2.4.** Anne Bannerman and the Poetry of Horror

……………………………………………….………………………………. 136-155

**Chapter Three:** **Fear and Abjection: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Mary Robinson, and the World of Opium**

**3.1.** Opium and the Narco-Gothic ………………………………………………………………………...………156-166

**3.2.** Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Pains of Opium

………………………………………………………………………...………167-176

**3.3.** Coleridge’s *Christabel* and the Horrors of the Narco-Gothic

………………………………………………………………………...………176-187

**3.4.** Mary Robinson, Opium, and the Gothic Body

………………………………………………………………………...………187-192

**3.5.** The Narco-politics of Madness: Fear, Drugs and Robinson’s ‘The Maniac’

………………………………………………………………………...………192-211

**Chapter Four: William Wordsworth’s Acoustics of Fear**

**4.1.** Hearing Fear, Feeling Fear

……………………………………………….……………………………...…. 212-227

**4.2.** The Pedagogy of Trembling Fear: William Wordsworth and Gothic Sound

……………………………………………….……………………………...…. 227-242

**4.3.** Re-sounding Fear: Wordsworth’s Gothic Sound and *The Prelude*

……………………………………………….……………………………...…. 242-261

**Conclusion**

Representations of Fear: An Afterword

………………………………...........................................................................262-267

**Bibliography**

.………………………………………………………………….268-317

**Introduction**

**i. The Literature of Fear and the Body**

“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 ... And where lies the differentce between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity that accompany the first, respecting the dreading evil?”

Ann Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ (1826)[[1]](#footnote-1)

Ann Radcliffe’s distinction between terror and horror in terms of the supernatural in poetry is widely used in discussions of the Gothic. Published in *The New Monthly Magazine* in a redacted form, the essay was set out more elaborately as a Preface to her posthumously published final novel *Gaston de Blondeville* (1826). However, we know that Radcliffe composed her theorisation of terror and horror as early as 1802-3. Radcliffe’s essay articulates some of the key distinctions between terror and horror that informed not only her authorial practices, but also those of her contemporaries. Even though it was published in 1826, Radcliffe’s essay relates to the ongoing attempts to theorise emotion in the early nineteenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, different expressions of fear penetrated contemporary literature, mainly because of the avalanche of changes caused by the French Revolution and the reinvention of what it means to be a personal and political entity within a rapidly modernised nation.

In Radcliffe’s essay ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ (1826), terror and horror are approached as variations of fear that nevertheless have distinct characteristics and can be used to refer to different sensations on mind and body. Radcliffe differentiates between terror and horror by placing a strong emphasis on their physical effect, something that makes Radcliffe’s theorisation relevant to my thesis as I will argue for the very physical manifestations of these variations of fear in early Romantic poetry. According to Radcliffe, terror ‘expands the soul’ through ‘uncertainty and obscurity’ that follow the anticipation of ‘a dreaded evil’, whereas horror ‘contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates’.[[2]](#footnote-2) More graphically, Devendra P. Varma explains that the ‘difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse’, between an indication of imminent danger and its physical actualisation.[[3]](#footnote-3) However, both trigger a ‘movement’ reaction that varies by the stimulus, if not solely by degree. Radcliffe refers to this distinction by explicitly connecting terror with a sense of mystery and obscurity, a sense of imminent fearful approach that is not actually here yet, but which has palpable psychophysical effects on the self. The terror in ‘obscurity’ characterises Emily’s feelings towards the veiled object that she sees in front of her in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and which she fears conceals a human corpse. Radcliffe explores how terror functions in this scene by showing Emily’s anxious anticipation to uncover the black veil, which turns out to reveal a wax figure, therefore averting the horror of contact with an actual dead human body. Nevertheless, Emily seems to experience a feeling of alarm, ‘[a]lmost fainting with terror.’[[4]](#footnote-4) It is these bodies of fear and in fear that I will look at in this thesis in relation to the writings of early Romantic writers, who explore this kind of contact between these bodies and the psychophysical effects it produces.

Edmund Burke discusses variations of fear even earlier than Radcliffe, and his theorisation is important in my thesis as it pertains to this distinction between terror as an apprehension of danger which, when becoming too intense, turns into a repulsive feeling akin to what Radcliffe would later describe as horror. Burke’s *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) describes terror as ‘an apprehension of pain or death’, which, when pressed too nearly, repulses by bringing the self closer to actual pain.[[5]](#footnote-5) More importantly, Burke associates this feeling of terror with the sublime, which creates ‘amazement’ in its mysteriousness/obscurity and its closeness to the divine.[[6]](#footnote-6) My argument will follow Burke’s connection of terror with obscurity, since, as I will argue, bodies of fear created in the writings of many poets in this thesis are characterised by their obscurity in the way they appear and the way they interact with bodies in fear. More specifically, I will examine how contact between these bodies of fear/in fear, whether spectral and/or monstrous, real or imaginary, is facilitated, as well as the way this interaction is registered and the kind of fear that is explored as a result. Burke’s theory of feeling is important, since it is a testament to the centrality of examining emotion in the late eighteenth century, which would be even more foregrounded in the years of the French Revolution, where fear would become a dominant emotion for the self and society.

In this thesis, I explore the different kinds of fear expressed in writings of early Romantic poets and the ways in which they are represented both psychologically and physically. More specifically, I consider the way in which writings by William Blake, Joanna Baillie, Anne Bannerman, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Mary Robinson, and William Wordsworth interact with and reflect contemporary views on how feelings work and how they are managed by self and society within the wider effort to re-invent both the self and the world during and immediately after the French Revolution. Although published several years later in 1826, Radcliffe’s theorisation of fear as something multi-dimensional, varied and physical is useful because it is the studied product of an ongoing effort to register the nature and importance of emotions from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards. Similarly, prior to Radcliffe, Edmund Burke talked about this distinction of terror and horror in his theorisation of the sublime in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), where fear as terror (in connection to sublime awe and fascination) and horror (in connection to repulsion) is analysed in both psychological and physiological dimensions as impacting the mind as well as the body.

I employ the term ‘psychophysical’ in my discussions of the mental and bodily aspects of fear to illustrate the involvement of mind and body in fear’s various manifestations. More specifically, I will look at manifestations of fear as a primal mental and highly physical emotion that, more than any other, blurs the distinction between internal and external and forces the self to confront personal and political anxieties, especially in a period of intense sociopolitical stress. All authors featured in this thesis were actively writing at the time of the avalanche of change that followed the French Revolution and expressed feelings of fear in different ways and for various reasons. The French Revolution irrevocably changed the way self and society are defined, especially in relation to external threat in terms of internal stability. Each of the writers in this thesis lived and wrote within the context of societal change that contested the way the self is perceived and forged through fears triggered by the revolution. In this thesis, I refer to Gothic ‘fear’ as the general term that encompasses various manifestations of this emotion, and I investigate how it is transformed into terror and horror variously through different Gothic narratives and even, in places, within the same narrative. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), fear is defined as the ‘emotion of pain of uneasiness caused by the sense of impeding danger’ or evil and is ‘the general term for all degrees of this emotion’.[[7]](#footnote-7) This definition entails and foregrounds the physical aspect of feeling fear. Fear is intimately connected to a sensation of pain that is analogous to the proximity of the danger. The same psychophysical dimension is included in the *OED* definitions of terror and horror. According to the *OED*, the Latin verb ‘terrere’ that is the root of ‘terror’ means ‘to frighten’. Terror means to be in a state of ‘intense fear or dread’, such as in depicting the aftermath of the French Revolution as the ‘Reign of Terror’ while the use of the term is coupled with the word ‘pleasurable’ to connote how terror can be experienced when reading a literary entry on danger and violence in the reader’s safe distance from terror’s formidable source.[[8]](#footnote-8) The term ‘horror’ is even more intimately connected to its physical dimension as it comes from the Latin word ‘horrere’, which means to ‘shudder’, a word that comes up numerous times in Romantic writings.[[9]](#footnote-9) Here, the word is referred to in relation to a ‘disease’, a feeling of ‘loathing and fear’ that disturbs the self and which, like other manifestations of fear, finds fertile ground within the hybridity and subversiveness of the Gothic to intrude into the narrative in a very physical form. This is relevant in my discussion of variations of fear in early Romantic poetry as many writers test the limits of fear by revoking horror and the close contact with very physical Gothic bodies.

The body is a crucial factor, and images of the body in fear, supported by contemporary discussions on physiology and the emotion in the increasingly secular setting of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, are present in all the writings under discussion. As Joanna Bourke writes, ‘[t]he only access we have to fearful people from the past is through the things they left behind’, and texts, by extension, are valuable guides for exploring these fears and anxieties.[[10]](#footnote-10) I will approach these texts via textual and contextual analysis aimed at unraveling psychophysical images of fear, as well as why and how they are cultivated, primarily through the body.

There have been several studies that have tackled the mental and physical dimensions of affect. These include Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985) and Steven Bruhm’s *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (1994), which have both emphasised the integral role of the body in experiencing pain not just as an external source of affect, but also as something that is internalised and becomes enmeshed with the construction of the self. More specifically, according to Scarry, intense pain ‘destroys a person’s self and world’ and creates a spectrum where the source of the pain and the pained body cannot exist without each other in the process of shifting focus to the power of the body as the locus of pain, the centre of affect that facilitates a redefinition of the self.[[11]](#footnote-11) In Scarry’s monograph, the body becomes the agent of feeling and the agent of recentring the self in this interaction between the torturer and the pained body. This is particularly pertinent to my argument as the variations of fear approached in this thesis act in a similar way. For the writers under question here, fear defines the self at the same time as it de-centres it and takes it apart. However, I will shift focus to this interaction in terms of the powerfulness of fear in relation to the body, and how fear breaks the boundaries between the inside and the outside to redefine the self. Bruhm observes that, for Coleridge for instance, ‘pain often helps to construct the same self that it abuses’.[[12]](#footnote-12) Bruhm’s analysis with its specific emphasis on ‘Gothic bodies’ speaks directly to the concerns of this thesis. Bruhm wants to connect the return of repressed qualities within Romantic texts with the Gothic, arguing that only the Gothic makes this possible with its excess of ‘display’, its ‘vulnerable immediacy’ and ‘troublesome power’.[[13]](#footnote-13) Since the body holds a special place in discussions of the Gothic’s subversive qualities, which I will look into more detail later on and within the chapters, Bruhm’s discussion of pain in relation to Gothic bodies foregrounds the way in which the Gothic makes manifestations of the affected body possible. For Bruhm, pain is the main point of reference when it comes to how the body acts and reacts, as well as the way agency is acquired, even compromised through expressions of affect and the focus on the self.[[14]](#footnote-14) My thesis focuses on the interaction of bodies through affect by shifting focus from pain to fear as one of the most primal human feelings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, intimately connected to the Gothic because of its violent breaking and shaking of the human self. Bruhm focuses on different degrees and expressions of pain in his analysis, and following his model, I look into degrees of fear as they are expressed by a number of early Romantic poets within the context of the ‘dialogue between body and soul’ and the body’s relation to the self in experiencing and expressing fear.[[15]](#footnote-15) However, this thesis aims to emphasise how this psycho*physical* dimension of fear is foregrounded in the language used by the Romantic writers under consideration and how the authors’ intense preoccupation with contemporary psychological and physiological discourses related to mind, body and the self.

The eighteenth century saw the proliferation of sociopolitical studies on the role of emotions in shaping political subjectivity in relation to pleasure and pain, stability and disintegration. In this, my analysis is in line with Mark Canuel’s detailed theory of what he calls ‘Romantic fear’.[[16]](#footnote-16) Canuel moves away from the ‘confessional mode of Renaissance sovereignty’ and religious community and focuses upon the newly formed ‘lexicon of penal law’ seeking to sanction fear’s threatening power, and more significantly, the fear of pain, as a stabiliser for public order and justice. This process took place within the gradual but steady change from the religious earlier in the eighteenth century to the secular that came to dominate the Age of Reason, with which Romantic writers interacted by offering a more central focus on secular, internal emotion, what Charles Taylor calls a shift to ‘desires, aspirations, inclinations and feelings.’[[17]](#footnote-17) This ‘Romantic fear’ that Canuel refers to is part of an increasing turn towards studying how emotions function within society in the wake of the surge of modernity and the de-centring of long-established ideologies that threaten to disintegrate meaning for the individuals living in 1790s England. This secularisation is pointed towards the study of what constitutes self and society and, according to Canuel, ‘demands acts of “extirpation” in order to avoid ideological meaninglessness’ by establishing penal systems based on the systemic utilisation of the fear of French invasion, disintegration and meaninglessness. This relates to the way the Romantic writers under discussion in this thesis responded to this fear of external invasion. My analysis looks into the way in which this is achieved on both personal and political levels.

This thesis departs from Canuel’s almost exclusive emphasis on the political implications of seeing fear as a political weapon to stabilise contemporary ideologies and instead moves towards an in-depth study of how fear functions as a complex affective mode that is fluid and allows individuals to make sense of self and society through commonly shared but different experiences and anxieties that both facilitate and compromise meaning. Thomas Pfau sees affect in a similar way when he refers to theories of the emotion in the eighteenth century as ‘a kind of quasi-knowledge’, a way to evaluate the world in the wake of David Hume’s empiricism and Adam Smith’s theorisation of the privacy of emotion and its place in society in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).[[18]](#footnote-18) Pfau refers to the increasing perception of emotions as a bond in society, something that societal members shared. This is exemplified by Joanna Baillie’s idea of ‘sympathetic curiosity’ as it is developed in the ‘Introductory Discourse’ to *A Series of Plays, in which it is Attempted to Delineate the Stronger Passions of Mind* (1798-1812), where she writes of the ‘sympathetic propensity of our minds’ by which we observe other people’s emotional response to certain experiences. Baillie joins contemporary discourses of studying the ‘workings of nature’ and affective responses to different stimuli unravelling within the spectrum of pleasure and pain, with horror and repulsion becoming more prominent the closer one gets to an adverse experience.[[19]](#footnote-19) Baillie registers in her writing a very common societal trait, namely the interest that people express in witnessing and even accessing how feelings like fear work, foregrounding ‘the sympathetic body’ that Bruhm also refers to in relation to pain.[[20]](#footnote-20) This is important for my argument here as it foregrounds the centrality of emotion in the minds of writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

During the Romantic period and also within the more recent critical theory on affect, there is an acknowledgement of literary expression as a highly emotive experience, which, as Mary Favret argues, ‘derives from or at least accompanies contemporary work by cognitive scientists, psychologists and moral philosophers’. [[21]](#footnote-21) This seems opposed to W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley's sense of the value of affective response as a ‘fallacy’.[[22]](#footnote-22) Wimsatt and Beardsley do not deny the impact of affective literary descriptions on the reader, but they refute the place of taking such responses into consideration when it comes to objective criticism, simply because the ‘affective report is either too physiological or it is too vague’.[[23]](#footnote-23) However, it is precisely this aspect of affective criticism that I mean to employ because of its subjective quality. Rather than hindering criticism, this ‘physiological’ and psychological aspect of emotional expression in writings of the Romantic period offers further insight into the (un)shaping of Romantic subjectivities through the mind-body dynamic, primarily accessible through language. This matters because of the power of affect in the writings under discussion here and the way fear constitutes a primary emotion through which these writers try to tell their stories in relation to what was happening around and inside them.

This thesis explores the strong connection between affect and the value of the text itself, which gains further momentum precisely because of the psychophysiological response it evokes and the context in which it grows. Fear as an emotive experience and an inherent part of what constitutes the self does not pertain to the way ‘subject’ is perceived by poststructuralist Rei Terada in *Feeling in Theory: Emotion After the Death of the Subject* (2001), in which the self’s unified, undivided nature is an illusion which sustains the subject’s emotional being. By subjective quality I mean the way the subject is deconstructed within the ‘*ideology of emotion*’ (Terada’s italics) and revealed to be fractured, contradictory and multifarious rather than an organic whole.[[24]](#footnote-24) This is exactly what Terada perceives as the subject-less quality of emotion like fear in its ability to undo the self. However, this thesis views a theory of subjectivity and emotion to reveal the contradictions within subjectivities rather than undoing the term ‘emotion’ altogether.[[25]](#footnote-25) In this, my analysis is more in line with Joel Faflak and Richard C. Sha’s *Romanticism and the Emotions* (2014), where Faflak and Sha focus on how notions of self and society are forged through contemporary studies of emotion such as in science, moral and political philosophy and more, and argue that emotions […] ‘suspend us between solitude and sociality, where the subject is a (no)one or no(body)’, thus drawing attention to the complexity of making and unmaking the self especially in relation to the mind/body relationship within the eighteenth and nineteenth-century societal structures.[[26]](#footnote-26) Most importantly, Faflak and Sha acknowledge that Romantic writing ‘evolved a robust lexicon for thinking about emotion’ that was very much centred around the physical. This is attuned to the revolution in sensibility and sentiment and the need to address the role of emotion in Romantic poetry observed earlier by Jerome McGann in *The Poetics of Sensibility* (1996) but Faflak and Sha lay greater emphasis on the role of the body in this endeavour. I use terms like feeling, affect and emotion interchangeably when it comes to their psychological and physical expressions because of the words’ closeness of meaning.

Terada acknowledges the shades of meaning among the words ‘feeling’, ‘affect’ and ‘emotion’, such as when we say ‘emotion we usually mean a psychological, at least minimally interpretive experience whose physiological aspect is *affect*. *Feeling* is a capacious term that connotes both physiological sensations (affects) and psychological states (emotions).’[[27]](#footnote-27) In this tentative definition of each term, Terada tries to preserve these shades of meaning rather than revert to the word ‘mood’ like Pfau does,[[28]](#footnote-28) which can be used in discussions of affect to mark its historical and cultural conditions, but such careful delineation can seem opaque. As physical and mental qualities of fear are internally enmeshed with each other in this case, by variously using the terms, I aim to reflect the complexity of separating the physical and the psychological when it comes to discussions of affect, especially since this pertains to historically and culturally conditioned reconfigurations of self.

The central role of feelings in the formation of the self, art and society is also approached in Andrew M. Stauffer’s *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* (2005), another study that has inspired the current thesis. Stauffer contends that Romanticism intimately connects to ‘sensibility and the sublime’ and adds that ‘[g]rief and terror were their foundational emotions’ in the context of people being ‘newly pressurized by the discourse of the Revolution and Terror’.[[29]](#footnote-29) In my thesis, I shift the focus from anger to explore how fear nurtures Gothic expressions of Romantic writers through psychophysical images, as fear is an intensely physical power capable of revealing deep personal and political anxieties through the body. There have been studies that focus on the physical representation of anxieties through the Gothic such as Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger’s *William Blake’s Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror* (2018). My thesis is different in that it goes in the direction of seeing different kinds of fear in the writings of a variety of early female and male Romantic writers as well as their use of the vocabulary of fear and how it creates a pattern among contemporary writers that betrays common and varying influences and anxieties.

In certain parts of the thesis, Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980) is used to talk about how the bodies of self and other interact through fear and how the self comes in close contact with creatures of abjection. This abjection causes varying degrees of horror and repulsion because the boundaries between the self and its outcast others disintegrate, thus destabilising preconceived notions of safety and stability. According to Kristeva, abjection is a state of ‘degradation’ whose ‘public feature’ is ‘horror’ because it lingers at the points where identities (subject, object, etc.) lose stability and meaning, a ‘fragile border’ where everything is ‘double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered’.[[30]](#footnote-30) In Kristeva’s theory, the abject other is rejected by the self at the same time as its presence is affirmed. The self attempts to remain separate from the other at the same time as its identity relies on the other’s existence. This interaction between self and other in the context of the abject’s powerful horror is particularly relevant to some parts of my thesis where I investigate the way horror bodies break into the narrative and threaten the frightened self as meaning is destabilised. The Gothic plays a central role in this interaction of physical bodies and the presence of the other evoked through fear because, in its hybridity and rupture of boundaries, it creates a space where the play between bodies of fear and bodies in fear can take place. However, Kristeva’s account of the physical abject is less vital to other discussions of the Romantic Gothic. For in Wordsworth’s case, there is a breaking of boundaries between the inside and the outside in the hearer’s active participation in fearful sounds, and I will follow Henri Lefèbvre’s emphasis on the self’s active role in making Gothic sounds present as bodies, thus placing greater potential agency in how the self can condition the interaction of fearing bodies and Gothic sound to register a journey of self-exploration.

In my analysis, the Gothic and the Romantic become enmeshed, since the Gothic is a site that, as Michael Gamer rightly observes, ‘*moves*’ around ‘forms and media’.[[31]](#footnote-31) Despite the ‘stigma’ of the Gothic as a ‘pernicious genre’,[[32]](#footnote-32) Romantic poetry frequently uses the Gothic to explore different themes of affect and self-exploration, which indicates that the Gothic is not only a feature of the popular romance novel with a certain number of traits such as castles, threatening villains and atmospheric suspense. According to Angela Wright and Dale Townshend, Romantic authors, ‘whether consciously or unconsciously, variously sought to engage, enlist, parody, critique, appropriate or circumvent the potent, profitable and magnetic lure of the Gothic’.[[33]](#footnote-33) The Gothic allowed writers to reveal voices of abjection, born out of contemporary individual and collective fears, which will be central to my argument in this thesis

E. J. Clery argues that aesthetic expressions of fear are inexorable companions to a growing fascination with spiritual and corporeal manifestations of society’s darkest anxieties,[[34]](#footnote-34) of which the flourishing of the Gothic is a prime example. Clery’s reference to these ‘darkest anxieties’ are in line with manifestations of Gothic bodies that I will explore in early Romantic poetry, since these dark visitations are the nexus of how fear in expressed in the writings under discussion in this thesis. The Gothic is central because it brings out unconscious fears, and with the advent of societal change in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it because even more popular.

William Collins’s ‘An Ode to Fear’ (1747) reflects the shift to thought and sensibility that marked the transition from religious to psychological fear expressed through eighteenth-century graveyard poetry that preceded the Romantic writings under discussion here. Although by the time Collins wrote his ‘An Ode to Fear’ the supernatural and the emotional had already started informing writings of many genres in a world of philosophical and political Enlightenment, a particular urgency is revealed to address a growing trait of contemporary aesthetic experience, namely what Clery calls the ‘vision of terror itself’.[[35]](#footnote-35) Shadows of these would appear as flashes of unconscious fears expressed through the body in the novels of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis later in the eighteenth century.

The ‘frantic fear’ (5) haunting the speaker in Collins’s ode is foregrounded, bringing ‘monsters’ (9) and summoning the beast of ‘Danger’ whose ‘limbs of giant mold’ (11) remind us of the apocalyptic terror monsters of William Blake’s poetry and art.[[36]](#footnote-36) Collins refers to the unbreakable bond between fear and danger, something that John Aikin Jr., first editor of Richard Philips’s *Monthly Magazine* (1796) and brother to Anna Letitia Aikin (Barbauld), also brings to light in his review of Collins’s Ode: ‘Collins, who in his Ode to Fear has personified Danger, mixes the two ideas, of an author of danger, and a person exposed to it; and a degree of confusion is the necessary result [...] Danger, as a gigantic figure, terrible to the sight and hearing, is properly formed to excite the apprehensions of fear’.[[37]](#footnote-37) Embodied fear seems to have a physiological effect for Collins, as words like ‘shuddering’ (53) and ‘throbbing heart’ (42) indicate. Language, as Bourke also observes, is a powerful tool for the conveyance of distinct socio-cultural experiences and intense psychophysiological feeling.[[38]](#footnote-38) Clifford Geertz reminds the reader that fear, among other emotions, ‘are cultural artifacts in man’,[[39]](#footnote-39) left behind as traces to a socio-historical past replete with socio-political changes and revolutions. The gradual immersion of the early nineteenth century into a pervasive culture of fear and trembling is the product of traumas and anxieties surfacing in the contestable formation of modern society.

The French Revolution brought confusion and a need to re-evaluate meaning, as well as an interrogation of the ideas such as society and freedom are made of. For Mr. Flosky of Thomas Love Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), for example, the French Revolution had destroyed, ‘in the more refined part of the community (of which number I am one), all enthusiasm for political liberty.’[[40]](#footnote-40) The Age of Reason that some intellectuals and theorists strove to uphold in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was put to the test. In this context, Romantic texts are written as testimonies to an ever-shifting society of self-exploration. Taylor discusses the formation of modern identity when he argues that there is a new philosophical and socio-political shift to ‘individual independence’ and social relations within the family and the larger whole.[[41]](#footnote-41) This self-exploration was cultivated within a new cult of sensibility that was not about the nature of the feelings so much as the importance of feelings in relation to self and one’s society, and especially against ‘distant kin and outsiders.’[[42]](#footnote-42) There was a climate of inclusion and exclusion, as well as fear and repression. Imagery of fear persists in William Blake’s quasi-spiritual poetical and artistic expression, especially in poems like *Jerusalem* (1804). Blake and others found problematic this divisive culture of ‘inclusiveness’ in English society, especially from 1800 onwards, and fear was its unacknowledged and carefully concealed centre. It is highly suggestive that Collins’s ‘Ode to Fear’ is prominent in Maria Edgeworth and her father’s *Practical Education* (1798). In her letter to Sophy Ruxton, Edgeworth writes that her father ‘has just finished a little volume containing Explanations of Poetry for children: it explains the ‘Elegy in a Country Churchyard’ […] and the ‘Ode to Fear’.’ It will be a very useful schoolbook’ (20 October 1800).[[43]](#footnote-43) This is just a small example of how popular and prominent graveyard poems like these had become for reflecting contemporary personal and collective emotions in response to changing times.

The ‘holy’ scripture of ‘tolerant government’, as Canuel calls it, in a newly formed secular world, kept a constant eye on the urgent need to achieve ‘safety and order through inclusion’.[[44]](#footnote-44) This, however, ‘curtails a certain kind of illiberal political fear’, directed to and from the nation’s others. The Hobbesian ideology of omnipotent sovereignty gains ground even a century after the publication of Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651),[[45]](#footnote-45) a groundbreaking record of Commonwealth supremacy, where the politics of fear denote ‘fear’ as respect and awe, as well as a more integrated force in the clockwork of family and society in the seventeenth century. For Hobbes, ‘man is naturally void of fear’ and societal laws are called upon to restrain him,[[46]](#footnote-46) sees him point to the enlargement of a kingdom’s dominions, based on ‘claims that they are in danger and in fear of invasion’ (Part 2, Chapter 17, n.p.). For Hobbes, fear is a prerequisite for the imposition of balance and order in the body politic, and the sovereign’s omnipotent power is structured precisely in this dual role of fear as awe and respect, to the exclusion of any transgressive behaviour. While the eighteenth century moves progressively away into an age of empirical skepticism and revolution, the politicisation of fear sees political ideologies intrude well into the nineteenth century, expressed in both male and female writing of the period. This context is particularly relevant to my argument in this thesis, since it shows the way fear is utilised for socio-political purposes, and how it penetrates the lives of the writers under discussion.

Narratives of progress ‘at home’ functioned incessantly in the service of marking stability, progress, and reform, especially in the aftermath of the French Revolution. ‘Taken in the large,’ David Eastwood writes, ‘the age from 1815 (and, in many respects, before 1815) was a period of reform, and justified a robust belief in progress’.[[47]](#footnote-47) Eastwood lists a series of titles allotted to surveys of the nineteenth century, ranging from Elie Halevy’s translated *England in 1815*, whose *The Liberal Awakening* and *Triumph of Reform* mark Halevy’s approach, to Llewellyn Woodward’s ‘Age of Reform’ in his *Oxford History*, and Asa Briggs’s ‘The Age of Improvement’ in 1959, which established nineteenth-century Britain as a case study to be interpreted through the lens of improvement.[[48]](#footnote-48) According to Eastwood’s account, Briggs’s account presents what Eastwood calls ‘a grand morality tale’ by which is celebrated ‘British evolutionary reformism against revolutionary upheaval or democratic insurrectionism’.[[49]](#footnote-49) Ultimately, Eastwood retorts that studies like Briggs’s, while illuminating some aspects of early nineteenth-century British political milieu, ‘underestimate the profound uncertainty which was characteristic both of Britain’s political life and social condition’.[[50]](#footnote-50) This ‘age of uncertainty’ (also, the title of Eastwood’s article), which is intimately connected to prevailing fear, was not a straightforward line to change and progress, but a complex concoction triggered by the nation’s quivering but rapid modernisation. This would affect the writers I discuss in this thesis as they deal with the personal and political fears this change brings forward.

The choice of the word ‘quivering’ to describe the socio-political changes taking place is relevant in a discussion of fear as it is an integral physiological response to variations of fear like ‘horror’, which, according to the OED, refers to shuddering. While horror evokes a stronger reaction, it is an integral variation of fear in the face of an external threat and/or impeding danger, and an intense physiological feeling many writers such as Blake and Bannerman explore. The Romantic age witnessed this interaction with an external threat both on an individual and on a collective level. John Hollander argues, ‘literal fear, acute and chronic’ can be and was ‘instilled and controlled with brutal delicacy for political purposes.’ [[51]](#footnote-51) The popularity of the Gothic during this time is not accidental. The Gothic can both refer to a glorious ancestral past as depicted in Horace Walpole’s Gothic writings, as well as a movement, a ‘sort of trembling of what is ‘‘natural’’,[[52]](#footnote-52) the uncanny place of the sacred law, to use Sue Chaplin’s terminology.[[53]](#footnote-53) The Gothic releases society’s dark others and presents a liminal space where the writers in this thesis explore their own personal and political fears in their search for meaning.

Modernisation, industrialisation, and the fast-paced urban sprawl are at the heart of this deep search for meaning and exploration. In his *Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (1829), Robert Southey shares his thoughts on social and political matters that have been unraveling for twenty years and condemns a tainted ‘system in which the means are so bad’, that is grows ‘at the expense of human misery and degradation.’ The end of all this ‘is so fearful.’[[54]](#footnote-54) Inequality in modern society frames Lord Byron’s response to the Luddites’ uprising in 1811 and ties well with the earlier rise of the French Revolution as a self-created monster that threatens to change the status quo.[[55]](#footnote-55) In such a context, David Punter enumerates the conditions that nurtured the rise of the Gothic, which include urban expansion, the rise ‘of a trading middle class’, the advancement of the printing houses, ‘the sudden growth of the circulating libraries’ and the rise of the novel, Enlightenment ideas of an ‘all-powerful’ human reason fostered to contain a ‘mythic fear turned radical’.[[56]](#footnote-56) All of these factors contributed to release and contain the passions at the same time. The avalanche of emotional study in novel form clashed with and shed ‘the full burden of rationalism’, giving birth to sentimental works of fiction and the cult of sensibility that conditioned the Gothic. It is in these works that ‘we begin to glimpse’ Enlightenment principles being ‘crushed beneath the weight of feeling and passion’,[[57]](#footnote-57) which the tenets of reason still attempted to restrain. Punter sees fear ‘as both the root and the product of the attempt to bring all things under rational control’, and as both the subject and the enemy of reason. According to Punter, ‘reason will create its own enemies’,[[58]](#footnote-58) which are nevertheless uncontainable. This is the reason fear, as Caroll E. Izard and Eric A. Youngstrom contend, ‘[o]f all emotions,’ fear poses the most powerful threat to one’s sense of self-efficacy and self-control.[[59]](#footnote-59) Fear’s power in taking apart and re-defining the self will therefore be a central point in my thesis.

1. **Fear and Trembling: Psychophysiological Manifestations**

I AM not so good a naturalist (as they call it) as to discern by what secret springs fear

has its motion in us; but, be this as it may, ’tis a strange passion, and such a one that

the physicians say there is no other whatever that sooner dethrones our judgment from its proper seat.

Michel De Montaigne, ‘Of Fear’ (1580)[[60]](#footnote-60)

It is useful to begin with a quick overview of emotive theory, as historicising emotion is important in understanding its central role in human thought and its intimate connection to the body. Earlier attempts to theorise emotion go back to Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics,[[61]](#footnote-61)* Aristotle’s influential albeit problematic approach to *pathe* (anger, fear, love, etc.) as passive states with manifold effects on the subject. The history of emotions records varied responses to the role of emotions for human nature, with thoughts like Cicero’s (106 - 43 BC), who found in the word *pathe* something inadequate, ‘the very sound of which seems to denote something vicious and these emotions are not excited by any natural influence.’[[62]](#footnote-62) This contrasts with St. Augustine’s transcendentalism, who, in his *City of God* (426 AD), adopts a rather more benevolent stance: ‘It may, indeed, reasonably be maintained that the perfect blessedness we hope for shall be free from all sting of fear or sadness; but who that is not quite lost to truth would say that neither love nor joy shall be experienced there?’ (14.9).[[63]](#footnote-63) While it was only natural that *City of God* would shape Western spiritual writing and theology to come, early modern theories of emotion were attended by a growing tendency for empirical studies, better attuned to the dominant seventeenth and eighteenth-century ideologies and ever more centred on the nature of man and the burgeoning science of self-perception, with a growing emphasis on emotive physiological effects.

The quote used at the beginning of this section is from Michel Montaigne, as he is among the most prominent philosophers to write on matters of psychology and topics related to human nature. A French Renaissance philosopher with an acute interest in human action, Montaigne largely influenced more contemporary thinkers such as Francis Bacon, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Edmund Burke, and William Hazlitt. Among his *Essays*, short pieces that pioneered essay-writing in Europe, ‘Of Fear’ is particularly relevant to this study because of the writer’s attempt to accurately describe emotions and their psychophysical manifestation. At the beginning of his essay, Montaigne alludes to fear’s psychophysical force and focuses on a body in fear by quoting an epigram from Virgil’s *Aenead*: ‘*I was amazed, my hair stood on end, and my voice stuck in my jaws*’.[[64]](#footnote-64) While Montaigne examines the complicated effects on fear upon human action and physiognomy, he takes great care to frame his analysis with an acute acknowledgement of fear’s physical impact. Three centuries later, these psychophysical expositions of fear would find ample expression through eighteenth and nineteenth-century philosophical discourses, Gothic writings and the rise of the Romantic Gothic.

These newly developed theories in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries about emotions and human perception, especially along the spectrum of pleasure and pain, put physiology at the forefront of emotional manifestation, and attempt to categorise emotions or at least study them in relation to human reaction. David Hume’s philosophical work considers the ontological meaning of the passions for human nature, and John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) addresses these ideas in the context of mind and experience.[[65]](#footnote-65) Though groundbreaking, Locke’s ‘mechanical equation of pleasure/pain with good/evil’ was not, as Steven Bruhm writes, good enough for an emergent, eighteenth-century culture of sensibility that saw the blurring of the lines between pleasure and pain, and emotional experience as much more complicated, and centred on the body, as the line between mind and body becomes a primary philosophical concern.[[66]](#footnote-66) This complexity of emotions and the mediation of them by the literary text is already evident in the ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in which Wordsworth contemplates the role of the poet in considering ‘man and the objects that surround him as acting and reacting upon each other so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure’.[[67]](#footnote-67) Furthermore, Wordsworth sees ‘the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature’.[[68]](#footnote-68) The emphatic relocation from a harmonious coexistence of man and object to the supremacy of the creative mind not only to ‘mirror’, to reflect, but to transform the sensory experience, carries a Cartesian divide of mind and body that binds them in a symbiotic relationship of inevitable separateness; ‘[K]knowledge of the truth’, writes René Descartes in his *Sixth Meditation* (1641),‘seems to belong to the mind alone, not to the combination of mind and body.’[[69]](#footnote-69)

While Descartes acknowledges the unavoidable interrelation of mind and body, it does not follow for him that understanding comes from both. The mind is the soul behind the body’s mechanistic qualities. It is such Cartesian divisions, Bruhm observes, that Romantic theorists like Edmund Burke sought to blur by the end of the eighteenth century, and which would be further contested by the shift towards a discourse of psychology from the end of the eighteenth century onwards.[[70]](#footnote-70) This shift carries with it a distrust and anxiety that too much exposure to the supernatural can inflict for such writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which urged the *British Critic* (1803) to label Anne Bannerman’s *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802) (featuring in Chapter Two) a work of ‘fancy perverted to the purpose of raising only horror’, gesturing towards the alleged ‘transient fashion’ of the times.[[71]](#footnote-71) Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, emotions were featured objects of enquiry, and books like Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), which was actually reprinted after 1800—John Keats read this in 1819 and declared it among his favorite—triggered questions about emotions and their symptoms on the body. Emotions like fear came to be studied in their psychological and physical dimensions from the end of the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth centuries.

For Edmund Burke writing during the decades leading up to the French Revolution, ‘fear,’ or variations of fear like ‘terror,’ ‘is an apprehension of pain or death’,[[72]](#footnote-72) a sense of an imminent danger or threat to our own being. And while this connects to the incessant deepening of experience through the act of reading literature, it also renders the *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) vital to questions of how emotions, more specifically fear, implicate themselves in the mind and the body. The mind’s ‘state of indifference’[[73]](#footnote-73) in its usual state that Burke expounds in the *Enquiry*, is what makes it all the more receptive to these ideas of terror and the accompanied apprehension of pain and danger, which, when pressed ‘too nearly’, as near enough Burke would find the atrocities of the French Revolution, ‘they are incapable of giving any delight,’ but which can be rendered pleasurable ‘with certain modifications.’[[74]](#footnote-74) He tempers this with terror’s role to inspire sympathy among mankind through pain and pleasure in representation. While the experience of terror as conveyed through aesthetics is tempered by what Burke calls ‘the contemplation of our own freedom from the evils which we see represented’,[[75]](#footnote-75) it still pertains to questions of bodily and mental proximity to the object of terror. The idea of the sublime relative to ‘whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror’,[[76]](#footnote-76) reinstates this complex codependence of mind and body, especially because terror, for Burke, ‘operates in a manner that resembles actual pain,’[[77]](#footnote-77) but with an inclination to obscurity.[[78]](#footnote-78) This description links to Radcliffe’s differentiation of ‘terror’ and ‘horror’ in her ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ and pertains to the degree by which fear interacts with the body.

‘No passion’ other than terror, Alexander Bain explains, ‘is more marked in outward display’.[[79]](#footnote-79) In his *The Emotions and the Will* (1865) Bain, a Scottish empirical philosopher and pioneer in outlining the physiological expressions of feelings that came to lay the ground for modern psychology, was among the first to refer to the ‘deranging effect’ of fear[[80]](#footnote-80) that manifests ‘in the apprehension of coming evil’.[[81]](#footnote-81) Bain draws attention to ‘the *physical* side of Terror’, tinged by the feeling of ‘Uncertainty’, that results in ‘quakings’, ‘a deadly pallor’ on the face, alterations in skin, and a peculiar ‘stare of the eye’ that indicates change of body.[[82]](#footnote-82) In Bain’s account, which was published later than the beginning of the nineteenth century but reflects a century-long fascination with the study of affect, feelings like fear ‘play the part of rebels or innovators against the canons of the past’, harbingers of a change of state. Similarly, Charles Darwin, drawing upon Bain in many respects, approaches the physiological effects of fear in Chapter 12 of *The Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), following his *On the Origin of Species* (1859). For Darwin, ‘[t]he word fear’ seems to be derived from what is sudden and dangerous; and that of terror from the trembling of the vocal organs and body. I use the word ‘terror’ for extreme fear’.[[83]](#footnote-83) A man in fright, for Darwin, stands, at first, “motionless,” or convulsed: the ‘trembling’[[84]](#footnote-84) of the body is a distinguished symptom, the pupils are dilated, the ‘breathing is hurried’,[[85]](#footnote-85) the hair stands erect.[[86]](#footnote-86) The ‘death-like pallor’[[87]](#footnote-87) that Darwin notices is also a symptom central in Bain’s theorizations, all part of the diversified effects of intense fear, or terror. The result, for Darwin, as for Montaigne before him when he recounted the reaction of the guard when ‘Monsieur de Bourbon took Rome’,[[88]](#footnote-88) is either passivity in motionlessness, or a preparation ‘to discover and encounter any danger’,[[89]](#footnote-89) which results from the violent agitation in moments of fear and trembling. Extreme fear, for Darwin, is synonymous with terror, and exhibits its symptoms through the voice and anatomy of the human body. In this thesis, the human body will be central both in manifesting degrees of fear and in portraying the effects of fear on the self.

1. **“Fear Cuts Deeper Than Swords”: Fear and the Body in the Romantic Gothic**

When considering physical manifestations of fear, this thesis examines fear’s psychophysical expressions and their transformative potential in Romantic texts. It will address the way male and female Romantic writers channel individual or socio-political fears, revealing fear’s potential, in forms of terror and horror, for personal and political change.

The first chapter of my thesis starts with bodies of horror in William Blake’s The *French Revolution* (1791) and *Jerusalem* (1804) and the way in which Blake foregrounds them to indicate reflections on the overthrow of French monarchy and the atmosphere of sickness and decay that portends Blake’s anxieties over the advent of the revolution in France. It considers the way in which these Gothic aesthetics[[90]](#footnote-90) are embedded and transformed into Blake’s later prophetic works of the early nineteenth century to depict a highly embodied vision of the fall of Albion in his poem *Jerusalem* (1804), where Jerusalem and Albion’s long-fallen bodies lie prey to the haunting fear of Urizenic assault.[[91]](#footnote-91) The poem inaugurates socio-political transformation through the unceasing movement and interaction of abject bodies of horror as the force that destabilises the self. In Blake’s world, horror fosters the chaos of Revolution and the eventual recollection of Christ’s body, which points to hopes for a new period of resurrection and rejuvenation after the war. As I will argue, Blake uses physical images such as haunting horror bodies and the body of Christ to express the unmaking and making of the body politic.

The second chapter approaches a similar interaction with abject bodies of fear and spectrality. The focus is on Joanna Baillie and Anne Bannerman’s female ghosts and the idea of haunting in poems like Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ (1790) and Bannerman’s ‘The Dark Ladie’ (1802), where female ghosts act as othered bodies that scare by pushing the limits of subjectivity and make us ‘behold what we shrink from’. Fear changes forms for these writers depending on the proximity of the ghostly abject bodies.[[92]](#footnote-92) In both poems and in varying degrees, fear and haunting are put forward as a way of foregrounding the oppressed female voice and bring change through the interaction of the poems’ characters with the spectral bodies of the female ghosts.

Chapter Three also discusses feelings of haunting but in connection with manifestations of physical fear through opium use in the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Mary Robinson. Both poets were notorious opium users and experienced Gothic fear (examined through Radcliffe’s terror/horror spectrum) in disturbing dreams of diseased, tortured and mad bodies expressed in psychophysiological language. The interaction with these bodies leads to a more informed sense of self through contact with Gothic abject bodies that both fascinate and repulse in a way that opium also does. The chapter considers the way opium works as both medicine and poison for the poetic self, as it enables a more intimate connection to dark thoughts and anxieties in poems like Coleridge’s *The Pains of Sleep* (1800) and *Christabel* (1816), as well as Robinson’s *The Maniac* (1791), at the same time as it triggers loss of control by destabilising the mind and the body.

The final chapter examines similar attempts at re-evaluating meaning through (dis)embodied Gothic sounds in William Wordsworth’s earlier *The Vale of Esthwaite* (1787) and *Fragment of a ‘Gothic’ Tale* (1797), as well as the proliferation of corporeal imagery through the power of Gothic sound in the *Prelude* (1805), his experimental epic poem of how he ‘grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear’ (1.302-3). Wordsworth takes up the contemporary ‘thirst after outrageous stimulation’[[93]](#footnote-93) (*Preface*) and gluttonous consumption of extravagant Gothic tales, the ‘Novel trash of the day’[[94]](#footnote-94) that Anna Seward proclaimed detestable,[[95]](#footnote-95) and builds up his poem about a life-long relationship with fear ‘recollected in tranquility.’[[96]](#footnote-96) In these poems, Wordsworth turns into what Henri Lefèbvre calls a ‘rhythmanalyst’ who interacts with Gothic acoustics and actively turns them into feared presences that threaten to cross boundaries and turn into bodies in horror.[[97]](#footnote-97) Wordsworth tries to control the disintegration into horror, but his experiences in fear nevertheless re-connect him to deep-seated traumas that would irrevocably change his poetic identity and enable his search for ‘solace’ (440) toward the end of *The Prelude*.

In different ways, all the writers in this thesis express fear in their writings and indulge in Gothic explorations. The Gothic provides the ideal space for re-evaluating meaning in times of uncertainty for both male and female Romantic writers, the works of which is sometimes subsumed by a persistent preoccupation with monolithic forms of Romanticism. Rather than writing apart from the ‘male Romantic poetic tradition’, Stephen C. Brehrendt observes that these female writers, among so many more, are ‘*in conversation*’ with this tradition.[[98]](#footnote-98) Indeed, Behrendt underlines that these women writers ‘represent a variety of “shadings” of Romanticism’ that testifies to how diversified these writings and experiences were, and how these texts reflect real socio-political concerns about emotions, politics, psychology, and many more.[[99]](#footnote-99) In a similar way, women participated in the discourse around literature and the passions. Joanna Baillie argues in her ‘Introductory Discourse’ to *A Series of Plays* (1798-1812) that people are eager ‘[t]o lift up the roof of’ the criminal’s ‘dungeon, like the *Diable boîteux*, and look upon a criminal the night before he suffers, in his still hours of privacy.’[[100]](#footnote-100) Haunted by personal fears and anxieties, the audience is drawn to ‘wait with trembling expectation for what we dread’ through the motions and expressions of the body. [[101]](#footnote-101) In her effort to urge the readers to know themselves in safety from circumstances liable ‘to create contempt’,[[102]](#footnote-102) Baillie carefully but precariously exposes the underlying workings of the reader’s/spectator’s fascination with works of passion. In the chapters to come, I will follow textual, contextual and intertextual readings to unravel the ways in which fear acquires different forms and opens up spaces for individual and collective explorations. As I argue, the writers in this thesis express different kinds of fears to tell different kinds of stories and employ fear’s potential to re-evaluate meaning.

**Chapter One**

**William Blake: The Visionary Poet and Horror Bodies**

* 1. **Blake and Physical Horror**

|  |
| --- |
| From the caverns of his jointed Spine |
| Down sunk with fright a red |
| Round globe hot burning deep |
| Deep down into the Abyss: |
| Panting: conglobing, trembling, |
| Shooting out ten thousand branches |
| Around his solid bones. |
| And a second Age passed over, |
| And a state of dismal woe. (Plate II, 1-9)  *The First Book of Urizen* (1794)[[103]](#footnote-103) |

This chapter considers how William Blake uses bodies of horror that reveal their raw physicality to explore the revolutionary possibilities of fear that acquired new meaning during the years of the French Revolution. While studies like Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger’s *William Blake’s Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror* (2018) have recently advanced a more in-depth look into expressions of physical horror in Blake’s poetry and art than had hitherto been developed, I focus on the way Blake echoes and portrays psychophysical signs of language of fear on the body throughout his body of work. More specifically, I will show how signposting the interaction among fearful bodies can lead to a re-connection of the Divine body, which for Blake represents redefining the personal and political self in a new era of hope and regeneration. The trembling bodies of fear constitute the fallen but necessary Other that will assist in bringing forward the regenerated body. In my endeavor to ‘dissect’ the grotesque horror bodies of Blake’s poetry and art, I will make use of Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980) to understand the quivering boundaries between bodies of fear and bodies in fear as well as the boundaries between the inside and the outside that Blake utilises to explore how the physical chaos of the revolution can bring change.[[104]](#footnote-104)

These bodies of Blake’s fallen world are inherently revolutionary, especially as fear operates on the dynamics of action and reaction, a re-evaluation of pre-established boundaries through a closer contact with the darkness within. Like the heart of fear that shoots through the ‘caverns’ of Urizen’s spine in the epigraph, fear (in the sense of raw horror, as I will argue in Blake’s case) is a strong physical reaction to the call from ‘Deep down into the Abyss’, and the trembling recesses of the fallen body. Blake creates bodies of horror that go beyond terror’s anticipation of danger to actuality of contact, and the re-awakening of society’s body from the sleep of Reason. Urizen’s ‘jointed Spine’ and the painful birth of a ‘red Round Globe’ is an important instance of how Blake portrays the birth of the fallen, abject body that exists in ‘fright’. In Blake’s poetry, there is a darkness that strives to come out and constantly endangers the prelapsarian childhood state.[[105]](#footnote-105) As Morris Eaves maintains, reading the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789, 1794) ‘can make them seem a hall of word-mirrors, each refracting at least several of the others’.[[106]](#footnote-106) For Blake, this interaction between innocence and experience is a sign of the fallen world, one which can be redeemed through the passion and revolution of bodies.

For Blake, beauty and perfection are not the primary objectives of poetic expression. Instead, Blake responds to Sir Joshua Reynolds’s *Discourses on Art* (1778)[[107]](#footnote-107) and the idea of beauty before passion by claiming that ‘Passion & Expression is Beauty Itself – The Face that is Incapable of Passion & Expression is Deformity Itself’.[[108]](#footnote-108) For Blake, the passionate is the beautiful, and therefore, for him, John Milton and William Cowper were both among the best of poets. In his 1804 letter to William Hayley, patron, and friend, he writes: ‘I have the happiness of seeing the Divine countenance in such men as Cowper and Milton more distinctly than in any prince or hero’.[[109]](#footnote-109) Because of Blake’s passionate poetics, the reader finds the grotesque depictions of Urizen’s birth in the epigraph of this chapter extremely affecting, and very much alive. The ‘Panting, conglobing, trembling’, the branching out of endless sinews around the bones of the body in an ongoing agony of painful creation, pronounce the unique character of Blake’s Gothic imagery. The word ‘conglobing’ (gathering into a globe), placed between the very physical activities of ‘Panting’ and ‘trembling’, is just one example of Blake’s raw anatomical imagery. Carmen S. Kreiter also observes that Blake’s choice of the word ‘conglobing’ to describe ‘the heart’s action’ shows ‘something seen only when the heart is viewed through a surgically opened chest’.[[110]](#footnote-110) Blake’s carefully constructed image of Urizen’s ‘conglobing’ and fearful heart is one of many expressions of Blake as Gothic artist and writer conversant with the political and scientific changes of his time through the quasi-religious mission of his Gothicism, and his peculiarly anatomical description of horrific, sinewy bodies.[[111]](#footnote-111) The word ‘conglobing’ stands out because of its placement in the middle of the line and its extra syllable, which makes it even more prominent in its descriptive effect.

Blake’s continued interest in the Gothic can be traced back to his persistent attraction to eighteenth-century graveyard poetics, whose aberrant imagery can be found creeping into Blake’s own poetry. David Punter tracks Blake’s ‘continuing interest in the graveyard poets’ in his ongoing ‘preoccupation with morbid vocabulary’, of which the works of poets like Robert Blair and Edward Young provided ample specimens. [[112]](#footnote-112) In Young’s *Night-Thoughts* (1742), for instance, Young’s visionary language about the mortal body’s confinement and its release through apocalyptic death precedes Blake’s and its reprinting in 1798 shows how this poetry remained popular, and even more so during the new order of things that the French Revolution seemed to bring: ‘Life is the triumph of our mouldering clay; / Death, of the spirit infinite’ (467-8).[[113]](#footnote-113) What Punter calls the ‘restlessness of the later eighteenth century’[[114]](#footnote-114) certainly marked a transition from the poetry of reason, and a darker expression of the poetry of sensibility, which foregrounded passion and the outpouring of emotions. Young tellingly writes: ‘Are passions, then, the Pagans of the soul? / Reason alone baptized? / alone ordain’d / To touch things sacred?’ (629-631). For Young, as for Blake, passions can foster vision. As far as revolutionary apocalypse is concerned, bodies remain central in their inherent capacity for resurrection. In 1794, a renewed, post-revolutionary interest in the Gothic sublimity of graveyard poetry brought forth a commission for Blake by Richard Edwards for a new edition of *Night Thoughts*, and his illustrations certainly set the ground for later depictions of characters in his Prophecies.[[115]](#footnote-115) Similarly, Blake’s revoked commission for Robert Blair’s *The Grave* (1743)*,* which he completed before being replaced by Louis Schiavonetti, are fine examples of the way Blake relates to graveyard poetry.[[116]](#footnote-116) In Blake’s engravings, we see a collection of skeletal bodies, divine bodies, corpses in graves, dying bodies, deadly bodies, all connected to *The Grave*’s religious *raison d’être*. However, Blake’s own writings were different from eighteenth-century Graveyard poetics in their compelling re-evaluation of apocalyptic experience. A new kind of subjectivity emerges as powerful affective expression on the one hand, and, on the other, as more personal, and less didactic. One reason Blake stands out is exactly this quasi-religious way of seeing the world, always by centralising the fallen human body in passion.

It is relevant to note that, according to Blake’s poetic and visual representations, the fallen body is a body of horror, which anticipates bodies of horror in German Gothic tales of the eighteenth century and in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796). Translated into English, Friedrich Schiller’s *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*, 1781), ‘and short novel *Der Geisterseher* (1784, partly translated into English in 1795 as *The Ghost-Seer, or Apparitionist*)’, as Rictor Norton claims, ‘were very influential on English works, and some of the Gothic novelists, especially Matthew Gregory Lewis, were well versed in German folk tales and ballads of the supernatural’.[[117]](#footnote-117) We have no evidence that Blake read or studied German Gothic poetry, but the sharpness of his Gothic poetic expressions are in line with basic characteristics of the German School of Horror, which Blake seems to anticipate. What distinguished the German School of Horror from other Gothic aesthetics at the time was its uninhibited rawness: ‘Sensationalistic ‘raw head and bloody bones’ are more characteristic of the School of Horror’ Norton writes, ‘and partly help to define it. Full-bodied demons have replaced the filmy spectres of the School of Terror’,[[118]](#footnote-118) of which Radcliffe is the most famous example. Norton is making this point about what he terms the ’School of Horror’ that greatly permeated English Gothic texts and recognises its ‘roots in German literature’.[[119]](#footnote-119) The extent of the influence and permeability of German Gothic for English texts across genres is recognised by Barry Murnane, who argues that there is a complexity of origin for English and German tastes when it comes to the Gothic. [[120]](#footnote-120) However, according to Murnane, British critics ‘sought to differentiate’ between these two tastes refer to in the 1800s, meaning both a dangerous kind of writing originating in Germany and the modern ‘British depravity of taste’.[[121]](#footnote-121) Whatever its point of origin, traces of the Gothic School of Horror can be found in Blake. William Blake’s gory bodies can be part of the second category as an expression, according to D. J. Moores, of what the self has thrown ‘in the refuse bin of the unconscious’.[[122]](#footnote-122) More specifically, Moore observes the meeting of ‘extremes’ in Romantic writing, a ‘doubling process’ by which the reasoning ego (Moores adopts the psychoanalytical vocabulary in his analysis of Jung and the process of doubling) isolates ‘unwanted parts’ and represses them.[[123]](#footnote-123) Maria Beville agrees when she writes that there is an attraction / repulsion dynamic when it comes to the ‘darker side of our known “realities”’, which terror hints at, but whose darkness alludes to ‘unimaginable horrors’.[[124]](#footnote-124)

The extreme rawness of the horror body strangely echoes the brutal horror of Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*, and there is evident affinity in the way both Blake and Lewis presented the abjection of Gothic bodies. After Lewis’s death in 1818, *The Courier* published a scathing review of the author’s book and politics. More precisely, the author of the review called *The Monk* ‘an eloquent evil’, and Lewis as ‘compounding poison for the multitude’ by the mortality he exposes in his writing and his ‘naked and diseased sensibility’.[[125]](#footnote-125) Earlier, Coleridge condemned the horror of a direct encounter with our ugliest nature in *The Monk* by drawing attention to Lewis’s ‘images of naked horror’ that inevitably force us to ‘sit at the dissecting-table of a natural philosopher’.[[126]](#footnote-126) Blake’s Gothic bodies also put forth a similar nakedness that repeatedly alludes to unconscious powers working in the dark. While terror in the Radcliffean sense ‘is implied’, and never extends ‘beyond the realms of probability’, as Eric Parisot argues,[[127]](#footnote-127) horror in writing shocks, freezes, and repulses. Indeed, Radcliffe refers to this element of probability that envelops terror in her ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, where she expands on the influence of terror in Shakespeare’s rendering of Hamlet’s ghost. Terror dwells on the moments the supernatural is ‘*permitted*’ (my italics) to appear.[[128]](#footnote-128) Blake and Lewis construct bodies that break these boundaries. There is evidence that Blake read Lewis’s *The Monk*, or at least that he was familiar with the tale and way of writing. His wife Catherine illustrated ‘Agnes’, a lurid tempera of *The Monk*’s Agnes in a foetal position desperately clutching her dead baby inside her prison.[[129]](#footnote-129)



Fig. 1: Catherine Blake, *Agnes*, 1800 **©** The Fitzwilliam Museum

Catherine’s illustration marks a Blakean contact with one of the most horrific scenes in Lewis’s book. After her baby’s death, Agnes refuses to give it up for burial, even though it ‘soon became a mass of putridity, and to every eye was a loathsome and disgusting object’.[[130]](#footnote-130) In the illustration, Agnes’s posture as a protective mother holding closely the dead body of her baby is foregrounded and creates a mixed feeling of sympathy and horror because of the viewer’s awareness of the decomposed body of Agnes’s child. The same putridity would be included in the later description of the dead Nun that comes to sweep Lorenzo away in Lewis’s novel.

The bloody, wounded body of the bent Monk in Blake’s ‘The Grey Monk’ from the *Pickering Manuscript* (1807) is a further example of the artist’s affinity with raw physical descriptions. As Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger point out, ‘The Grey Monk’ is, in fact, one of Blake’s poems representing strong ‘ecclesiastical characters’, which extend to the ‘corrupt, despotic priests and monks’ we find in Blake’s ‘The Chimney Sweeper’, and Ambrosio in Lewis’s novel.[[131]](#footnote-131) The description of the Monk’s bloody, tortured body belongs to this wider Gothic tradition of portraying complex characters of authority, and the body offers a space to inscribe the Monk’s troubled existence.

Over the course of his career, Blake foregrounded the body as an integral part of visionary experience, even in his most spiritual writings. Even as early as in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), Blake writes: ‘Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call’d Body is a portion of Soul discern’d by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age’ (10-11). For Blake, body and mind are both the recipients and channels of perception and imaginative experience, and both integral parts of being human. Rather than reinforce the Enlightenment body-mind dichotomy that inevitably separates imagination from the body, Blake champions bodies of horror and imagination through which we have access to vision. Erin M. Goss acknowledges this when she says that Blake moves away from the ‘bodily limitation’ of theories by Locke, Bacon, and Newton and into a more complex ‘assessment of the relationship between the “Corporeal Eye” and what he terms “Vision”.[[132]](#footnote-132) Perception is not reached merely by the sensual experience of the mortal body, but by something deeper that involves a re-evaluation of the body through the power of horror, chaos, and imagination. In this vein, when Northrop Frye argues in his pioneering *Fearful Symmetry* (1969), that ‘the fall of man’s mind’ in Blake’s quasi-spiritual world ‘involved’ a correlated ‘fall of the physical world’,[[133]](#footnote-133) he is referring to a web of body imagery that pours out from the moment of the great fall, and which will play a pivotal role in re-instating imagination and vision. Taking it a step further, Frye explains that, for Blake, this correlation takes even greater dimensions in that ‘the fall of man and the creation of the physical world were the same event’.[[134]](#footnote-134) In this sense, it is not accidental that Blake uses a Gothic body of fear to write prophetic books in complex biblical imagery, especially with the purpose of condemning corrupted bodies, and re-uniting the human and the spiritual. Indeed, Blake’s poetry presents a sinewy exposure of the terror of human anxiety, and how the apprehension of fear is expressed by the radical breaking and shaking of the bodies. Heavily inflected with such gory imagery of corruption and decay, the graphic physicality of Blake’s poetry would later transform his vision of fragmentation and mortality in his *The French Revolution,* and, later, in *Jerusalem*.

Blake was very much a poet of his time, and the purpose of this chapter lies ‘in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality’ of its ‘fundamental history’, and the ‘political Unconscious’[[135]](#footnote-135) of his prophecies. In truth, Blake’s political observations started early. Blake’s student years at the Royal Academy for painting, in which he enrolled in 1779 after his apprenticeship, found him widening his circle. John Flaxman and George Cumberland are among the prominent acquaintances, and Aileen Ward remarks that they were all joined by ‘their enthusiasm for classical art’ as well as ‘their radical stance in politics at a time of growing political and social unrest sparked largely by the American Revolution’.[[136]](#footnote-136) However, the French Revolution that followed left a larger imprint on Blake’s poetic vision, and the storming of the Bastille prison in 1789 compelled him to take an active role in the debate over the war, and refine his prophetic utterance into *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which the later prophecies would follow. Interestingly, Blake ‘cloaked himself in anonymity’ when *The Marriage* was published, probably because of the ‘fear of prosecution’, as ‘journalists and publishers’ were ‘being jailed all over the kingdom and radical leaders tried for treason’ after the establishment of the new Terror regime in France. [[137]](#footnote-137) Nevertheless, the energy of horror imagery is the force behind his political declarations, and the visionary graveyard poetics of the eighteenth century are transformed into sharp visionary pronouncement in all Blake’s prophetic books. To this day, Blake’s *America; a Prophecy* (1793) and *Europe; a Prophecy* (1794) are among his finest revolutionary writings, but his ultimate apocalyptic vision of disease and trembling fear within Albion’s Ulronic body is *Jerusalem*. In *Jerusalem*,the reader finds the re-collection of a lost meaning, and the emergence of a new, re-composed Romantic subjectivity through images of horror bodies.

The poet takes up the role of the visionary who encounters anxieties and fears on a deep personal and communal level and evokes images of fear that would foster imaginative transformation through a re-evaluation of the innocence/experience dynamic.[[138]](#footnote-138) The poet recognises this challenge at the beginning of *Jerusalem*:

Trembling I sit day and night, my friends are astonish'd at me.

Yet they forgive my wanderings; I rest not from my great task!

To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes

Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity

Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination

O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love:

Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life!

Guide thou my hand which trembles exceedingly upon the rock of ages,

While I write of the building of Golgonooza, & of the terrors of

Entuthon:

Of Hand & Hyle & Coban, of Kwantok, Peachey, Brereton, Slayd &

Hutton:

Of the terrible sons & daughters of Albion. and their Generations.

(Chapter 1, Plate 5, 16-26)

The ‘I’ of poetic utterance privatises Blake’s spiritual mission and echoes Milton’s similar evocation to his Muse in Book VII of *Paradise Lost* (1667)*:* ‘More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged / To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days, / Still govern thou my song,⁠ / Urania’ (24-5, 30-1). For Blake, *Milton* (1804-10) and *Jerusalem* were first and foremost a personal calling, the product of his ‘visionary studies’ dictated to him ‘even against my Will’; In the April 1803 letter to Thomas Butts, he says that his heart ‘is full of futurity. I perceive that the sore travel which has been given me these three years leads to Glory & Honour. I rejoice & I tremble’.[[139]](#footnote-139) Farrell indicates that ‘[t]he shift in Blake’s thought in the early 1800s is from corporeal war to mental fight but is no less radical for being so’.[[140]](#footnote-140) The gradual realisation of his prophetic role makes his later prophecies noticeably different from his earlier, more enthusiastic poetic expressions.

The persistent use of the word ‘trembling’ in *Jerusalem* and in Blake’s account of his new mission closely aligns with fear as a state of mind and body. The outlet of bodies of fear and in fear, especially from Blake’s *The Book of Urizen* (1794) onwards, will be analysed in the context of what Lucy Cogan calls a ‘contemporary culture of anxieties surrounding materialist discourses of the body, and fears as the French Revolution descended into chaos and violence’.[[141]](#footnote-141) Particular focus will be placed on the way images of bodies in fear bring out a revolution of movement in Blake’s *The French Revolution* and his *Jerusalem*, both of whichturn the fear of Urizen’s assault into re-evaluation and change, albeit in different ways. Along these lines, I will examine ‘the unconscious’ of ‘the gothic imagination’, as Joyce Carol Oates phrased it, which sets loose the ‘restraints’ of our deepest dreams, desires, and anxieties, and exposes our most profound wish to *re-collect* our humanity; ‘What we fear most’, Oates writes, ‘is not death, not even physical anguish, mental decay, disintegration. We fear most the loss of meaning’, and to ‘lose meaning is to lose one’s humanity’.[[142]](#footnote-142) Especially in the face of what Beville calls ‘the unrepresentable’, the one related to the death of meaning, Blake’s political agenda acquires new significance and leads to a more informed sense of self.[[143]](#footnote-143) What we are most attracted to, for Blake, are ‘the voices of the ground’ (Plate 6, IV, 8) that speak to us as they spoke to the Virgin from *The Book of Thel* (1789) ‘in the land of clouds thro’ valleys dark’ (Plate 6, IV, 6), urging us to ask questions. And even though we, like the Virgin, ‘shriek’ (Plate 6, IV, 21) at the sound of them we fly back to the world of eternity, but with a more informed view of our own complex, contrarious nature. The dark bodies of Blake’s poetry function exactly this way in that their interaction and energy through fear leads to a re-awakening of society’s body.

* 1. **Fear and Vampirism in Blake’s *The French Revolution***

If one closely observes Blake’s perpetual attraction to the Gothic, one can find that Blake has infiltrated Gothic tropes in his poetry as early as in his poem ‘Fair Elenor’ (1783) of his *Poetical Sketches* (1783). ‘Fair Elenor’ is even more important, in this context, both because it is replete with Gothic conventions, and because it seems to be written in the Gothic ballad tradition in which writers like Anne Bannerman also participated, as I will argue in Chapter Four. Especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Gothic ballad thematology tried to re-instate ‘the cultural remains of British antiquity’[[144]](#footnote-144) that Thomas Percy evoked in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) and his *Hermit of Warkworth* (1771). It is safe to say that, by adopting the Gothic ballad, Blake places ‘Fair Elenor’ within the British national tradition, and automatically politicises the ballad as fundamentally Gothic. Blake’s description of Fair Elenor’s encounter with her husband’s dead body that appears as a warning against marrying the evil duke evokes feelings of horror, and the effects are visually portrayed in a raw, direct way: ‘She sat with dead cold limbs, stiffen’d to stone’, before she becomes one with the corpse by a chilling kiss on ‘the pale lips’ of her dead husband ( 69-71). The appearance of the dead husband and Elenor’s unmediated physical contact with the body of the ghost stages the same intrusion of the horror ghost body that pervades poems like Bannerman’s ‘The Perjured Nun’ (*Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, 1802), in the form of a clasp from the female dead more directly, and like Joanna Baillie’s Gothic bodies more indirectly. Moreover, it is worth observing that Blake’s *Poetical Sketches* (1783), of which ‘Fair Elenor’ is part, was written before Baillie’s and Bannerman’s ghost poetry, something that renders ballads like ‘Fair Elenor’ central in the voices of Gothic bodies raised in response to society’s suppressed realities. By the ghastly physical exchange between Elenor and her husband, the body of fear and the body in fear are joined and rendered indistinguishable in their physiological description and poetical presence when Elenor’s horror disintegrates. Interestingly, ‘fair Elenor’ adopts and re-writes many of the most generic Gothic tropes. There is a grim castle, and a ‘hollow’ atmosphere of ‘corruptible death’ (4, 14), which gradually but steadily moves from ominous ‘deep sighs’ (16) into the full revelation of the ‘gory’ (60) husband.

We do not often find in Blake’s poetry the presence of imagery that very much resembles Radcliffe’s, matched with the coarse blood descriptions that adorn Lewis’s writings. In fact, Blake’s ‘The Grey Monk’ from *The Pickering Manuscript* (1801-3) openly expresses the recurrent images death, blood, and decay as space for socio-political commentary. In ‘The Grey Monk’, ‘fear’ features as a yoke that summons wars and impoverishes, and a trembling, Christ-like Monk prays for the world’s redemption. Evidently, the ‘Grey Monk’ has wounds in ‘His hands and feet’ as well as ‘blood red’ dripping from his side (5-6), symbols of the perennial sacrifice of Christ’s body, and of the fallen mortality that Blake elaborates more fully in his later prophecies. More than this, the dripping blood anticipates Blake’s later masterful aesthetics of horror as it forces the reader to encounter the vulnerability of the body, manifest as an abject other. The blood directly refers to something purely physical that oozes from the body, thereby alluding to bodies of horror that expose their raw physicality and bring outside what happens inside the body. At the same time, the wounded body of the Monk acquires the spiritual dimension of nurturing through its association with Christ’s body. In reference to Blake’s relationship with the Methodist sect, Michael Farrell notes that ‘[f]rom 1743 until around 1750, Moravian devotion increasingly emphasised the blood and wounds of Christ, in particular the side-wound’.[[145]](#footnote-145) Farrell goes on to account for the way devotees sought after ‘spiritual nurture’ and a ‘partaking of Christ’s body’ through the blood and wound of Christ.[[146]](#footnote-146) The persistent presence of blood in Blake’s Gothic writings, as I will argue, is a symptom of the way blood imagery informs Gothic descriptions of feeding on and draining the body politic in the context of interacting bodies of fear that thrive on energy and chaos.

The preoccupation with movement and creative energy that we see in Blake informs both his political and aesthetic register. In line with such allegiance to Gothic energy in poetry and art, Blake famously condemns ‘The Classics’[[147]](#footnote-147) in his essay ‘On Homer’s Poetry’, for bringing desolation in ‘Europe with Wars’, and explicitly exalted, in his ‘On Virgil’, the ‘Living Form’ of the Gothic, the only aesthetics in alignment with imaginative vision and a disposition to ‘Make’, and create, which, for Blake, is the only proof of the movement of the imagination. While, according to Thora Brylowe, Blake’s engraving education must have instructed him ‘to appreciate a specific kind of formal artistic style’, one that was on a par with ‘the neoclassical taste’ that prevailed during the time, Blake turned to a certain kind of ‘[p]opular antiquarianism’ that favoured ‘provincial Anglicanism’ and its Gothic antiquities.[[148]](#footnote-148) Blake’s course of education all the way through to his Basire apprenticeship was a way of outgrowing the classical for the more refined, universalised locality of Gothic prophetic vision, a style much more energetic than the stasis of classical antiquity. The choice of the word ‘energetic’ is relevant in this context, and clashes with the non-productive suspension of energy that characterises the Urizenic world. It is along these lines that France’s shaking must be placed in Blake’s *The French Revolution*. William Richey contends that the poem constitutes ‘Blake’s most public attempt’, along with Burke, Paine, and Wollstonecraft, to engage with the ‘ongoing English debate over the French Revolution’.[[149]](#footnote-149) This points to the relevance of Blake’s work within the contemporary socio-political context and the significance of the way he uses horror bodies to express personal and political anxieties.

Blake’s *The French Revolution* is one of the poet’s prominent commentaries of the revolutionary fervour that dominated the country after the advent of the French Revolution. Written in 1791, the poem is the only one of Blake’s poetic expressions that was destined for traditional publication.[[150]](#footnote-150) According to Aileen Ward, *The French Revolution* was ‘planned in seven books’ but was withdrawn ‘after the first was set up in print in 1791’.[[151]](#footnote-151) Incidentally, the poem was supposed to be published by the editor and publisher Joseph Johnson, for whom Blake was already working by the 1780s and whose ‘bookshop was a center for dissenting intellectuals such as Paine, Priestley, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Horne Tooke’ (Blake also met Henry Fuseli through Johnson).[[152]](#footnote-152) Blake’s involvement in the Johnson circle is not often foregrounded in discussions of his politics by scholars, but it is a crucial indicator of how involved Blake was in the politics of his time, as well as of his engagement with radical ideas about the French Revolution, especially in association with the radicals of the 1790s. Though not completed, *The French Revolution* features as Blake’s ‘poetic contribution to the fierce Revolution Controversy’ that involved Richard Price, Edmund Burke, Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine.[[153]](#footnote-153) The fact that the poem was eventually withdrawn from publication (Blake’s name as an author did not appear even in its first publication attempt) and it was not until 1913 that it was published in John Sampson’s *Poetical Works of William Blake* may have been connected to Johnson’s concerns about the poem’s radical content – after all, Johnson also ‘withdrew Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* the same year.’[[154]](#footnote-154) As seditious libel and treason accusations surged in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and Johnson himself was imprisoned in 1799, it would make sense that the contents of *The French Revolution* rendered the poem dangerous, especially since it is one of Blake’s least veiled attempts at using the actual historical moment to comment on revolutionary ideas.

The poem focuses upon the centuries-long problems of the French monarchy, and what Blake presents as rotten, deep-rooted institutions, which are eventually overthrown in the poem during the destruction of the Bastille prison. *The French Revolution* is unique among Blake’s revolutionary poems because, though its events are ‘treated as a single Day of Judgement or Morning of Resurrection’ as David V. Erdman points out, Blake is giving ‘cosmic significance to specific historical figures and events’, and ‘historical particulars are clear and explicit.’[[155]](#footnote-155) At the poem’s beginning, the languid Prince is on the couch amidst an atmosphere of disintegration and decay, ‘his strong hand outstretch’d, from his shoulder down the bone,’ and running ‘aching cold into the sceptre, too heavy for mortal grasp’ (3-4), which does more than evoke the destructive stasis of the past. In many ways, Blake’s regal body of pain and sickness reverses Burke’s image of a ‘healthy’ constitution nurtured by ‘the course of succession’ in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).[[156]](#footnote-156) Bodies of darkness / torture proliferate during the convulsive movement of France to shake off the rust of monarchy, and the trembling of the ‘nerves’ of the ancient ancestry (69). Therefore, Blake instantly sets the contrast between the current state of death and disintegration that permeates France and the subsequent burst of revolutionary chaos and energy that accompanies the descent of Liberty, and which is expressed through the lurid description of bodies of fear.

In this setting, the Bastille trembles,[[157]](#footnote-157) and exposes the sinewy place where outcasts are being kept prisoners in a freakish, horrific procession of bodies, death, and skeletons:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

[. . .] And the den nam‘d

Horror held a man

Chain‘d hand and foot; round his neck an iron band, bound to the

impregnable wall;

In his soul was the serpent coil’d round in his heart, hid from the

light, as in a cleft rock:

And the man was confin’d for a writing prophetic. In the tower nam‘d

Darkness was a man

Pinion‘d down to the stone floor, his strong bones scarce cover‘d

With sinews; the iron rings

Were forg‘d smaller as the flesh decay’d: a mask of iron on his face hid

the lineaments

Of ancient Kings, and the frown of the eternal lion was hid from the

oppressed earth.

In the tower named Bloody, a skeleton yellow remained in its chains

on its couch

Of stone, once a man who refus’d to sign papers of abhorrence; the

eternal worm

Crept in the skeleton. In the den nam’d Religion, a loathsome sick

woman, bound down

To a bed of straw; the seven diseases of earth, like birds of prey, stood

on the couch,

And fed on the body: she refus’d to be whore to the Minister, and

with a knife smote him. (26-38).

Bodies in chains, decaying flesh, skeletal remains, sick, cannibalistic bodies, and many more palpable images of death and long-held suspension do ample justice to the way that Lewis describes, in his novels, the effluvia of the human condition, and the crumbling of identity. For example, the image of the worm creeping out of the skeleton is a glaring example of Blake’s emphasis on the decay of the human body and its disturbing mortality in a way that anticipates Lewis’s description of dead bodies like the state of Agnes’s baby in *The Monk*. These bodies are what Sarah Cohen Shabot calls ‘grotesque’, always physical and always excessively concrete, described in detail as living in between, among the ‘excess and residue’ of the liminal human state.[[158]](#footnote-158) For Shabot, grotesque bodies like these threaten our ‘sameness’, our ideas of normality. At the same time, these bodies attract and repulse us, as Justin Edwards and Rune Graulund observe, by offering ‘insights into the limits of the body and human experience.[[159]](#footnote-159) The sinews of the prisoner’s ‘strong bones’ and the decaying flesh in *The French Revolution* not only reveal the rottenness of incarceration in the name of nation and religion, but also the feeding off the body by the ‘seven diseases of the earth’, the disintegration of the outside and the unraveling of the inside skeletons eaten by eternal worms. The symbolic power of this image relies heavily in the portrayal of a body politic seemingly healthy on the outside that is slowly but steadily eaten away only to reveal the rot that it fostered but carefully hid all along.[[160]](#footnote-160) What strikes most in this succession of images is the way the appalling mortal body is exposed and foregrounded.

In her salient study of abjection *Powers of Horror* (1980), Kristeva refers to this crossing of the boundaries between inside and outside when she talks about abjection,[[161]](#footnote-161) and the loathing such putrescence gives rise to: ‘Loathing a piece of food, a piece of filth, waste or dung’, is exactly what leads to ‘[t]he spasms and vomiting that protect me’,[[162]](#footnote-162) disturbing the inside/outside boundary of identity at the same time as it protects it. The spectacle of the horror bodies that we see in Blake’s Bastille are precisely this contact with abjection, the encounter with the horror inside, which is visualised on the moment of revolution/revelation. Especially for the person who beholds them, this trail of human bodies lying around in suffering are reminiscent of Blake’s own *The* *House of Death* (1790), which is an illustration of a scene from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and features an array of bodies in despair and pain amidst the house of Lazarus where suffering is dominant, and death is triumphant because of the rampant disease. Paintings like Henry Fuseli’s *The Death of Cardinal Beaufort* (1772) and George Romney’s *John Howard Visiting a Lazaretto* (1790-4)[[163]](#footnote-163) also centralise the fearful body in suffering, elicit terror, and expose what Burke seems to fear, ‘our naked, shivering nature’ by exposing the body in all its pain and mortality.[[164]](#footnote-164) The posture of the bodies as well as the combination of colours and the interaction/placement among the bodies in the three paintings illustrate the way the bodies can variously articulate its state and emotions.



Fig. 2: William Blake, *The House of Death*, 1795–c.1805 © Tate, London 2018



## Fig. 3: Henry Fuseli’s *The Death of Cardinal Beaufort*, 1772, © The British Museum, 2018

## https://www.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/T/T03/T03547_10.jpg

## Fig. 4: [George Romney](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/george-romney-457), *John Howard Visiting a Lazaretto*, c.1791–2 © Tate, London 2018

Like the speaker in Dante’s *Inferno* (1308-21), whose ‘every pulsing vein’ is shaken by ‘a tremor’ (Canto 1, 90)[[165]](#footnote-165) by the creatures he beholds descending to the caverns of Hell, the beholder voyeuristically consumes fear by coming into contact with such bodies, partly because of the intensity of these bodies’ representation and partly because of their grotesque familiarity.[[166]](#footnote-166)

The deep dark cavern like Dante’s caverns of Hell and the ‘cavern’ of Urizen’s ‘joined spine’ in *The Book of Urizen* (the cavernous deep can also be seen in Romney’s painting), is important in demarcating the space of the other, and grotesque bodies like the decaying ones in Bastille’s prison are expressive of these places. In discussing the ‘grotto’, for example, Shabot makes the connection with the word ‘grotesque’ and argues that the grotto, like the crypt, is a ‘threatening place that inflames anxiety and fear. It is also a potential space of spatial internment that echoes the state of being confined within the physical limits of grotesque bodies.’[[167]](#footnote-167) The chained man, the sinewy man, and the old sick woman in the Bastille are marginalised and confined, just like Agnes in Lewis’s later Gothic romance *The Monk*.

For Blake, these bodies are exposed to full view, not obscurely hidden from the reader’s view. Burke, for instance, refers to a sense of obscurity when he talks about fear in the *Enquiry*. Screened by the power of dreams and vision, fear is aligned to anticipation in the presence of something bigger: ‘In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake’.[[168]](#footnote-168) For Blake, however, bodies of horror succeed better than sublime terror at arousing the reader from the sleep of reason and pragmatism. This is the ability to give ‘the first alarm to the still sleeping passions’ that Coleridge later condemns in writings like *The Monk*., which, according to Coleridge in his review of the novel, presents ‘[s]ituations of torment, and images of naked horror’, which is like dragging us ‘by way of sport through a military hospital, or force us to sit at the dissecting table of a natural philosopher’.[[169]](#footnote-169) Coleridge despises the unrestrained grotesqueness of Lewis’s descriptions, because the readers take the place of doctors who open the cadaver on the dissecting table and expose our raw physicality. The same ‘pain and violence’ ‘catapult[s]’, in Bruhm’s words, Blake’s response to ‘revolutionary political fervor’, just as it did for Wordsworth and Coleridge at the advent of the Revolution.[[170]](#footnote-170) In this context, at the moment when ‘the prisoners have burst their dens’ (77), the monarchical assembly, which is presented as shaken, recoiling, and asked to make decisions in the face of danger, is haunted by a trail of spectral bodies in Blake’s *The French Revolution*, not unlike the spectral bodies of Coleridge’s opiated nightmares. On closer inspection, these spectres subtly echo Urizen’s terror army with the ‘cold hand’ and form ‘white as snow’ (130) that peculiarly resembles the thickening foam, ‘White as the snow’ (187), accompanying the enchainment of the Eternal mind in Blake’s *The Book of Urizen*. These spectres also seem to persistently ward off movement and change, as the spectre of Blake’s mythology does, exchanging the river for the lake, and the icy water of Urizen on Milton’s head for the ‘Water of life’ that Milton bathes in after the dissolution of selfhood in Blake’s *Milton*. In such a state of prophetic haunting, political vampirism is even more clearly manifested in the poem. Although not stated explicitly, upon the intrusion of fear in the narrative, the ‘flesh’ of the nobility is seen as ‘corrupted’, and ‘not numbered among the living’ (75). The ‘red fires’ the King’s army breathes in on the battlefield is visible to him through the window, and the Duke of Burgundy cannot hide his red hand, his ‘red limbs’ stretching ‘in flames of crimson’ (82-5) and rising from the monarch’s right-hand side.

This image of the hand is not new. In referring to the hand of nobility, Blake echoes Burke’s constant references to the ‘hand’ of monarchy holding ‘out graces, favors, and immunities’ that the revolutionaries have smitten, as well as the ‘hand’ of ‘a destroying angel’ like Cromwell[[171]](#footnote-171) whom Burke alleviates from disgrace because he, among many other heroic figures of Britain’s ancestral past, preserved ‘a conscious dignity, a noble pride, a generous sense of glory and emulation’, which come contrary to the present ‘confusion’[[172]](#footnote-172) and degradation of the French Revolution. Here, Blake reverses the image of the reviving hand of ancestral monarchy by presenting the monarch’s hand as ‘aching cold into the sceptre’ (4). Cold is also the hand of the spectre, ‘white as snow’, that passes over the ‘limbs’ of the Monarch (130), forewarning him of revolutionary destruction. Rather than hands that feed the people and bestow prosperity, monarchic hands are stiff with inactivity in Blake’s poem, as cold and white as stone.

The recurring figure of the hand is previously referred to and exemplified in Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776), who introduces the idea of self-interest as an ‘invisible hand’[[173]](#footnote-173) that drives economic actions beneficial to society. This view of laissez-faire that is served by a mode of economy free from government intervention but directed to self-interest acquires almost supernatural dimensions if viewed as an invisible source that directs the present, much in the same way as the ‘gigantic hand in armour’ that Horace Walpole mentions in his letter to William Cole in 1765 pertaining to the composition of his Castle of Otranto (1764). Walpole writes:

I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream, of which all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour.[[174]](#footnote-174)

Almost depriving him of human agency, the ‘gigantic hand’ of ancestral inheritance, similar to Burke’s elevation of ‘mortmain’ as an organic tie between generations, guides Walpole’s hand in writing *The Castle of Otranto*, much like Blake’s call to the Savior to ‘Guide thou my hand’ (*J* 8)in the act of composing *Jerusalem*. [[175]](#footnote-175)The hand referred to in Burke and Walpole is a haunting presence that belongs to the past at the same time as it maintains a close connection to the present, much like the ghost hand in the fragment texts of Anna Letitia Aikin’s ‘Sir Bertrand’ (1773) and John Keats’s ‘This living hand, now warm and capable’ (1819). The benign ancestral hand that we find in Burke and Walpole is re-written in Blake’s *The French Revolution* as the cold, spectral hand that is unable to hold ‘the sceptre’ anymore, because the sceptre is ‘too heavy for mortal grasp’ (4). The sceptre falls under the impotent grip of the king’s pale hand and the red hand of the Duke of Burgundy.

The coldness of the noble hand concurs with the general atmosphere of sickness pervading the initial description of France, which alludes luridly to the fading away of the body politic:

|  |
| --- |
| Sick the mountains! and all their vineyards weep, in the eyes of the  kingly mourner; |
| Pale is the morning cloud in his visage. Rise, Necker! the ancient  dawn calls us |
| To awake from slumbers of five thousand years. I awake, but my soul  is in dreams; |
| From my window I see the old mountains of France, like aged men,  fading away. (6-9) |

The sickness of nature, as well as the paleness of the atmosphere and the corpse-like ‘slumbers of five thousand years’ echo stories from Hungary that prevailed in eighteenth-century Britain about ‘*dead Bodies* sucking, as it were, the Blood of the *Living*; for the *latter* visibly dry up, while the *former* are fill’d with Blood.’[[176]](#footnote-176) Vampirism is, therefore, existent as something that refers to these Gothic bodies sucking the life out of the living, a very physical interaction of bodies that carry socio-political implications for a text such as *The French Revolution*. The poetic exhortation to historical figures like Necker, who was a central figure in the service of the King as minister during the French Revolution, not only reminds us of Lord Byron’s later call to the Greeks in his *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812), but also shows how informed Blake was about what was happening during his time. The aura of vampirism and haunting that informs Blake’s *The French Revolution* offers a way of interpreting and expressing contemporary events and falls under the category of politicising Gothic bodies of fear. Indeed, as Nick Groom notes, by the 1750s vampires ‘were everywhere’:

vampires were by now increasingly recognized as able to rise from the dead and infiltrate dwelling places, as murderous stranglers and bloodsuckers, as incorruptible corpses responsible for the spread of epidemic disease, as embodiments of fears of medicine and anatomical science’ about the limits of life and death, as allegories of East European politics and metaphors for the oppressive practices of commerce and the armed forces, and as impervious to most forms of physical assault except decapitation, staking and cremation.[[177]](#footnote-177)

Vampires provided an apt metaphor for the state of health of the body politic. As Groom argues, the vampire trope was used by ‘both sides of the Reformation and Protestant debate’ to signify a ‘religious crisis,’ and matched descriptions of the body politic like Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* to suggest the vitality of the political body. Henry Sascheverell’s *The Political Union* (1702), which predates *The French Revolution*, is also an example that Groom uses to analyse the discourse of the pathology of the body politic, and point out that the ‘integrity of a nation could thus be menaced by pestilence and parasites’, which could be war, division, revolution, anarchy.[[178]](#footnote-178) Even from the eighteenth century, the question of vampirism and the supernatural infiltrated works like Rousseau’s *Emile* (1762) in a discussion between two characters (the Believer and the Reasoner) on the supernatural, and Voltaire’s *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* (1772). [[179]](#footnote-179) Vampirism was variously approached as supernatural truth or a figment of religious zeal and imagination. Real or imaginary, vampires brought ‘a black illumination to the Enlightenment, by challenging the epistemological foundations of rationalism and empirical knowledge’, at the same time as they equipped literature with a powerful signifier for the political body.[[180]](#footnote-180)Even a century later, the vampire metaphor remained pertinent in socio-political theories of the body politic. As Stephen Shapiro observes, ‘Marx repeatedly invokes a Gothic lexicon of the undead, lycanthropes, and dripping blood to characterize capital’s damage to human subjects.’[[181]](#footnote-181) Even more importantly, Marx links the emergence of ‘restless corpses’ with the middle class’s ‘collective’ nightmares.[[182]](#footnote-182) , thus showing how the Gothic’s relentless focus upon physical abject bodies of fear is bodied forth from unconscious anxieties, which haunt the personal and political self.

In Romantic texts, there is plenty of evidence for this ‘vampire’ fascination. Like the eighteenth century, ‘the Nineteenth Century’, Peter Day says, ‘was awash with vampire inspired writing’.[[183]](#footnote-183) Gottfried August Bűrger’s *Lenore* (1773) and Robert Southey’s *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) are among many examples, like Lord Byron’s *The Giaour* (1813), Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Christabel* (1816), and John Keats’s *The Eve of St. Agnes* (1820), of literary vampires in different shapes and forms. Of these, John Polidori’s infamous *The Vampyre* (1819) would inspire generations of vampire literature with its Byronic quality and vampire tropes. Blake’s fascination with the borders between human and animal that a vampire induces can be placed in this context.[[184]](#footnote-184) Erle records Blake’s influence by Johann Caspar Lavater’s *Essays on Physiognomy* (1804), where Lavater forms the connection between physical appearance and personal character, and Blake’s illuminations can tell many stories about the relation of the face/body that he draws to the morality/mentality behind the illuminations. *The Ghost of a Flea* (1819-20), for example, is very peculiar depiction of an anthropomorphic flea that parasitically feeds off its victim.[[185]](#footnote-185)



## Fig. 5: William Blake, *The Ghost of a Flea*, c. 1819-20 © Tate, London 2018

Sibylle Erle analyses the physiognomy of Blake’s tempera and compares Blake’s *Flea* with Polidori’s *Vampyre* and other Vampire stories across the literature of the period. Blake’s flea, Erleclaims, has a ‘hybrid body’ with a ‘stylish cruelty’ in that it ‘does not suck its victim’s blood, it attacks and bleeds them, collecting the blood in an acorn-shaped bowl’.[[186]](#footnote-186) In its hybridity, the flea constitutes what Shabot calls a ‘grotesque’ body that calls attention to ‘its emphatically embodied existence’ and its eccentric ‘particularity’.[[187]](#footnote-187) More specifically, the flea embodies a half-human and half-animal quality that persistently unsettles assumed categories of normality. As Erle argues, ‘Lavater had felt uneasy about human-animal resemblances.’[[188]](#footnote-188) The flea in Blake’s illumination is reminiscent of a human, but not quite. Its categorisation as a ‘ghost’ refers to the history of its origin, as, according to Blake, the body of the flea appeared before him like a vision, a spirit that was part of a series of spirits revealed to him that he drew as part of ‘Visionary Heads’ (1820).[[189]](#footnote-189) This is particularly relevant to the flea’s status as a Gothic body that haunts in its very real embodiment, humanbut also supernatural and animal/monstrous qualities. In fact, Blake’s art and poetry abound with such bodies. Other examples of Blake’s uncanny/grotesque bodies of fear include The Great Red Dragon in ‘The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in Sun’ (1805), as well as Behemoth in ‘Behemoth and Leviathan’ (1825), both of which bodies show anthropomorphic traits (human body/human face) but disturb the boundaries of the human by foregrounding animal/monstrous characteristics.[[190]](#footnote-190) These are only a few instances of Blake’s Gothic bodies of horror that confuse the boundaries of the human and constitute bodies of fear in their impact on the reader/viewer of Blake’s poetry/art.



## Fig. 6: William Blake, *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in Sun*, c. 1805 © National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

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## Fig. 7: William Blake, *Behemoth and Leviathan*, 1825, 1874 © Tate, London 2018

While bodies like the Great Red Dragon and Behemoth exhibit anthropomorphic characteristics here and there, such as human hands or a human ear and human-like eyes, the flea goes beyond a mere pastiche of human and animal qualities. The flea is unique in that the human and the inhuman blend into each other in a way that highlights the intrusion of the grotesque into the ‘human’ through its threatening vampiric stance. Consequently, the flea can be associated ‘with death and disease’, ‘a metaphor for a threat which is difficult to detect’ because it comes from within.[[191]](#footnote-191)

In Blake’s *The French Revolution*,the paleness of the body politic is a similar sign of disease. Revolutionary energy is stale and dry, as the Bastille is ready to ‘devour’ the revolutionaries (155-6) if they fail to change the constitution. At the beginning of the poem, the ‘terrible towers’ (19) of the Bastille contain drained skeletons and sickly prisoners who have transgressed, in one way or another, monarchic and religious rule. Thus, we see the ‘seven towers dark and sickly’ (25) confining inmates like the Prophet with a ‘serpent coil’d round in his heart’ (28), the ‘old man’ (38) decaying under a grave-like prison, ‘with spiders wove’ and ‘snakes and scorpions’ as companions that steadily ‘breathe / His sorrowful breath’ (40-2), and, of course, the seven diseases that, ‘like birds of prey, stood on the couch / And fed on the body’ of a ‘loathsome sick woman’ (35-7).

The body politic is sick, and war is, for Blake, both the cause and the remedy. As Marie Mulvey-Roberts argues, ‘[i]n the act of parasitically feeding off a living body, the vampire functions as an appropriate trope for the draining effects of war on the body politic’, much in the same way as ‘Albion’s mountains run with blood’ amidst ‘the cries of war & of tumult’ (6) in Chapter I of Blake’s *Jerusalem*, after the shattering division of Albion, and the living death of Ulro that keeps the ‘soul’s disease’ and darkens the ‘Divine Vision’ (13).[[192]](#footnote-192) Horror bodies like corpses and the living-dead, bodies-politic that spit out blood, shiver, and suffer from the ‘pestilent vapours’ (274) of war, like the body politic in *The French Revolution*, have a bearing on questions of abjection, rather than be explicit signifiers of death. Blood persists here too, as in Blake’s ‘The Grey Monk’, and carries the mark of the abject, mortal body that is constantly exposed to death and decay. Blood is everywhere in Blake’s poetry and its circulation in moments of chaos and abjection is also evident in *The First Book of Urizen* (the ‘red globe’ mentioned at the beginning of the chapter is but one example), where the word ‘blood’ is mentioned nine times, and where Blake makes a reference to the ‘veins / Of blood’ (30-1) that run through Urizen’s world in rivers. It is interesting to note that both William and John Hunter debated the circulation of blood, and Blake may well have ‘had this description highlighted by the quarrel between the Hunter brothers over the discovery of the circulatory system, as George H. Gilpin maintains.[[193]](#footnote-193) In this, Blake borrows from contemporary scientific discourse to symbolise Urizen’s chaotic world as a chaotic abject body full of blood. According to Kristeva,

[a] wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death – a flat encephalograph, for instance, –I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – *cadere*, cadaver.[[194]](#footnote-194)

The abject, then, lies at the interstices of a pre-conscious state, and borders the separation of human and animal, of a Symbolic language and the Other. This is also evident in Plate 10 of Blake’s *First Book of Urizen*, which places the human body next to a skeleton in flames, both of which are in the same posture and whose interaction can be read as the contact with the body’s abjection.[[195]](#footnote-195)



Fig. 8: William Blake, *First Book of Urizen* pl. 10, 1796, c.1818 © Tate, London 2019

‘The body’s inside’, Kristeva says, ‘shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside’,[[196]](#footnote-196) and the blood that in Blake flows across the narrative of *The French Revolution* signifies this collapse, while also exposing the workings underneath the body politic. Thus, at the same moment that the red hand of the Duke reveals itself in its deadly crimsonness, the King is urged to ‘Let thy soldiers possess this city of rebels that threaten to bathe their feet / In the blood of Nobility’ (154-5). The revolutionaries are therefore perceived as the vampiric, chaotic, and monstrous threat to the noble bloodline. For the nobles, the revolutionaries constitute bodies of fear that prey upon the rich and are looking to drain their blood, at the same time as the nobles are portrayed as bodies of fear themselves through Blake’s description of their dead-like qualities.

Historically, the discourse of fear that finds expression in such writings as Blake’s and Burke’s also fuels the way people thought of the events of 1789. As Neil Fraistat and Susan S. Lanser remark, ‘the summer of 1789 also brought a wave of anti-aristocratic violence known as the ‘Great Fear’ that spread across the French countryside, destroyed considerable property, and spurred the first major emigration of nobility’.[[197]](#footnote-197) The apocalyptic tones around the French Revolution as a cosmic event that would set Europe on the course to liberty was widely acknowledged, and writings/reports like Helen Maria Williams’s *Letters Written in France* (1790) joined comments even from less liberal writers like Hannah More, whose *Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont* (1793) admitted English exaltation over the events. In such a climate, Burke’s description of the state in France came as a shock to his liberal contemporaries.[[198]](#footnote-198) In contrast to his chivalric depiction of monarchic constitution, Burke adopts the discourse of monstrosity to refer to the ‘monstrous democratic assemblies’[[199]](#footnote-199) several times in his *Reflections*, the ‘monstrous tragicomic scene’ that brings forth only ‘contempt and indignation’, ‘scorn and horror’.[[200]](#footnote-200) Again, the overflow of body refuse is dominant in his description of the horrors the royal family endured:

This king, to say no more of him, and this queen, and their infant children (who once would have been the pride and hope of a great and generous people) were then forced to abandon the sanctuary of the most splendid palace in the world, which they left swimming in blood, polluted by massacre and strewed with scattered limbs and mutilated carcasses. Thence they were conducted into the capital of their kingdom.[[201]](#footnote-201)

The imagery of overflowing blood is prominent in the above description and is coupled with images of mutilated body parts that are there to repulse Burke’s reader and represent the revolutionaries as monstrous bodies of fear that threaten the integrity of the regal body. Similarly, in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796), Burke goes a step further when he associates the practices of the mob with cannibalism:

By cannibalism, I mean their devouring, as a nutriment of their ferocity, some part of the bodies of those they have murdered; their drinking the blood of their victims, and forcing the victims themselves to drink the blood of their kindred slaughtered before their faces. By cannibalism, I mean also to signify all their nameless, unmanly, and abominable insults on the bodies of those they slaughter.[[202]](#footnote-202)

The assault on the bodies of the victims by the vampiric forces of the assembly is seen by Burke as the utmost disrespect for the body politic, whose kingly authorities we are supposed to fear, like God,[[203]](#footnote-203) and echoes the fear, in Blake’s *The French Revolution*, of the revolutionaries as blood-sucking monsters. Conversely, this perception of the revolution as a bloody threat is reversed by Blake into an apocalyptic casting off the chains of those who have been ‘kept in awe with the whip’, and who are ‘bred from the blood of revenge and breath of desire / In bestial forms, or more terrible men’ (213-4).

Blake recasts this image of revolutionary fear in the context of monarchy’s radical disintegration, and its encounter with its own haunting anxieties. As we have seen, Blake has unravelled, from the very beginning of *The French Revolution*, the ghastly inactivity and pain of the monarchy’s bodies, as well as their vampiric practices, much like the energies set free in Satan’s Pandemonium, and by Moloch, ‘horrid king besmear’d with blood’ (392) in the first Book of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.[[204]](#footnote-204) However, in envisioning France’s trembling and the earthquake of change, Blake presents the Revolution as something sublime,[[205]](#footnote-205) which Burke, for all his association of the sublime with fear, has dismissed as ‘false’, a ‘perversion’, as Mark Neocleous claims, not in the least impregnated with ‘awe or admiration’.[[206]](#footnote-206) But it is a sublime energy in Blake’s radicalism, even though he condemned the propagations of men like Voltaire and Rousseau for their adherence to Enlightenment principles; in Blake’s ‘An Island in the Moon’ (1784), for instance, Voltaire is emphatically the object of ridicule by Obtuse Angle. Even in *The French Revolution*, the cloud that encircles Voltaire and the rocks of Rousseau bear witness to the qualities Blake associated them with. On the contrary, the bodies in fear in *The French Revolution* respond to the call for released energy, contra the dictates of reason; as the Devil said in Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, ‘Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy’ (11-12). In this sense, Colebrook argues that the Blakean sublime is nothing like the Kantian sublime, in that Blake’s ‘Gothic sublime’ destroys ‘the coherence of the rational subject’ and allows ‘multiple voices and registers to generate’ different worlds,[[207]](#footnote-207) always in the context of imaginative energy. It is this difference that, according to Blake, can ‘open and unfold infinity’,[[208]](#footnote-208) through the cracks of fear, a clash of powers that sees the spectre of Henry in *The French Revolution* taking the side of ‘the revolutionary commoners’,[[209]](#footnote-209) and the noble La Fayette finally leading the Nation’s people, ‘inspir’d by liberty’ (284). The reconciliatory voice of Blake’s prophetic vision rests on this final harmonisation of ‘the frozen blood’ that ‘reflow’d’ (303), in the wake of the ‘morning’s beam’ (306). Fresh blood runs again through the veins of the newly awakened body politic and inaugurates the beginning of a new era, a body metamorphosis that Blake would further re-work in his *Jerusalem*.

* 1. **Monsters of the Apocalypse: Re-collecting William Blake’s *Jerusalem***

Blake’s *Jerusalem* holds a significant place, not just because Blake wrote it after he had developed his Romantic cosmology more extensively, but because it is Blake’s most articulate expression of the ‘Spiritual Acts’ that haunted his life.[[210]](#footnote-210) A ‘Soldier of Christ’,[[211]](#footnote-211) as he called himself in a letter to Thomas Butts in 1802, Blake always felt compelled to defend his spiritual vision of a re-assembled Divine Body that emerges through the bodies of the fall, even if pursuing his ideas meant social isolation and severe criticism. Robert Hunt of *The Examiner* was not long in calling Blake ‘an unfortunate lunatic’, a ‘poor man’ who ‘fancies himself a great master, and has painted a few wretched pictures, some of which are unintelligible allegory, others an attempt at sober characters by caricature representation, and the whole ‘blotted and blurred’, and very badly drawn’.[[212]](#footnote-212) Similarly, Henry Crabb Robinson claims in his Diary that Robert Southey held Blake ‘to be a decided madman’,[[213]](#footnote-213) and these are just a few examples of Blake’s reception by his contemporaries.[[214]](#footnote-214) Even Blake’s close friend and patron William Hayley abstained from fully indulging Blake’s cosmology, and Blake is not far from the truth when he tells his brother that ‘As a Poet’, Hayley ‘is frighten’d of me & as a Painter his views & mine are opposite’.[[215]](#footnote-215) Blake did not fully understand the cause for this critical reception and the intensity of fear that his art inspired in his contemporaries is closely aligned with the ‘pictures of horror’ in his art and poetry, showing, as Punter claims, the ‘potential political dimensions of the Gothic’.[[216]](#footnote-216) Even from the very beginning of *Jerusalem*, Blake pays attention to these ‘jealous fears’ that inscribe Albion’s speech when he disavows Jerusalem, and proclaims war and individuality as the ultimate rulers of its body (*J* 25-34).

Plate 25 of *Jerusalem*, which now belongs to the Paul Mellon collection in the Yale Center for British Art,will help structure my argument around three main points of reference: the fall of Albion’s body and spectral fragmentation, the function of fibres and sinews, and the Veiling/unveiling of monsters in the poem.

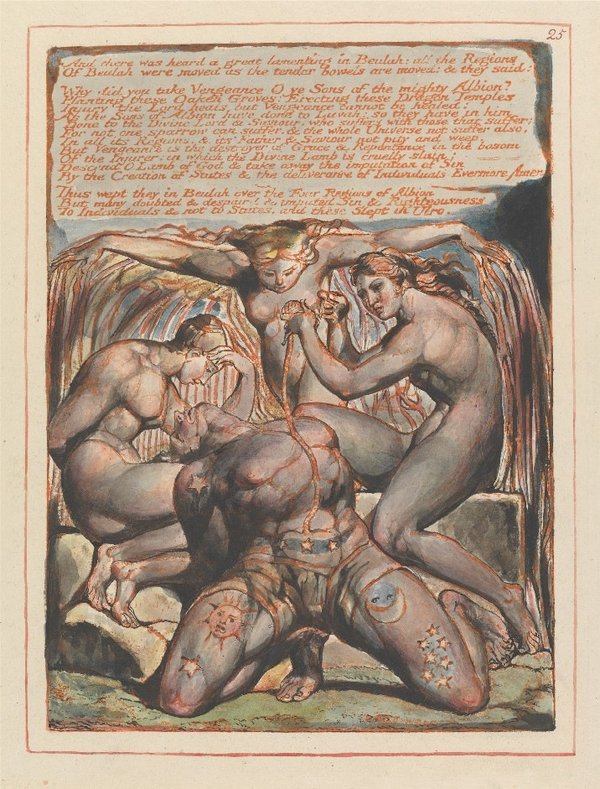


Fig. 9: William Blake, Jerusalem, Plate 25: "And There Was Heard a Great Lamenting in Beulah", 1804 to 1820, Bentley Copy E © Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

In the illumination, Albion’s body is strategically placed at the centre of this grotesque image of national disembowelment, and the three female bodies of Rahab, Vala, and Tirzah are seen tormenting Albion in a gruesome act of druidic sacrifice.[[217]](#footnote-217) The plate is important in my analysis, not only because it draws attention to the body’s painful fragmentation, but also because it shows Tirzah,[[218]](#footnote-218) the embodiment of worldly sense experience, in a posture of suspended weaving out of Albion’s bowels. In this light, the cord that is seen in Tirzah’s hands alludes to a profusion of web and fibre images replete in Blake’s prophecies that exemplify the veil of human perception, and the curbing of imaginative vision through physical concealment. In ‘To Tirzah’ of Blake’s *Songs of Experience*, we find a similar claustrophobic feeling of mortal incarceration, and binding of the body, much like the binding of the grotesque bodies in Blake’s *The French Revolution*:

Thou, mother of my mortal part,   
With cruelty didst mould my heart,  
And with false self-deceiving tears  
Didst bind my nostrils, eyes, and ears

Didst close my tongue in senseless clay,  
And me to mortal life betray. (9-12)

The binding of ‘nostrils, eyes, and ears’ in the form of ‘senseless clay’ is the state of the fall from the Divine body of Jesus, and Albion’s condition as a ‘sleeper of the land of shadows’ (6) at the beginning of *Jerusalem*. Also suggestive in ‘To Tirzah’ is the reference to the oppressive mother, an all-too-familiar Gothic trope that further shows how involved Blake is in the Gothic tradition. Mothers in Gothic literature are frequently absent and/or abjected, and if not so, as Ruth Bienstock Anolik observes, they are mostly presented as a threat to the identity of the main character: Anolik sees this ‘demonisation’ of the present mother as the only way in which ‘to survive and flourish in the Gothic text’.[[219]](#footnote-219) Following this, the mother in ‘To Tirzah’, quite possibly the Virgin Mary if one looks closely into the illustration of the poem and the inanimate, Christ-like figure at the centre, is forthrightly accused of confining the speaker, and imposing a mortal body-prison from which the speaker suffers.[[220]](#footnote-220) Re-directing the motif of the oppressive mother to Jesus’s familial drama, Blake re-invents his Gothicism at the same time as he appropriates reoccurring patterns of contemporary Gothic texts. Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya* (1806) is certainly admissible as an example of placing the blame on a decadent mother; Laurina is accused of destroying both her children by metaphorically binding them to a life of sin. In *Jerusalem*, too, fibres and nerves are bound and unbound, used as references of both an intimate connection as they are tied together, and the confinement that comes with the inability to freely move voluntarily This connection that the fibres both fuse and refuse meaning. They can confine the frail human body or set it free.

Blake’s psychophysical imagery of fear is again evident, if one looks closely into the imagery of undoing, trembling, shuddering, upsetting, and un-nerving that pervades *Jerusalem*. Fear is physical, and Burke remarks that its physical expression involves ‘a tension, contraction, or violent emotion of the nerves’,[[221]](#footnote-221) (p. 62-3), as we, indeed, see early on in *Jerusalem*. Los, the fallen body of Urthona and the figure of the Eternal Prophet in Blake’s poetry, descends into the inner recesses of Albion’s darkness, and the ‘disease that he sees ‘forming a Body of Death around the Lamb / Of God, to destroy Jerusalem, & to devour the body of Albion / By war and stratagem’ (9-11) devours the body of Albion like the horrors of the ‘infinite abyss’ that Blake draws in *A Vision of the Last Judgement* (1808). Here, too, there is emphasis on the caverns and abysmal pits of the incarcerated, grotesque body, leaving Albion a prey to the Gothic body of disease, and the distortion of imaginative vision, which looks at ‘the beauty of / Eternity’ as ‘deformity’ (7-8). In this world of division and disease, Los gives birth to his Spectre, a vampiric ‘black Horror’ (68)[[222]](#footnote-222) that is born out of Los’s back, ‘panting’, ‘howling’, terrified ‘in every nerve’ (15, 7), and haunting/preying on Los:

While Los spoke, the terrible Spectre fell shudd'ring before him

Watching his time with glowing eyes to leap upon his prey.

Los open'd the Furnaces in fear, the Spectre saw to Babel & Shinar

Across all Europe & Asia, he saw the tortures of the Victims.

He saw now from the outside what he before saw & felt from within,

He saw that Los was the sole, uncontroll'd Lord of the Furnaces,

Groaning he kneel'd before Los's iron-shod feet on London Stone,

Hung'ring & thirsting for Los's life yet pretending obedience,

While Los pursu'd his speech in threat'nings loud & fierce. (*J* 21-9)

Los’s Spectre is presented as a predator, a vampiric product of division that shudders at the sight of Los and his intentions to re-build Albion’s Divine body, at the same time as it cunningly thirsts and hungers ‘for Los’s life’. In this case, the Spectre holds a dual function; while it certainly figures a body of fear, terrible in its aspect, an ‘opake blackening Fiend’ (8) ready to devour Los, it is also a body in fear, terrified, panting, and spasmodic, ‘like a frighted wolf’ (15). This aberrant depiction of man’s fallen state, the exposed, howling human bodies with all these ‘modern man’s garments’ that Blake contested in their ‘ability to change the body’, as Tristanne J. Connolly observes, and ‘turn it *opaque*’,[[223]](#footnote-223) just as the spectre is portrayed as opaque, are represented by the profusion of spectral images in Blake’s *Jerusalem*, and their assimilation in the Veil of deception; ‘the Veil of Vala’, Blake writes, ‘is composed of the Spectres of the Dead’ (11).

To ‘enter into the Spectre’ means to ‘behold’ one’s ‘own corruptions’ (10); the veil of Vala is woven out of ‘the reptile flesh’ of spectral existence that the Daughters of Los behold when they create the ‘silk-worm & the Spider & the Catterpiller’ in their incessant weaving of the web that enables Rahab and Tirzah to parasitically ‘exist & breathe & love’ (43). This is a parasitic love, one built on feeding off another,[[224]](#footnote-224) and echoing Oothoon’s lament to Theotormon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793): ‘Can that be Love, that drinks another as a sponge drinks water?’ (17). In the case of parasitical vampirism, Blake’s *The Ghost of a Flea* is a prime example; Its animal propensities are in line with the strangely animalistic character of the spectres, who ‘rage like wild beasts in the forests of affliction’ (61), and coexist with the fibrous world of ‘vegetated mortality’, as Blake put it in a letter to John Flaxman.[[225]](#footnote-225) In fact, the illustration of Los’s Spectre in Plate 6 of *Jerusalem* as a dark, winged creature hovering thirstily over Los invites comparison with contemporary accounts in British periodicals about the ‘Vampyre Bat’, a creature whose

body is in general about a foot long, and the spreading of its wings nearly four feet; but it is sometimes found much larger, and some specimens have been seen of six feet in extent. Its general colour is a deep reddish brown. The head is shaped like that of a fox; the nose is sharp and black; and the tongue pointed.[[226]](#footnote-226)



## Fig. 10: William Blake, *Jerusalem*, Plate 6.

Studies of animal and plant life were abundant during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Blake’s imagery is proof that he was interested in physiology and the emotions. Vampire bats are relevant not only because of the supernatural quality they were assigned to in the eighteenth century, but also because, as Groom records, such ‘creatures’ were considered notorious in their capacity to ‘come at night’ and ‘suck blood’, and even kill. Furthermore, they were claimed to have a ‘wing-span’ that ‘can reach up to six feet’,[[227]](#footnote-227) much like Blake’s depiction of the Spectre in Plate 6.

In 1794, Erasmus Darwin published *Zoonomia*, a meticulous analysis of physiology in the vegetable and animal world. In his book, Darwin writes about ‘the associations of fibrous motions’ that are observable in both realms, and the organic affiliation among them by omnipresent sensibility, as well as the connection between emotions and physiology: ‘sensibility to certain affections of the mind’, as Darwin says when he refers to the glands of the circulatory system, will have corresponding effects on physiology, ‘in the deeper colour of the skin in the blush of shame’, for instance, ‘or the greater paleness of it from fear’.[[228]](#footnote-228) Fibres that connect the various fragmented parts of the body of Blake’s Albion[[229]](#footnote-229) serve this function: not only do we see fibres ‘Shooting out’ (38) of Albion’s heart in Salisbury Plain across the country, but they are ‘bound down’ (47), cut out, displaced (41-2), but connected, and feeding the ‘mighty polypus’ (4) that is growing over Albion’s fallen body. The *Literary Gazette* (1826) also has an interesting entry about the powerful polypus that seems to fit Blake’s vision:

The *polypus* is classed in the animal kingdom, although it was formerly considered as a vegetable, or sea-plant. The multiplying power of this insect is astonishing; for if a *polypus* be slit into six or seven parts, it becomes a hydra, with six or seven heads. If again divided, we shall have fourteen heads. (italics in the original)[[230]](#footnote-230)

The exuberant blend of confusing animal/plant/monster connotations in this lurid account of the polypus physiology can be one of the reasons why the polypus is a perfect symbol for the animalistic/vegetable body that entraps the fallen body, like Rahab’s body wrapped Jerusalem in Plate 75, in the form of a vicious serpent, or the curling snakes in Blake’s watercolour illustration of the Dantean *The Punishment of the Thieves* (1824-7).[[231]](#footnote-231)



## Fig. 11: William Blake, *The Punishment of the Thieves*, 1824-7 © Tate, London 2018

These creatures lie at the interstices of creation and symbolise the contact of the self with the other side of abjection. Blake’s profusion of such blended bodies testifies to his knowledge/fascination with using the body in imagery, and his use of such bodies to represent something grotesque. As Connolly argues, ‘Blake is scary’ in that his bizarre bodies startle through Blake’s ‘simultaneous adoration and abomination of the human body’[[232]](#footnote-232) Blake plays with the fact that animal / plant / human bodies verge on chaos and excess, abject bodies that live on the danger of going from ‘intimate friends of mankind’ (animals and plants are thought to be so), to ‘uncontrollable beasts’.[[233]](#footnote-233) As Kristeva observes, ‘abjection [...] is the other facet of religious, moral, and ideological codes on which rest the sleep of individuals and the breathing spells of societies’, and ‘the return of the repressed make up our ‘apocalypse’’,[[234]](#footnote-234) much like the sleep of Albion ‘Beneath the Fatal Tree’ (46) rests on the moment ‘Albion’s Spectre from his Loins / Tore forth in all the pomp of War’ (p. 55). This image of separation in the context of war is what breeds the Gothic horror bodies of Blake’s poetry, and the interaction of these bodies in fear is what will bring forward a re-evaluation of the divine body at the end of *Jerusalem*.

The figure of the spectre is divided from Albion’s painful body in the same way that Los’s spectre was divided, in a perverse rendition of Eve’s creation from Adam’s ribs. The way in which birth and physiology infiltrate Blake’s spectral divisions, as well as his general illustration of the human body, is conditioned by his contact with contemporary anatomical practices, and prominent scientists who experimented on human cadavers. Connolly recognises this when she remarks that, although ‘Blake did not produce anatomical drawings as a commercial engraver, though he was associated with James Basire’, his ‘encounter with the role of anatomy in art is most easily traced in his association with the Royal Academy.’[[235]](#footnote-235) More precisely, Connolly claims that a lot of Blake’s acquaintances were, in fact, interested in anatomical studies (see Flaxman, Fuseli and James Barry), but also that another major influence on Blake was ‘his acquaintance with the Hunters’, whose elemental impact can be seen in Blake’s ‘An Island in the Moon’(1784)and *The First Book of Urizen*.[[236]](#footnote-236)The fact that Blake’s studies in the Royal Academy (1779) at the time that William Hunter was ‘Professor of Anatomy’ is also significant, because it suggests that Blake would most probably ‘have attended some of the lectures and demonstrations offered’.[[237]](#footnote-237) After all, the Hunter brothers, William and John, were leading surgeons and anatomists during Blake’s time, giving lectures on anatomy and physiology, and performing dissections that were based on empirical principles. Still, however much Blake borrowed from human anatomy to draw the human body in his illuminations, his portrayal of spectral birth in the vegetative world reminisces Darwin’s description of the polypus’s stalky reproduction; found in ‘stagnant water’, the polypus has its ‘young ones branch out from the side of the parent like the buds of trees, and after a time separate themselves from them’.[[238]](#footnote-238) This idea ‘of the reproduction of animals from a single living filament of their fathers’ reminds Darwin vividly of ‘the curious account in sacred writ of the formation of Eve from the fib of Adam’.[[239]](#footnote-239)

The role of this ‘filament’ in Blake’s texts demonstrate the way immersion in anatomical thinking is not relevant only to graphically real representations of human anatomy; the presence of the fibre is also evidence to Blake’s knowledge of general eighteenth-century medicine. As Hishao Ishizuka acknowledges, ‘at the heart of eighteenth-century medicine was the fibre: it ontologically constituted the animal body, and epistemologically as well as ontologically mediated mind and body’.[[240]](#footnote-240) The way the fibre implicates itself in Blake’s horror body iconography can be seen in numerous instances. For example, in *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (1797), we find this passage about Tharmas, the Sensation:

In torment he sunk down & flowd among her filmy Woof  
His Spectre issuing from his feet in flames of fire  
In gnawing pain drawn out by her lovd fingers every nerve  
She counted. every vein & lacteal threading them among  
Her woof of terror. Terrified & drinking tears of woe  
Shuddring she wove— (Night the First, 14-9)

The pain that the drawing of the nerves by Tharmas’s Emanation Enion causes the body goes hand in hand with the birth of Tharmas’s Spectre and the ‘woof of terror’ that is woven when the Spectre is issued. Again, the birth of the spectre is described in gruesome anatomical detail, as the reference to the ‘gnawing pain’, the ‘nerve’ and the ‘vein’ makes evident. Intensely anatomical is also the reference to ‘Shuddring’, a central physiological reaction to terror. Terror is, of course, a primal emotion in this scene because it is the result of the woof’s ghastliness, as well as a psychotic suspension in the state of non-stop weaving. The same painful weaving is witnessed in Jerusalem, when Vala weaves ‘the Veil / With the iron shuttle of War among the rooted Oaks of Albion: / Weeping & shouting to the Lord day & night’ (60-2). In just a few lines, Blake has connected Vala as the daughter of Babylon and War, the industrial weaving of the veil, and the culture of sensibility. The veil, in this context, can signify various restrictions for Blake, central of which is that the veil is the result of the effort to conceal the body and restrict vision. For example, David G. Riede speaks of Blake’s idea of free sexual expression, and mentions the veil as a ‘physical identity’ that can represent both ‘the foreskin and the hymen’, ‘obstacles that must be removed’ if the body is to be fully free from this ‘cover of mystery’.[[241]](#footnote-241) Apart from restricting vision / perception / accessibility, the veil creates a sense of obscurity and mystery that Blake connects to fallen abstraction, instead of the ‘Minute Particulars’ that he favours in art and representation. In Chapter Two, I will examine the way Joanna Baillie and Anne Bannerman evoke fear and mystery by introducing veiled characters to their poems, but whereas the veil in both cases is a successful Gothic trope facilitating mystery and concealment, Blake connects the veil with binding the senses and the endless weaving of webs and deception.

Dennis Welch artfully unravels his analysis of the way Blake ‘considered commercial activity, the feminine, and sensibility’[[242]](#footnote-242) excessively close, especially in his *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, where Blake presents the way ‘such daughters served the nation’s textile industry, helping to weave ornaments […] that softened and refined life – especially for those who could afford them’.[[243]](#footnote-243) The polypus that I placed before in the centre of my discussion is highly relevant to this web of vegetative life, since Blake saw ‘English society as a gigantic consuming polypus’, stemming from a pervasive commercial revolution that was largely based on female sensibility.[[244]](#footnote-244) Blake was himself caught up in this polypus of commercialisation as an engraver, and experienced its corruption first-hand, the economic inter-dependence of consumer-product that Adam Smith[[245]](#footnote-245) propounded.[[246]](#footnote-246) The production and proliferation of the visual image, as Saree Makdisi argues, ‘lies at the very heart of modern (capitalist) culture’,[[247]](#footnote-247) and Blake’s engraving as a site of production/consumption contests and disrupts such machinery from within. Vala is another take of Blake on this culture of interest and devouring. This veil of deception, Welch observes, is efficiently personified in the Veil of Rahab/Vala.[[248]](#footnote-248)

In many ways, the cult of sensibility that Blake contested finds expression in a variety of transformed ways, and Blake certainly reflects some of these influences when he writes about the fibres,[[249]](#footnote-249) the way they function, and the effect of the fibres/nerves on the body. On this note, Ishizuka points to the ‘concept of nervous sensibility’[[250]](#footnote-250) that can also be found in Darwin’s *Zoonomia*, especially when he discusses ‘irritability’: ‘With every new change […] of organic form, or addition of organic parts, I suppose a new kind of irritability or of sensibility to be produced’.[[251]](#footnote-251) In Blake, this is evident throughout the prophetic writings. In *Jerusalem*, for instance, Los ‘took his globe of fire’ and descended into Albion’s body only to see ‘Every Minute Particular’ ‘degraded and murder’d’, each worm-like murdered being hid and immersed within the organic form of Albion’s bowels (7-8), changing everything to ‘filth & mire’ (21). This is certainly not the fruitful encounter of contraries that we find in Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Rather, it is the outcome of ‘Negation’, and, as Blake writes in his *Milton*, the ‘Negation is the Spectre’ (34). The filth that is mentioned in *Jerusalem* makes the body rot from the inside out, moist in its own disintegration, and signify what Kristeva‘s idea of ‘nurturing horror’, the signal of incompleteness and desolation, which systems need ‘in order to build themselves up and function’.[[252]](#footnote-252) Albion is such a system, which, in order to keep the ‘Reasoning Power’ (*M* 34) of its spectre, lives off the ‘filthy garments’ (6), much like the filth rituals that Mary Douglas studies in relation to reason:[[253]](#footnote-253)

On all other occasions they avoid faeces and filth and reckon it a sign of madness not to do so. But in the face of death itself they give up everything, they even claim to have eaten filth as madmen do, in order to keep their reason. Madness will come if they neglect the ritual of freely accepting the corruption of the body; sanity is assured if they perform the ritual.[[254]](#footnote-254)

Just like performing a paradoxical ‘cleansing’ of the body/system by staining the self, Albion’s body allows the contact with the fluid body of corruption[[255]](#footnote-255) to be able to stay solid. But the solid body was found, even from the seventeenth century onwards, to be ‘ultimately composed of tiny elementary threads.’[[256]](#footnote-256) The result is that ‘Albion’s mountains run with blood’ (6), Lincoln and Norwich tremble, and Wales and Scotland ‘shrink themselves to the west and to the North’ (10-11). The body is shaking, and the boundaries disintegrate.

This psychopathology of horror bodies like Albion’s is, indeed, well known in the medical discourses of the time. Even so, the way Blake revolutionizes Enlightenment science is twofold; his fibre imagery, and the way he overturns the solid ground of Reason through the tremors that shake and transform the nerves in his Prophecies. In this appeal to sensation, Blake does not extend a call to either Memory or Nature. Blake he wrote in his *Marginalia* on William Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*:

Natural Objects always did & now do weaken, deaden & obliterate Imagination in me. The Natural Man is at Enmity with God […] Imagination is the Divine Vision not of The World, or of Man, nor from Man as he is a Natural Man, but only as he is a Spiritual Man. Imagination has nothing to do with Memory. [[257]](#footnote-257)

Instead, Blake appeals to the re-collecting of the Divine Body, of which the fallen human body is but an abject castaway. For Blake, the multifarious nature of the human body, and the interaction between bodies, do not just test the limits of the fallen body, but stage what Connolly calls the ‘abject reality of the body’ in a way that divulges its transformative powers.[[258]](#footnote-258)

At this point, associationist philosopher David Hartley is relevant for understanding the mentality behind Blake’s vision of transformation, and its alignment with sensations and vibrations. Blake would have certainly been familiar with Hartley’s theories, having been commissioned by Johnson to engrave the frontispiece (1791) to Hartley’s *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty; and his Expectations* (1749). David Hartley founded his studies on human psychology upon the model of associationism, the mutual interaction of different variations of sensation and feeling. Although Hartley did base his theoretical framework on empiricist principles, and his famous *Observations on Man* is an arresting example, he also placed the body on a high pedestal when it comes to sensational experience, thus keeping a fine balance, as Blake certainly did, between mind and matter. More importantly, whereas Joseph Priestley[[259]](#footnote-259) retains a more materialist approach when he reformulates Hartley’s theory[[260]](#footnote-260) in 1775, Hartley remains closer to Blake when he refers to the way ‘the ultimate end of man’, who with the whole community make up an individual body, is to re-unite with ‘the mystical body of Christ’,[[261]](#footnote-261) and find connection to the divine. In Blake’s world, this Divine Body of Christ that is going to transform ‘the Mundane Shell’ (*J* 23) of experience into the world of imagination by re-collecting the body of Christ. ‘Imagination’, according to Blake, is ‘the Divine Body of Lord Jesus’ (*J* 59), and therefore is the ultimate source of divinity and eternity. While scholarship on Blake have profusely focused on Blake and the idea of imagination as divine goal, Blake’s convergence of ideas about the body of Jesus between Hartley and Blake in the context of ‘radical religion’[[262]](#footnote-262) is no more than a passing reference in Richard C. Allen’s *David Hartley on Human Nature* (1999), and it is not extensively approached elsewhere in critical analyses. Even less has been written about the role of fear and trembling both in Hartley’s study of physiology and Blake’s prophetic vision in *Jerusalem*, and to this direction I am now going to turn.

Indeed, Hartley refers in his *Observations* to the ‘new *Jerusalem*’ that counteracts the degradation of the fall, and remarks that ‘hope and fear […] both conspire to purify the mind, and to advance the great design’.[[263]](#footnote-263) Trembling in Hartley’s *Observations* carries religious connotations when mentioned in this context, and mostly refers to fear of punishment.[[264]](#footnote-264) But what really distinguishes Hartley is his focus on the theory of ‘vibrations and association’,[[265]](#footnote-265) which is expounded in more detail when read physiologically in the first part of his *Observations*: ‘These Vibrations’, Hartley writes, are Motions backwards and forwards of the small Particles; of the same kind with the Oscillations of Pendulums, and the Tremblings of the Particles of founding Bodies’,[[266]](#footnote-266) quite unlike Newton’s theory of uniform motion. Vibrations affect the nerves, the fibres of the Brain. In this light, Hartley further argues that ‘external Objects impress vibratory Motions upon the medullary Substance of the Nerves’,[[267]](#footnote-267) thereby allowing for the cause of sensation to affect the body in a rippling effect. Among these sensations is listed the feeling of fear and the ‘Tremors’ that it causes. Its symptoms are visible:

the Redness and the Paleness of the Lips, Face, and Neck, which are observable in these Cases, are Marks of a Contraction in muscular Fibrils-, in a less Degree in the first Case, so as to check the Return of the venal Blood -, in a greater in the lad, so as to prevent the Influx of the arterial.[[268]](#footnote-268)

This psychophysical diagnosis is clearly applicable to the trembling of Blake’s horror bodies. Los’s Spectre trembles, the red Globe caused after Los’s separation with Enitharmon trembles (55), buildings and chambers rampaged by war tremble (24), Vala trembles because of Albion’s ‘fear’ (1), and Jerusalem is also presented as a trembling body (46).

By this trembling that fear brings about, the ever-growing movement/vibration of the body counters the Urizenic idea of a solid body, and a solid identity. Connolly similarly contends that body interactions and expressions in Blake’s writings ‘dramatize the instability of bodily borders’,[[269]](#footnote-269) and ‘a loss of control over’ these borders.[[270]](#footnote-270) What Blake does, Makdisi argues, is a fundamental ‘rewriting’ of history, the ‘history of modernity’, in which the ‘stable unitary subject’, which is the ‘stable Western subject’ of Wordsworthian Romanticism, is contested, as it also does subconsciously in Wordsworth’s own poetry, which I will discuss in Chapter Four.[[271]](#footnote-271) This is why we see in Blake a constant fusion and proliferation of identities, and a combination of voices, both divine and spectral. This way, the ‘transcendent bourgeois subject’ as a product of modernity is done with, and the interaction of different identities[[272]](#footnote-272) illustrates how apocalypse comes during the moment of fragmentation. Following this line, the spectres seem to stand for the fragmented subject who, as Tom Boland argues, ‘opposes imagination with reason, memory and constraint’, and its creation inaugurates Blake’s own version of caricaturing ‘enlightenment-as-universalist-reason’.[[273]](#footnote-273) The king of Reason that reins this ‘Satanic Void’ of spectral division is Urizen, leader of terrors and the builder of the static ‘Natural Religion’ (4) in *Jerusalem*. Plate 1 and 4 of Blake’s *The Book of Urizen* skilfully visualise him standing in a recoiling position of fear, weariness, contraction, and cold paleness, a variation of the ‘Ugly Man’[[274]](#footnote-274) that Blake mentions in *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809). Urizen’s posture in both plates echo both Hartley’s and Darwin’s reference to the ‘cold and pale skin, with tremblings’ as symptoms of ‘the passion of fear’.[[275]](#footnote-275) Therefore, this vibration/trembling/shuddering that we find scattered all through Blake’s Prophecies serves the dual function of imposing corrupted horror bodies unto the readers to trigger their sensibilities, and of facilitating prophetic activity in *Jerusalem*. It is important to remember that, for Blake, activity births revolution, as ‘Active Evil is better than Passive Good’.[[276]](#footnote-276) At the same time, the fibre imagery also serves a double purpose. As Ishizuka rightly observes, fibres are not only sites of dissection and exploration of the vegetative body, but they also trigger a psychophysiological ‘activity intended to control, manipulate, and, if successful, dominate others by affecting their fibres’,[[277]](#footnote-277) just like they trigger Albion’s body, and the body of Tharmas in *The Four Zoas*.

As far as the re-assembly of the Divine Body[[278]](#footnote-278) is concerned, fibres acquire a Swedenborgian[[279]](#footnote-279) divine quality in Blake’s perception of the apocalypse. Indeed, the benevolent fibres (8) that we see at the beginning of *Jerusalem* connecting humanity perform the apocalyptic re-collection that Blake strives for throughout the poem. Similarly, the shuddering of Los when he beholds Albion’s ghastliness (28-29) stirs the movement of his Furnaces, and includes him in a world of movement, trembling, and division, until the moment the war triggers Los’s prophetic speech. Urging the world not to fear, Los finally announces their much longed-for unity with Jesus (19). Just before the divine moment, the madness of movement is startling:

The weeds of Death inwrap his hands & feet, blown incessant  
And wash'd incessant by the for-ever restless sea-waves, foaming abroad  
Upon the white Rock. England, a Female Shadow, as deadly damps  
Of the Mines of Cornwall & Derbyshire lays upon his bosom heavy  
Moved by the wind in volumes of thick cloud, returning, folding round  
His loins & bosom unremovable by swelling storms & loud rending  
Of enraged thunders. Around them the Starry Wheels of their Giant

Sons  
Revolve: & over them the Furnaces of Los & the Immortal Tomb

around  
Erin sitting in the Tomb, to watch them unceasing night and day  
And the Body of Albion was closed apart from all Nations. (Chapter 4, Plate 94, 5-14)

The blowing, folding, revolving, thundering, continuous, rampant movement is what expedites the final resurrection of Albion’s body, a moment of unity with ‘the Good Shepherd’ (3), the body of Christ that for Hartley is the ultimate destination of man. Curiously, Albion is referred to in this passage as both a ‘he’ and a ‘she’. Indeed, while the representation of England as a female body has been seen in later texts like Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* (1826), Blake seems to treat England as a topos that goes through an androgynous death, as if death had to be re-written and re-invented. In line with this, Bolton argues that instances of hermaphrodism and homoeroticism occur in such instances of freeing ‘erotic energy for radical political purposes’,[[280]](#footnote-280) and complicate gender binaries at the moment of war. The energy unleashed by the end of *Jerusalem* is an all-embracing and unsettling force that re-invents Albion’s body. ‘What characterizes revolutionary classes at their moment of their action’ Walter Benjamin writes in ‘On the Concept of History’ (1940), ‘is the awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode’,[[281]](#footnote-281) and this is the explosion that occurs at the end of *Jerusalem*. The way fear conditions this kind of experience is also noted by chemist and poet Humphry Davy, who, exalting physiology and using the body as metaphor for the body politic,[[282]](#footnote-282) saw ‘[s]ublimity’ as ‘characteristic of the future state in the religion of Jesus. The highest degree of hope or of fear must be awakened by it’.[[283]](#footnote-283) For Blake, the body was central in this experience of sublimity, and the fear of post-Napoleonic war society was a weapon needed to realise a ‘[d]e-fusion’ of meaning,[[284]](#footnote-284) to borrow Boland’s words. De-fusion refers to a re-flowing of meaning in the form of the Divine Body, just as the blood starts re-flowing in the veins of the body politic by the end of *The French Revolution*. Therefore, despite Blake’s disillusionment by the degrading state of Enlightened numbness and radical prosecution that followed France’s wars, he seemed to retain a grain of hope when he writes, in his 1801 letter to John Flaxman, that

The Kingdoms of this World are now become the Kingdoms of God & his Christ, & we shall reign with him for ever & ever. The Reign of Literature & the Arts Commences. Blessed are those who are found studious of Literature & Humane & polite accomplishments. Such have their lamps burning & shall shine as the stars.[[285]](#footnote-285)

The human body is transcended into the Divine Body of Christ’s New Kingdom, whose body is ‘the physical body of the Eternal Man’ that Riede sees re-born through sexual activity.[[286]](#footnote-286) As Blake concludes, the only way to the Divine body and the transcendence of the senses is through the power of the imagination, which is ultimately the divine power of God. The imaginative transformation of the Divine body is made possible in the writings under consideration in this chapter by the chaotic interaction of haunting bodies of horror, which trigger a trembling physical reaction (personal and political) that enables the search for new meaning. It is to this haunting by bodies of fear in the poetry of Joanna Baillie and Anne Bannerman that I will now turn.

**Chapter Two**

**A Ghost of One’s Own: Spectral Psychopathologies in the Poetry of Joanna Baillie and Anne Bannerman**

**2.1. Baillie, Bannerman, and the Poetry of Haunting**

*Ambass.*

*(turning fiercely to the Prior)*

How is this, Prior? What sorcery has been here, that your block alone should destroy its victim, when the stroke of the axe has been wanting? What account shall I carry to my master of the death of his gallant General?

*Prior.*

No sorcery hath been practised on the deceased: his own mind has dealt with him alone, and produced the effects you behold. And, when you return to Lewis of Bavaria your Master; tell him that his noble General, free from personal injury of any kind, died, within the walls of this monastery, of fear.

Joanna Baillie, *The Dream* (1798)[[287]](#footnote-287)

… the alliance of the worried conspirators assembles, more or less secretly, a nobility and a clergy—in the old castle of Europe, for an unbelievable expedition against what will have been haunting the night of these masters. At twilight, before or after a night of bad dreams, at the presumed end of history, it is a ‘holy hunt against this specter’.

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (1993)[[288]](#footnote-288)

In a sense, Romantic poetry is a poetry of memories, anxieties, and haunting. Like the phantom bodies in Blake’s *Poetical Sketches* and *The French Revolution*, the haunting of the present by the past is represented by the intrusion of the inside by the outside and vice versa, bursting through the power of affect and striving to break boundaries. In this context, Gothic affect works to dissolve the limits between the inside and the outside, as well as between past and present through the haunting of female ghosts as bodies of fear that come from the past to inform what happens in the present. This chapter concentrates on the study of empowered female ghosts in the poetry of Joanna Baillie and Anne Bannerman, and how both poets reflect on haunting through fear in their poetical compositions. A focus on these two female writers is to follow the analysis on Blake’s poetry in this thesis, not only because Blake’s poetry is full of spectres and other Gothic bodies, but also because of Blake’s already evident preoccupation with haunting and the way this haunting facilitates fear through the interaction of Gothic bodies. We see this in *The French Revolution*, for example, in how fear brings forth political change through unleashing the decomposing bodies of the past, as well as in poems like *Jerusalem* where spectres abound and reflect the unconscious of the apocalyptic body. In this chapter, I will look at haunting female spectres in the poetry of Baillie and Bannerman, as well as how the terror/horror dynamics play out in different ways for both poets. I am going to observe the function of the female ghostly figure in Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ (*Poems*, 1790) and the more horrific female ghost in Anne Bannerman’s ‘The Dark Ladie’ from the *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802), in reference to the way both female ghosts foreground the lost female voice through fear, albeit in different ways and in different degrees.[[289]](#footnote-289) Approaching the way these female writers bring forward the female voice through haunting Gothic bodies will be the focus of this chapter.

Baillie was a deeply influential figure in her time, mostly because of her reputation as a playwright. She was equally a pioneer in the studying of haunting by an excess of passion. Of Bannerman’s life we know but little, but her flair as a Gothic writer of fear is evident in the few volumes of poetry she saw published during her lifetime, which consist of *Poems* (1800) and *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802).[[290]](#footnote-290) I chose to work on Bannerman and Baillie because, apart from their personal acquaintance with each other, the poets create powerful ghostly female characters who haunt their oppressors and live in liminality. In both cases, I will argue that the embodiment of fear in the Gothic genre provides fertile ground for Baillie and Bannerman’s explorations of female ghostly bodies and their status as overwhelming emotional manifestations. Baillie and Bannerman share something more than Scotland as their country of origin. Both Baillie and Bannerman force a re-evaluation of meaning through the contact with the ghostly female body, therefore politicising the Gothic body through their poetry. In their poetical works, haunting will not merely be approached as a metaphorical indicator of nostalgia, pain, and fear.[[291]](#footnote-291) Haunting in Baillie and Bannerman’s work is also quite different from Blake’s quasi-spiritual spectres and horror bodies, apart from the manifestation of the ghostly gothic body, although Bannerman moves closer to Blake’s pictorial bodies in her description of ghastly female bodies. Baillie and Bannerman summon actual ghosts and/or characters with ghost-like bodies, whose abjection will be further elaborated upon in this chapter. Before I delve into the analysis of the poems, however, I will look into the politics of haunting to contextualise how Baillie and Bannerman handle the return of haunting ghost bodies in their poetry.

**2.2. ‘To make fear, to make oneself fear’: The Politics of Haunting**

In *Specters of Marx* (1993), Derrida’s whole argument on spectrality is about the ghost of communism in Europe, but his ideas could apply to discussions about the ghosts of Enlightenment, and early nineteenth-century (counter)revolutionary Europe. As I have already argued, some writers more than others (see, for example, William Blake) have written contra the hard-line and dismissive voices of the age of Reason by putting forward their own monsters, spectres, nightmares, and creatures of the uncanny, while others have let the voices of the other more subtly creep in their writings. Ghosts do the same and their presence is highly political. Derrida makes a reference to the way ghosts trigger the ‘symptom’, an echo of Zizek’s term for an uncomfortable encounter with an unconscious power that we meet when we try to find stable meaning, which I will look into in relation to Wordsworth’s experience with Gothic sound.[[292]](#footnote-292) In Derrida’s view, ghosts reflect this symptom, the self’s dark side that manifests because of trauma, which leads to a diagnosis of something within us that haunts us, and that causes us to ‘make fear, to make oneself fear’, so that we can deal with the fear of our ghost:

Revolution against the revolution as the figure of *Les Misérables* suggests. More precisely, given the number and the *frequency*, it isas if they had been frightened by *someone* within themselves. […] the whole history of European politics at least, […], would be that of a ruthless war between solidary camps that are equally terrorized by the ghost, the ghost of the other, and its own ghost as the ghost of the other.[[293]](#footnote-293)

This passage is purposely confusing because it blurs the lines between one’s own ghost and the ghost as an-*other*. Indeed, one’s ghost materialises at the moment of calling it as threat, and making the ghost real happens through making oneself fear and wage a war against the ghost as other. This, of course, requires ‘*giving them a body’*, in Derrida’s words, by calling for them, but the haunting persists.[[294]](#footnote-294) The presence of ghosts is politically relevant to what society tries to control and suppress, and this is also the case with the female ghosts of Baillie and Bannerman. Peter Buse and Andrew Stott study this sociological and political approach to ghosts from a variety of critical perspectives, and they argue that, during the Enlightenment, ‘a line was drawn between Reason and its more shadowy others’. Buse and Scott go on to add that ghosts ‘fall very firmly in the camp of unreason and therefore become fair game for empiricists eager to demonstrate that ghosts are in fact the product of illusion or hoax’.[[295]](#footnote-295) Of course, Buse and Scott come to the conclusion that the Enlightenment ‘never succeeds entirely in exorcising its own ghosts’, but rather stays haunted by what it is trying to suppress’.[[296]](#footnote-296) Ghosts tend to return, which challenges preconceived ideas of normality and a healthy body politic that lives on certain binary standards, like masculine reason and female unreason/hysteria, living and dead, healthy and monstrous bodies. Both Baillie and Bannerman’s female ghosts return to correct wrongs and challenge other bodies.

Ghosts abound in narratives of the Romantic period and partly comprise the literature of fear that prevailed by the beginning of the nineteenth century as both a popular literary pursuit and an object for attack and satire. One of the most striking satirical takes on ghosts and Gothic tropes in novels generally is Lord Byron’s *Don Juan* (1819-24) in the Norman Abbey Cantos, where the narrator ponders the existence of ghosts, especially during Juan’s encounter with the supposedly centuries-old ghost of the Friar in the Abbey. Ghost stories were extremely popular and the thirst for them is portrayed in various works such as in Henry Giddon’s *The Sicilian Romance: or, the Apparition of the Cliffs* (1794) (an adaptation of Radcliffe’s 1790 *A Sicilian Romance*), where Julia asks for a good ghost story, and Orra’s yearning for a chilling story in Baillie’s play *Orra* (1812), as well .[[297]](#footnote-297) The craze around ghosts and their common perusal by everyone is scorned by ‘The Complaint of a Ghost’ (1798) in *The Lady’s Monthly Museum*, where the spectre complains of being persecuted and abused by writers of literature and drama. According to the ghost, women too have been added to the list of ‘persecutors’: ‘The exquisite delicacy of the female character no longer revolts at scenes of horror. Sepulchres are violated, charnel houses are ransacked, and Deformity itself rendered more hideous, to gratify the *refined* *taste* of the *soft* sex’.[[298]](#footnote-298)

Stories like Bannerman’s ‘The Dark Ladie’ and Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ are prominent ghost stories of females returning to avenge an immoral act and join a whole array of female revenants whose return from the dead is sometimes reparatory, sometimes reconciliatory, and always subversive. A few of them include Lewis’s ‘The Bleeding Nun’ (from *The Monk*) and ‘The Grim White Woman’, as well as Robert Southey’s ‘The Old Woman of Berkeley’ and Walter Scott’s ‘Glenfinlas’, all published in Lewis’s *Tales of Wonder* (1801). Limited space does not allow me to fully expand on these very different but equally relevant poems, but it is worth observing the recurrent themes that pervade the wide variety of poetry included in Lewis’s *Tales of Wonder* and the way this creates a community of Gothic ballad writers that explore popular Gothic tropes of the day in individualised ways, even if some of them eschewed their affiliation with Lewis’s notorious horror writing. In his discussion of Gothic ballad writing, Thomson refers, for instance, to Scott and Southey’s self-conscious distancing ‘from their early ballads and their fascination with Bürger’, and quotes a passage from Coleridge demonstrating a popular contemporary eagerness for disassociation from the ‘Monk’ Gothic:

I was not led to choose this story from any partiality to tragic, much less to monstrous

events (though at the time that I composed the verses, somewhat more than twelve years ago, I was less averse to such subjects than at present), but from finding in it a striking proof of the possible effect on the imagination, from an Idea violently and suddenly impressed on it. [[299]](#footnote-299)

Notwithstanding the general ambivalence around this poetry of fear, the participation of women writers in this tradition and the exploration of similar themes by them in new and revolutionary ways earn them a huge place in the shaping of the contemporary literary scene.

The list of powerful female ghosts is rather long, and also includes Charlotte Dacre’s ‘The Skeleton Priest; or, the Marriage of Death’ from *Hours of Solitude* (1805), in which a female character comes back from the dead to warn another woman of an inconstant lover (a theme repeated in Bannerman’s ‘The Perjured Nun’). Other poems leave a sense of uncertainty when it comes to the actual supernatural identity of female ghostly characters, like John Aikin’s ‘Arthur and Matilda’ (1791) and the corpse bride who visits her struggling lover out at sea to take him back home with her. The poem is wrapped up in an eerie atmosphere that leaves open the possibility that this has been one of Arthur’s dreams, where Matilda appears as suddenly as a vision of a fevered mind (see also Chapter Three on Robinson and Coleridge), like a more angelic version of John Keats’s ballad *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1819). Nevertheless, Arthur wonders at the corpse-like façade of his beloved, whose face is ‘pale and wan’ and the ‘sunk and dead’ eyes match the corpse’s ‘winding-sheet’ that is wrapped around Matilda’s body. However, Aikin’s benevolent ghost is nothing like the aggressive femme fatales we find in the poetry of Bannerman and Lewis, and more akin to Baillie’s obscure ghosts and ghostly figures, despite the rather detailed description of Matilda’s grotesque body.

**2.3. Joanna Baillie and the Diagnostics of Fear**

Baillie’s poems are to date under-researched, especially considering Baillie’s first volume, *Poems* (1790), published anonymously, contains everyday themes, and artfully upholds the basic tenets of Baillie’s theorisation on the importance of feeling in instructing readers and spectators of plays through the power of emotion, predating Wordsworth’s very similar preoccupation with feeling and instruction in *Lyrical Ballads*. This is doubly relevant to this discussion because ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, which is the primary focus of this thesis with regards to Baillie’s poetry, is part of the collection, and therefore pioneer in shaping Baillie’s ideas of the power of affect as well as Baillie’s place within literary theories during the time. The only contemporary selection of Baillie’s poetry is Jennifer Breen’s *The Selected Poems of Joanna Baillie, 1762-1851* (1999), which contains most of Baillie’s *Poems*, as well as some poems from *A Collection of Poems* (1823) and *Fugitive Verses* (1840). Work on Baillie’s life and work also includes Judith Bailey Slagle’s biography *Joanna Baillie: A Literary Life* (2002), as well as a selection of essays by Thomas C. Crochunis titled *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist: Critical Essays* (2004), which, however, focuses on Baillie’s plays rather than her poetry. This chapter will focus on Baillie’s Gothic poetry so as to show how Baillie’s popular views on feeling, outlined in the Introduction of *A Series of Plays* (1798), infiltrate Baillie’s poetry and foreground the way fear brings change through the psychophysical manifestations of the female ghost as a Gothic body.

In the multiple editions of *A Series of Plays* well into the nineteenth century, one sees an elaborate analysis into what drives excess of emotion, and the devastating consequences that follow, all directed for the instructive pleasure of the reader/spectator of the plays.[[300]](#footnote-300) Plays like *The Family Legend* (1805) may have been huge successes when staged, but Baillie’s stronger take on the chaos of emotional excess, – and failure to contain these emotions – is seen in her Gothic writings, like the plays on fear including *Orra* (Third volume of *Plays*, 1812) and *The Dream* (1798), *The Phantom* (1832), as well as her early Gothic poetry. Baillie started composing Scottish songs and ballads when she was an adolescent in 1779 in Lanarkshire. This initiated her immersion in the ballad tradition, especially in relation to Scotland’s tradition of folk tales. Indeed, most of the poems in Breen’s selection are titled ‘Songs’ and focus on themes of Scotland’s rural life. Baillie’s immense interest in the lives of everyday people and the passions predates Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* and its emphasis on the lives of ordinary men.[[301]](#footnote-301) Poems like ‘A Winter Day’ and ‘A Summer Day’ (1790), for instance, ‘celebrate the working lives of smallholding yeomanry in the Scottish lowlands, realistic representations of Scottish farm life aimed at triggering an empathetic response from the reader.[[302]](#footnote-302) Throughout the course of her life, Baillie was asked to contribute Scottish and other poems to a number of publications such as George Thomson’s ***Collection of the Songs of Burns, Sir Walter Scott and other Eminent Lyric Poets Ancient and Modern United to the Select Melodies of Scotland, and of Ireland and Wales*** (1822).

In this section, the primary focus will be Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, a Gothic poem written ‘Somewhat After the Style of Our Old English Ballads’, not only because of its scenic representation of the wintry rural setting in which the ghostly figure of the poor maid wanders and encounters the nobleman that broke her heart, but also because of the way in which the ballad aims subtly to trigger fear through the lurid description of the maid’s beaten, spectral body and the empathetic curiosity that this brings forward, ending in a re-definition of the female voice by the end of the poem. As I will claim, and as Adriana Craciun contends, Anne Bannerman was considerably influenced by Baillie’s theory of the passions, wrote in the ballad style herself, and even sent her fellow countrywoman ‘a presentation copy of her *Poems* in 1800’, which contained the seeds for Bannerman’s depiction of liminal female characters in poems like ‘The Mermaid’.[[303]](#footnote-303) Ballads were intimately associated with triggering excesses of emotion like fear. Indeed, as Douglass H. Thomson and Diane Long Hoeveler argue, many writers of the time chose ballads as a viable poetic form for ‘poetic’ tales ‘of terror’, since ballads were directly connected with the supernatural and a way of ‘conjuring up the old, folk-inspired bogies and demons.’[[304]](#footnote-304) Thomson and Hoeveler go on to mention ‘Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) and Johann Gottfried Herder’s *Volkslieder* (Herder 1778–9)’ as responsible for the eighteenth-century ‘ballad revival’ to which authors like Walter Scott and Matthew Lewis (see *Tales of Wonder*) contributed.[[305]](#footnote-305) Coleridge’s *Christabel* is one such example of the way ballads offered spaces of exploring new themes through the lens of the supernatural and the mystical, and I will explore *Christabel i*n the next chapter. Baillie’s ballad shows how the ghostly female body breaks convention, and contests normative ideas about the healthy and the feminine, thus creating a hauntological space for the deeply suppressed female voice.[[306]](#footnote-306)

Representations of ghosts are always accompanied by very detailed descriptions of bodies in fear because Baillie and Bannerman directly link the encounter with the ghost to a direct affront to one’s own steady sense of self. In Baillie’s work, the appearance of ghosts is not often something to be contested. Instead, these appearances awaken our deepest primal fears, and force us to confront the most abject, mortal part of our nature, functioning as forces of correction and instruction for the living. In speaking of witnessing public executions in her ‘Introductory Discourse’ to *A Series of Plays*, for instance, she writes:

To see a human being bearing himself up under such circumstances, or struggling with the terrible apprehensions which such a situation impresses, must be the powerful incentive, that makes us press forward to behold what we shrink from, and wait with trembling expectation for what we dread.[[307]](#footnote-307)

For Baillie, the power of empathetic identification with the sufferer pushes us to confront the fear of meaninglessness and death. To ‘behold what we shrink from’, therefore, deeply stems from what Baillie calls ‘sympathetick curiosity’,[[308]](#footnote-308) which tells the viewer/reader more about their own fears and anxieties. Discussing the role of the supernatural in Baillie’s drama in light of contemporary fears of German gothicisms on the British stage, Michael Gamer refers to the concept of sympathetic curiosity in Baillie’s plays, and adds that, for Baillie, ‘supernatural and psychological spectacle’ is a ‘potential tool for moral and intellectual instruction’ within a beneficial emotional experience encouraged by the age of sensibility.[[309]](#footnote-309) This anticipates Wordsworth’s instruction by fear and the way Wordsworth’s early experiences with emotional stimuli caused ‘by beauty and by fear’ (*Prelude*, (1.302-3)). shaped his imaginative perception and conditioned his empathetic capacity.[[310]](#footnote-310) Bannerman pushes the experience of fear to its limits in ways that break the boundaries of Baillie’s and Wordsworth’s instructive fear.

For Baillie, as for Wordsworth, there is a psychological process that directs the mind and conditions the body. This is as equally clear in her earlier poetry as it is in her later dramas. Nathan Elliott emphasises Baillie’s reliance on ‘an abstract standard of the passions’ as a means for self-diagnosis, whereby the audience/readers will be able to ‘diagnose themselves before those passions wreaked physical damage on their bodies’.[[311]](#footnote-311) Elliott is correct in detecting Baillie’s anatomical and pathological inclinations, especially in connection to her kinship with the Hunter brothers and her own brother Matthew Baillie, but Elliott does not reflect on the way Baillie’s poetry also turns to a similar endeavour and reveals her acute knowledge of psychopathology. There have been a great number of critics that have approached Baillie’s psychopathological theory developed in the ‘Introductory Discourse’, especially in relation to her plays. For example, critics like Michael Gamer, Frederick Burwick, Alan Richardson and Angela Monsam, to name just a few, have focused their critical enquiries on Baillie’s unique attention to individual psychology and anatomy in her collection of plays.[[312]](#footnote-312) More directed on *Orra*, fear and the body is Julie A. Carlson’s study of Baillie’s drama. Carlson’s analysis investigates Baillie’s ghostly Gothic bodies, but whilst Carlson focuses her study to Baillie’s drama, my analysis, as I have mentioned, is directed to Baillie’s poetry.[[313]](#footnote-313) In this chapter, I aim at a more informed examination of some of Baillie’s Gothic poems, which exhibit her views on passion, agency and the body, foregrounded to a great extent by Baillie’s early contact with anatomy and literature.

The prominent anatomists in Baillie’s family circle were her uncles, William and John Hunter, only the latter of whom Joanna met, and Matthew Baillie, her brother, who, according to Frederick Burwick, commenced his medical career in Glasgow and latterly Oxford when ‘the celebrated anatomist Dr. William Hunter took charge of his medical studies’.[[314]](#footnote-314) Although Baillie regretted not having met William Hunter, biographer Judith Bailey Slagle contends that Baillie ‘maintained a close relationship with John Hunter and his wife, the poet Anne Home Hunter, as well as with their daughter Agnes, later Lady Campbell’.[[315]](#footnote-315) After William’s death, Joanna and her sister Agnes moved from Scotland to London in 1783 with their mother Dorothea, and kept ‘house for Matthew Baillie’ at Great Windmill Street, who for the next eight years would serve ‘as a physician at St. George’s Hospital in 1787’, complete ‘his doctorate in medicine in 1789’, be a ‘fellow of the Royal College of Physicians’, and become ‘elected to the Royal Society in 1790’.[[316]](#footnote-316) It is relevant that Matthew Baillie’s *The Morbid Anatomy of some of the most important Parts of the Human Body* (1793) was published three years after Baillie’s *Poems* (1790), which means that it is possible they worked on the projects at approximately the same period. As Elliott argues, Baillie’s *Plays on the Passions* ‘was started at roughly the same time as her brother was completing his *Morbid Anatomy*, and she dedicated her second volume of *Plays on the Passions* to him’.[[317]](#footnote-317) It is to be assumed, therefore, that Baillie was familiar with her brother’s work, and Matthew definitely encouraged her attempts at writing.[[318]](#footnote-318) In addition, since Baillie was a frequent visitor at John and Anne Hunter’s home, ‘she was a part of that energetic and diverse environment’ of ‘[s]tudents and other visitors’ that peopled the Hunter household ‘around the clock’, even under Hunter’s reported ‘twenty-four hour day’ work as a physician.[[319]](#footnote-319) Indicatively, John Hunter’s work was renowned and conversant with many prominent vitalists of the day like John Abernethy, who, according to his *Physiological Lectures* (1817), relied on the body ‘to account for all vital phenomena’. As Abernethy observes, ‘Mr. Hunter believed that veins possessed vital activity’, which Abernethy extends to include the whole of the body.[[320]](#footnote-320) Related to this is the concept of ‘sympathy’ which, according to Sharon Ruston, was borrowed by Abernethy from Hunter, and refers to the ‘sympathy’ that exists among parts of the body, especially when there is stimuli.[[321]](#footnote-321) Abernethy connects this to the concept of ‘irritability’ that I also mentioned in Chapter One in relation to Darwin’s *Zoonomia* (1794) and Blake’s interlinked bodies. This indicates that Joanna Baillie would most certainly have been familiar with the various theories of vitality, irritability, sympathy and the body. Baillie’s compositional power, manifest in her plays and in her poetry, was conditioned by the medical discourses around her, and her idea of sympathetic curiosity certainly holds some affinity to the idea of physical connectedness. To complete this account of Baillie’s early inspirations and stimuli, it is worth stressing her aunt Anne Hunter’s influence on Baillie’s authorial identity. According to Slagle, Anne ‘was her genuine inspiration’, having ‘written several beautiful and popular songs’ and reading to Joanna her very own compositions.[[322]](#footnote-322) Interestingly, Anne Hunter wrote a collection of poetry titled *Poems*, as well as poems, ballads and songs published throughout her lifetime and ‘in Joanna Baillie’s 1823 edition, *A Collection of Poems, Chiefly Manuscript, and From Living Authors*’.[[323]](#footnote-323)

Baillie’s verses exhibit a sharp sense of physical sensation under the influence of emotion. In her poem ‘To Fear’ (1790), for instance, Baillie makes numerous references to physical pathologies under the extremities of fear. These include the ‘chilly blood’, the ‘fearful steps,’ and a body that ‘shrinks’, ‘starts’, and ‘quakes’, directly in proportion to the obscurity of its surroundings and the uncertain but imminent danger that is near at hand. ‘To Fear’ stands as Baillie’s homage to fear’s powerfulness and primality. It relies intensely upon Baillie’s informed sense of how a body in fear acts and reacts:

His heart beats thick against his breast,

And hardly stays within its chest:

Wild and unsettled are his eyes;

His quickened hairs begin to rise:

Ghastly and strong his features grow;

The cold dew trickles from his brow. (61-6)[[324]](#footnote-324)

It is surprising how long poems like this from Baillie’s first *Poems* edition (1790) have remained untapped by critics, not merely because of the early literary talent they betray, but also because of Baillie’s very early fascination with the power of emotion in mind and body. It is almost as if the details of the body’s description – the beating heart, the ‘wild and unsettled’ eyes, the ‘quickened hairs’ and the ‘cold dew’ – theatrically choreograph the reactions of a body in fear to bring it in front of the reader’s eyes. In so doing, it conditions empathy. The cause of the character’s fear in the poem is the strange train of ‘phantoms’ that ‘glide’ (60) around him, producing dismal sounds (very similar to Wordsworth’s acoustics of fear, which will be examined in the final chapter) that demarcate the liminal space of ghostly physicality, the place where the veil between the living and the dead is compromised, and one becomes aware of trembling bodies and identities. The past’s effect upon the present in the shape of the phantoms is particularly prominent here because it directly impacts the here and now, as indicated by the present tense used throughout the poem. Verbs like ‘beats’, ‘starts’, ‘quakes’ (57) carry strong physiological connotations as the effects of a body in fear and point to something that is happening to the body now and is potentially transferrable through the vivid description of affect to the reader. This poem betrays Baillie’s early interest in the politics of emotion and the body, which bloomed by a careful cultivation of the Gothic in early poems and later plays. As I will observe, Baillie’s ambivalent relationship with the Gothic originated in a fascination with Gothic stories from a very early age, and ‘To Fear’ is but one example of the way Baillie places herself in conversation with the themes explored by graveyard poets like William Collins, despite her reluctance to be associated with the Gothic later in her life. For Baillie, the Gothic provides a space where agency can be negotiated through her female ghosts and bodies in fear. Her poetry is extremely physical, and emotion plays a pivotal role in conditioning empathy and forwarding Baillie’s socio-political concerns.

In ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, Baillie ameliorates the supernatural elements associated with the ballad as a subversive genre and uses the Gothic trope of a ghostly female to write a tale of reconciliation, which is different from Bannerman’s use of the female Gothic body in her ballads. As Gamer argues, Baillie, like Coleridge, ‘is careful, self-conscious, and never without an enlightened distance or unassailable authority attached’ to the ‘supernatural material’ she handles. Rather, Baillie seems to ‘move’ the supernatural ‘into the minds of her characters as a way of revising existing models of psychology and subjectivity’.[[325]](#footnote-325) Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ explores internalised anxiety through externalised bodily expressions. The poem is about a maiden who crashes her former lover’s wedding to repair the wrong done to her. The couple eventually become reconciled over renewed promises of love and companionship. Baillie clearly establishes an air of mystery that penetrates the poem from the very beginning by describing the Gothic landscape of fear that penetrates the lady’s wanderings:

All shrouded in the winter snow  
The maiden held her way;  
Nor chilly winds that roughly blow,  
Nor dark night could her stay. (1-4)

The adjectives for describing the wintry setting are allusive to the description of a ‘shrouded’ and ‘chilly’ phantom that glides into the night during a cold winter wind. More than that, Baillie’s strategic placing of ‘shrouded’ to obscure the word’s referent – it could be either the shrouding of the ‘winter snow’ or the shrouding of the maiden that is pointed out here – immediately speaks of what Daniel Bergen calls the ‘distinct somatic feeling’ that characterises Baillie’s poetry and plays.[[326]](#footnote-326) It can also be said that ‘shrouded’ has a potential third meaning in this context and also alludes to the atmosphere of obscurity that veils the narrative from the very beginning.

As ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ unfolds, the physiological expression of fear and obscurity becomes even more evident in the ‘nightly yell’ of ‘Wild creatures’ (9-10), since the description of the first few stanzas addresses feelings of fear through the senses. The ‘chilly’ winds, the wild ‘yell’ of the creatures, the penetrating ‘darkness’ are all venues of fear, but it is the ‘inward troubles’ (12) of the maid that are juxtaposed with the Gothic sublime of the scenery. Fear has been re-placed within and outward bodies of fear like darkness and the wild creatures are in sync with the inward ghostliness that pervades the maiden:

Yet heedless still she held her way,  
Nor feared she crag, nor dell,  
Like ghost that through the gloom to stray  
Wakes with the midnight bell. (17-20)

It is never really clarified whether the maid of the poem is a ghost, but she certainly moves ‘Like ghost’ through the narrative in search of her lover’s wedding, herself a ghostly body of fear, ‘shrouded in the winter snow’ (1) that has internalised the emotions the poem is trying to convey. It is relevant to note here the negatives at play as the fear that pervades the description of the outside in the form of the snow, the chilliness, the ‘creatures’ that ‘left their caverns dread / To raise their nightly yell’ ( 9-10) and the steep darkness that surrounds the setting in which the maid undertakes her journey is in stark contrast to the maid’s resolution to reach the wedding banquet, as words like ‘yet’ and ‘nor’ indicate the maid’s internal blocking of fear’s pervading influence. Instead, the maid is transformed into a body of fear for the onlookers when the maid appears at the wedding. Especially for the bridegroom, looking at the maid would evoke a feeling of ‘cold’ that penetrates the ’turning blood’, shaking, staggering, and faltering (105-8).

At this moment, and through embodying the fear of the outside setting, the maid’s ghost-like body creates a sense of otherness that seems otherworldly, even more so because of the contrast she brings forward between her fair nature and her weather-beaten, sunken body. According to Roy Porter, we ‘feel and experience through our bodies’, and a fractured body like the ‘Storm-Beat’ body of the maiden is foregrounding an emphasis on passion and a shattered sense of identity that signifies the difference between the self and the other.[[327]](#footnote-327) The reference to a ‘ghost’ conjured by ‘the midnight bell’ in the passage quoted above ascribes a sense of otherworldliness to the maiden’s movements and marks her body as an *othered* body that, as I will argue, strikes her viewers at the wedding as out of place, but sublimely captivating. Anne Mellor explores the idea of the female sublime and argues that women writers move along the lines of the Radcliffean sublime, and/or variations of it, ‘displacing the horror of the Burkean sublime from nature into the home’, and within the self.[[328]](#footnote-328) Baillie in similar fashion re-writes the sublimity of nature’s terror as internal and turns the maiden’s self into a very physical and alive ghost-like body, which lives on the borders of liminality, bent on haunting the future of her former lover as ‘a stranger’ in the wedding hall (81), wrapped in *almost* supernatural mystery. Thus, in her representation of the maiden as ghost-like, Baillie brings the narrative closer to affective terror rather than what was considered repulsive horror in the face of freezing fear and the actual body of a ghastly ghost.

As a ballad, ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ predates a varied tradition of Gothic balladry that gained prominence from William Taylor’s famous translation of Bürger’s ‘Lenore’ (1796), published for the first time in the *Monthly Magazine*, and destined to ‘circulate widely in manuscript and exert a profound influence even before it came to print’.[[329]](#footnote-329) As Thomson observes, ‘Lenore’ was re-published no less than four times by 1797, together with Lewis’s ‘Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine’ in the *Tales*, which established ‘a prototype of the new or “modern” way of writing Gothic ballads’.[[330]](#footnote-330) As poems that presented tales of fear and the supernatural, ballads were popular as either specimen of old balladry, or spaces for experimentation with traditions of the past, and Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, Timothy Ruppert contends, belongs to balladry that ‘establishes’, like Bannerman, ‘a relationship to the literary past’ as the subtitle of the poem firmly suggests (‘Somewhat after the Style of Our Old English Ballads’).[[331]](#footnote-331) The ballad did not make it to the subsequently published poetry collection titled *Fugitive Verses* (1840), most likely because of its closer-to-home subject matter and obscure time setting, but Baillie did not abandon balladry in her volume of poems and included ballads like the ‘Elden Tree’ and ‘Sir Maurice’, which precipitate the idea of haunting by ghosts. However, all these are set in the remote English past, re-writing guilt and reparation in a manner congenial to the English ballad tradition of telling supernatural tales on a par with such stories from Southey or Scott.[[332]](#footnote-332) Nevertheless, there is an underwritten ambivalence here between the ballad as a ‘native poetic idiom’ that recalls a glorified past, and the ballad’s ‘politically subversive’ Gothic.[[333]](#footnote-333)

The *Quarterly Review*, for instance, praised Baillie’s ballads in *Fugitive Verses* (albeit moderately) for their power to create a striking impression on the reader:

Mrs. Joanna Baillie has, we think, succeeded very well in her ballads in a romantic and supernatural vein. They are all, more or less, good, especially the ‘Elden Tree’ and ‘Lord of the East’. ‘Sir Maurice’ is not so clearly narrated as it should be – but it is still a very striking poem, and there is great power of the same kind shown in ‘Malcolm’s Heir’. We wish it were in our power to present one of these ballads entire to our readers, for the effect lies so much in the whole piece, that we should do the author injustice by giving an extract only.[[334]](#footnote-334)

However, while the critic seems to admire the ballad’s power to ‘strike’ the reader, his positive criticism is tempered by the insertions of adjectives like ‘more or less’ and ‘good’ to describe the poetry, which shows caution against overexcitement. More importantly, the critic goes on to call these poems in Baillie’s collection ‘Ballads of Wonder’: ‘Highly […] as we estimate her ‘Ballads of Wonder’, we by no means think them the best parts of this volume’.[[335]](#footnote-335) The obvious reference here being to Matthew Lewis’s *Tales of Wonder* (1801), which became hugely notorious for disseminating a renewed but germanised way of ballad horror writing, the title sheds by subtle means an overt criticism of the ballads’ supernatural content and subconsciously puts Baillie closer to the Bannerman’s horror writings.

However, Baillie was cautious about the way she used her ghosts and other supernatural elements, especially in light of the predisposition of critics toward works like Matthew Lewis’s *Castle Spectre* (1798), and their fear that the English stage would be harmed by foreign invasions like German horror literature, particularly in the wake of a possible French invasion during the years 1797-8.[[336]](#footnote-336) I agree with Michael Gamer when he argues that Baillie re-directs the negative perception of the supernatural into the importance of emotion and ‘character perception’.[[337]](#footnote-337) Gamer quotes an interesting passage out of the ‘Introductory Discourse’ to illustrate Baillie’s point: ‘No man wishes to see the Ghost himself, which would certainly procure him the best information on the subject, but every man wishes to see one who believes that he sees it, in all the agitation and wildness of that species of terror.’[[338]](#footnote-338) What is crucial in representations of fear is not the supernatural *per se*, but fear itself and its impact on the characters. Ghosts are central to Baillie’s politics because they are intrinsically connected to an excess of emotion and the imprint of emotion on the moment of haunting. In ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, for instance, we never learn whether the maid is a ghost because that is not as important as the effect of her marginalised presence on the cottagers, the bridegroom, and the guests, as well as the readers. Indeed, unsure of the nature of her presence, the cottagers ‘wished her spirit peace’ (36), and further on, the gaiety of the feast and the bridal white that pervades the decorations inside contrast both with the adverse, fearful, snowy setting of the maid’s journey and with the maid’s ‘weary feet’ (41), snowy shroud, ‘rent’ mantle (74), ‘restless look’ (96), and scattered hair (102).

Contrary to Romantic anxieties against the reign of the passions and the body, Joanna Baillie seeks to bring the body to the centre of the empathetic experience. According to Aileen Forbes, Charles Lamb, ‘[l]ike Wordsworth, […] rejects the theater’s bodily manifestation of passion’ and wishes ‘to eliminate the bodily function of the stage actor and the stage itself’, instead of which he wants to ‘erect a psychological theater’, in the form of the ‘closet’ plays Baillie was accused of writing. [[339]](#footnote-339) In his essay ‘On the tragedies of Shakespeare’ (1811), for instance, Lamb writes:

[…] they see an actor personating a passion, of grief, or anger, for instance, and they recognize it as a copy of the usual external effects of such passions; for at least as being true to that symbol of the emotion which passes current at the theatre for it, for it is often no more than that: but of the grounds of the passion […] which is the only worthy object of tragedy, […] that apprehensions foreign to them should be thus infused into them by storm, I can neither believe, nor understand how it can be possible.[[340]](#footnote-340)

Lamb seems to oppose the somatic demonstration of emotional excess, rather than the theatrical demonstration ‘of the grounds of the passion’. However, Baillie’s psychological approach to writing fear was extremely physical, and shaped by a lifelong attraction to the workings of emotion and her inevitable contact with the anatomical world. This is already evident in ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, where the emphasis on the maid’s worn body and how it interacts with the outside. This interaction pertains to a series of descriptions that see the maid walking through ‘crag’ and ‘dell’ like a ghost to reach her destination, beaten by the weather, as well as the language Baillie uses to indicate the ‘nighted mind’ of the maid that reflects on her body, causing her passing through the night ‘Like early spring’s inconstant blast / That ruffles evening’s face’ (39-40), a highly physical image that describes the stimulating presence of the maid’s haunting figure.

As a result, it seems that Baillie cultivated her literary talents from a very early age in an engaging environment of mental and physical stimulation. Many years later, Baillie would be asked by her nephew William and her friend Mary Berry ‘to provide them with a memoir, along with information about her ancestors’, which would take the form of the ‘Memoirs Written to please my nephew William Baillie’ (1831) containing a very interesting record of Baillie’s experiences in Bothwell with her family.[[341]](#footnote-341) Baillie’s ‘first faint recollections’, then, give us a valuable insight into the way the Gothic stimulated her imagination. While Baillie rejoiced in ‘playing […] make-believe grown people’ outside with the ‘other Children’, her sister Agnes preferred books and reading, but there was one activity that resonated with both:

There was one occupation which we both joined in with equal avidity – listening to Ghost stories told us by the sexton of parish who frequently came to the house of a winter evening and sat by the Kitchen fire. We always, I don’t know how, contrived to escape from the parlor when we heard that John Leipen, so he was called, was in the house. His stories excited us much, and as the house we lived in was said to be haunted by the ghost of a man who had in former years hanged himself in the Garret, we became so frighten’d that we durst not go up stairs [sic] alone even in broad day light.[[342]](#footnote-342)

Here, we see Baillie’s excitement about the thrill that a good ghost story can trigger, much in the same way that Orra is fascinated by the possibility of hair-raising scary stories in *Orra*. Orra’s maid Alice wonders at her lady’s pleasure in fearful tales of ghosts and the supernatural, but Orra very insightfully answers that ‘there is a joy in fear’ that is directly linked to such a story’s physiological reaction to the hearer’s body. In the most sincere manner, Orra admits to the pleasure she receives ‘when the cold blood shoots through every vein: / When every pore upon my shrunken skin / A knotted knoll becomes’ (Act II, Scene I). [[343]](#footnote-343) It is interesting how Orra equates feeling the psychophysical effects of fear with pleasure:

Al.

What pleasure is there, lady, when thy hand,

Cold as the valley's ice, with hasty grasp

Seizes on her who speaks, while thy shrunk form

Cow'ring and shiv'ring stands with keen turn'd ear

To catch what follows of the pausing tale?

Orra.

And let me cow'ring stand, and be my touch

The valley's ice: there is a pleasure in it. (Act II, Scene I)

The ‘cow’ring’ and the icy ‘touch’ Orra refers to are pleasurable symptoms of fear that for Orra create an ambivalent oscillation between sheer terror, and an excitability that awakens the body. This is an example of the way terror is presented as triggering the body and places it in a position of pleasure and pain as Orra is scared on the one hand, but on the other hand wants to find out more. Orra finds this ‘thrill’ in the fake ghost of the castle, the encounter which leaves her to believe that she has seen a real ghost. Of course, reality proves that a real ghost is not needed for the superstitious mind to turn mad from fear. Visions of the mind can be just as dangerous, as the play leaves Orra mad, and in conversation with spirits of the imagination.

By the end of the play, Orra’s body becomes another ghostly, abject body, but it is noteworthy here that *The Monthly Review* (1812) claimed to prefer the death of the heroine by fear, rather than her survival as a mad woman: ‘If […] Orra had died of fear, a something would have happened tragical enough for the preparation, which rivals in terrifying mechanism the romances of Mrs. Radcliffe’.[[344]](#footnote-344) It seems that the idea of Orra as a female character breaking the margins of rationality is dismissed as unnatural, and preferably dead than living, a body ‘in hysterics’ and ‘extremities’ as Hoeveler observes.[[345]](#footnote-345) Even though clearly against such female authorial constructions, the critic nevertheless establishes a line of Gothic female writers that encompasses both Radcliffe and Baillie who use fear for their own purposes in their writings. Indeed, Baillie uses psychophysical imagery extensively in both her poetry and her drama and so does Radcliffe. It is worth mentioning here that Radcliffe characteristically uses a quotation from Shakespeare’s ghost speech in *Hamlet* to preface both *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and the second chapter of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794): ‘I could a tale unfold whose lightest word / Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, / Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres’ (15-7).[[346]](#footnote-346) Although Radcliffe’s use of the supernatural falls under an eventually rationalised explanation, she does not fail to lay stress on the effect of fear on the bodies of her characters, just like Baillie does in her writings, thus recognising the power of affect as both mental and palpably physical. For Baillie, ghosts carry highly physical connotations in their description and in the way they affect those who encounter them.

Baillie’s poetry is peopled by ghosts, which exist there less because of their presence as actual ghosts and more because of the way Baillie uses them to think about affect and the mind. Ghosts live on the margins of Baillie’s ‘An Address to the Night’ series, especially in ‘The Fearful Mind’. This holds particular importance in this context because this poem is part of a series (also published in *Poems*) that also consists of ‘A Discontented Mind’, ‘A Sorrowful Mind’ and ‘A Joyful Mind’, all portraying Baillie’s attempt to delineate psychological states of mind and how these condition our thoughts. Prominent in this series is ‘A Fearful Mind’, which illustrates how powerful fear is for Baillie. The poem starts with the word ‘Uncertain’, which echoes the sense of obscurity that Radcliffe connects to terror, as well as the obscurity that Blake associates with the veil in his poems. Right from the start, the speaker describes a sense of darkness and a ‘fearful stillness’ that covers all, as not a ‘cheerful voice’ is heard, which is artfully juxtaposed with the voices of the night. In the poem, the wanderings of ‘unearthy things’ (26) and their voices issuing ‘from the secret tomb’ (28) is introduced through this juxtaposition with the quietness of the living. However, the bodies of the ghosts do not acquire a full description and manifestation in the poem as the speaker moves on to the sublimity of nature amidst a scenery of darkness, rocks and waters, before discreetly moving on to the ‘restless spirit’ (45) that sways the night. We see the ‘roving shadow hastens o’er the stream / And like a ghost’s pale shroud the waters gleam’ (35-6), but not the actual shroud of the ghosts that issue from the graveyard. As with Baillie’s other Gothic poems, there is an evocation of the terror of the Gothic body without allowing it to turn into a horrific encounter, at the same time as she acutely analyses the psychophysical effects of fear turned terror and transfers this to her readers through the obscurity of ghostly bodies that nevertheless speak through the night. Ghosts also inhabit Baillie’s ‘Night-Scenes’ (*Fugitive Verses*), where Conrad is haunted by the ghost of his daughter, after the latter had committed suicide upon Conrad’s murder of her beloved Edward.

The poems that I have cited in the previous paragraph join the ghost-like (never explicitly presented as a ghost) figure of the maid in Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, where the lady glides forlorn through the wintry night to find her past lover and correct a wrong. This poem holds a special place not only because it is an indicative example of the way Baillie handles ghosts in her writings, but also because of the centrality of the female body in fear and of fear and how it brings forward the marginalised. In the context of haunting, Baillie finds a way to recollect meaning through the margins and embody the female voice through the resolution of the maid’s troubles. Baillie gives the female abject a body and a voice by which to upset social conventions, and re-gain agency through fear. In the ‘Introductory Discourse’, Baillie talks about the instructional value of coming in contact with the world of the dead and experiencing fear: ‘Among the many trials to which the human mind is subjected, that of holding intercourse, real or imaginary, with the world of spirits: of finding itself alone with a being terrific and awful, whose nature and power are unknown’, is, for Baillie, one of the most intense experience to this purpose.[[347]](#footnote-347) As Christine Colón says, while the ‘process of learning to live a good, moral life’ may not immediately be associated in our minds with ‘mysterious forests, dreary castles, threatening ghosts, and hideous corpses’ […] Baillie does’.[[348]](#footnote-348) Encounters with ghosts thus acquire instructional value similar to Wordsworth’s pedagogy of fear which, as I will argue in Chapter Four, meant an uncomfortable but necessary interaction of the inside and the outside, the past and present, through sensation and intense emotional experiences. Ghosts facilitate this interaction and marks a space for the re-negotiation of trauma through haunting.

Ballads like ‘The Elden Tree’ and ‘Sir Maurice’ from Baillie’s poetry recount the ‘living-on’ that Derrida sees as ‘a trace’ on the border of life and death, ‘a survival whose possibility in advance comes to disjoin or dis-adjust the identity to itself of the living present as well as of any effectivity’.[[349]](#footnote-349) This refers to a coming back of a trauma, a return of a haunting body that lives on to disturb and dislocate the preconceived sense of self and its perception of the living. To be more precise, the ‘Elden Tree’, which appeared for the first time in Baillie’s *Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters* (1821), exposes a fratricide that seems to haunt the Elden Tree planted by a monk.[[350]](#footnote-350) During a baron’s feast, the merry atmosphere is interrupted by the howling of the wind and a ‘thunder’ that strikes the Elden Tree, only to expose ‘White bones’ that were ‘found in the mould below / Like the bones of a stripling child’.[[351]](#footnote-351) As in ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, Baillie is careful not to foreground the existence of the brother’s ghost so much as to reveal, even momentarily, the ‘trace’, real or imaginary, that bestows shame on the mind of the baron and haunts the feast. In the same way as her other poems, here too we see the expression of the fear through the paleness ‘as the shrouded dead’, the petrified ‘eye-balls’, and the ‘stifled groan’ of the baron upon the startling news.

Like Wordsworth’s ‘The Haunted Tree’ (1820), ‘The Elden Tree’ hints at the idea of haunting without referring to an actual ghost, which happens through the guilty body of fear. However, Wordsworth’s poem only momentarily implies the possibility of haunting: ‘Nor is it unbelieved,’ Wordsworth says, ‘By ruder fancy, that a troubled ghost / Haunts the old trunk (27-9).[[352]](#footnote-352) The double negative ‘nor […] unbelieved’ is, evidently, indicative of Wordsworth’s cautious inclusion of the supernatural in the poem, which persists through the ‘creaking’ Gothic ‘sound’ (22) of the tree and the title of the poem. Indeed, despite the difference in how they explore fear, both Baillie and Wordsworth seek to explore the personal, ordinary experience through emotion. According to Paula Feldman, Wordsworth ‘silently borrowed’ from Baillie’s ‘Introductory Discourse’ ‘in his preface to the second edition of his *Lyrical Ballads*, something that Jonathan Wordsworth also observes in his preface to the reprinted edition of Baillie’s *Poems* (1794) when he talks about Baillie’s influence on Wordsworth’s ideas.[[353]](#footnote-353) Other critics that have commented on the literary affinity between the two theories include Jeffrey N. Cox, Mary F. Yudin, Richard Cronin, and Stephen C. Behrendt, among others, so it has been widely noticed that Baillie’s *Poems*, in which ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ is included, ‘are remarkable precursors of Wordsworth’s poems in *Lyrical Ballads*’, as Behrendt shrewdly notices.[[354]](#footnote-354) Even before Wordsworth, Baillie showed ‘her profound interest in human behaviour’ and ‘human psychology’, in the way ‘it is affected by various states of mind’, made even more evident in her ‘An Address to the Night’ series.[[355]](#footnote-355) These poems were not included in the *Fugitive Verses*, and neither was ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, which Richard Cronin accounts for by contending that ‘perhaps she felt that this kind of thing had subsequently been better done by Wordsworth and Coleridge.[[356]](#footnote-356) Whether or not this is true, the fact that Baillie’s poetry stood on a par with and influenced *Lyrical Ballads* testifies to her forward thinking and the way poems like ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ revolutionised poetry in their shift to inner states of mind and their physiological/physiognomic expressions, using the ballad’s ambivalent emphasis on subversion and political possibility.

In his essay ‘Repression’ (1915), Sigmund Freud examines the ‘turning something away’ that the conscious engages in when something is negatively intense emotionally, whether painful or otherwise. More precisely, Freud argues that ‘the essence of repression’ lies in ‘keeping’ something ‘at a distance, from the conscious’ that finds expression through affect, and whose repression leaves ‘symptoms’ behind that constitute ‘indications of a *return of the repressed*’ (Freud’s italics), much like Derrida’s idea of the trace that was mentioned earlier.[[357]](#footnote-357) Of course, Freud’s essay was written much later than Baillie’s poetry, but the idea of return is indicative here of this haunting that a ghost that returns embodies. In ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, for example, the maid’s return to the ‘stately castle’ portends a disruption of the wedding feast, while the ‘midnight bell’ mentioned earlier in relation to the maid’s ghostliness echoes the ‘shrill bell’ (47) of the wedding in the castle. In sketching the maid as ghost-like and obscure, Baillie effectively writes her heroine as neither the wholly ‘dead, vengeful revenant’ that we see in Bannerman’s poems, nor the ‘living, innocent Gothic heroine’ of Radcliffe’s novels, but as an in-between presence that revises female identity and emphasises the complexity of the female voice.[[358]](#footnote-358)

In ‘Night-Scenes’, Margaret’s ghost returns to visit her guilty father, ‘pale Conrad’, who killed Margaret’s lover. Margaret’s ‘ghost’ follows her lover’s very ghastly ghost appearance in the form of an airy music coming from a harp, enrobed in a ‘passing mist’, and tormenting in her presence the conscience of her father.[[359]](#footnote-359) Here, too, the female character is paralleled with the ‘low ev’ning breath’ that blows in the ‘weeds of death’, but which offers resolution in the narrative through the ‘heavy groan’ of the father and his eventual release in death. Having undergone oppression during their lives, both the Storm-beat Maid and Margaret find a way to return and find peace by affecting the guilty mind through fear and regret. As Makala Edmundson suggests, issues with women’s oppression/silencing in the middle-class family were especially voiced through the Gothic, and women writers, like Baillie and Bannerman, ‘appropriated the ballad tradition in order to voice concerns that they could not otherwise publicly articulate within the wider culture of their time’.[[360]](#footnote-360) Baillie’s maid does not speak in ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, and neither does Margaret’s ghost in ‘Night-Scenes’, but they become empowered through the psychophysical effects of their presence, and the resolution that they bring forward.

Indeed, there is physiological focus to the Storm-beat Maid’s description. Upon her entrance, the maid is seen sitting ‘on the ground’ with a withered appearance that catches the eyes of the wedding guests, while she rolls ‘her wandering eye’ in search of the groom. Marked as ‘no bidden guest’, the lady’s mien, ‘stiff with drizzly snow’, comes in contrast to the warmth of the wedding day and combines stately beauty and anxiety:

And tall and slender is her form,  
Like willow o'er the brook;  
But on her brow there broods a storm,  
And restless is her look. (93-6)

While ‘soft and fair’ (109), the maid betrays a restlessness that is marked on her face, much ‘like the unsheltered sapling-bough / Vexed with the wintry wind’ (99-100). Baillie keeps referring to the lady’s ‘brow’ and ‘look’, which again reveals Baillie’s interest in the body and face and how physiognomy and physiology conveys emotion. This recalls Blake’s similar take on physiognomy in poetry and illustrations, where emotion is expressed on the face of the people and creatures Blake was supposed to see as visions. E. J. Clery makes an interesting observation alluding to Aristotle’s idea of ‘pathos’ when she claims that pathos has tangible physical effects. According to Aristotle, pathos is ‘an Action which destroys some Person, or causes some violent pains, as an evident and certain Death, Torments, Wounds, and all such things’, and Clery further links this to supernatural beings when she talks about the power of emotions like terror, as ‘the example of Seneca’ in Renaissance tragedies makes evident.[[361]](#footnote-361) Thus, when Baillie talks about the maid’s tempestuous looks in the poem, she pays tribute to the power of pathos and disturbs the boundaries between the inside and the outside in the maid’s inner reflection of ‘the storm’ raging outside the castle. At the same time, the potentially supernatural nature of the maid is carefully kept unaddressed, following a Radcliffean spectralisation that, according to Jerrold E. Hogle, ‘keeps us from any real contact with a natural or physical other’.[[362]](#footnote-362) We never actually find out whether the maid is an actual ghost, but her spectralised identity is evident throughout the poem. Baillie therefore avoids the reader’s contact with an actual ghost and utilises the obscurity of the maid’s identity to create a feeling of terror in the reader.

Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ reiterates in a unique way the Gothic trope of the mysterious female intruding on a wedding gathering as a kind of revenant, also re-written by Bannerman in her poem ‘The Dark Ladie’, but with a twist. Instead of death, Baillie’s maid brings love and reconciliation in unison. Upon his encounter with the maid, the groom repents, and promises to ‘tend thee like a restless child’ (153):

I'll share the cold blast on the heath,  
I'll share thy wants and pain:  
Nor friend nor foe, nor life nor death,  
Shall ever make us twain. (161-4)

In the last few lines, there is a conspicuous emphasis on the word ‘share’, coupled with the repetition of the word ‘I’, which encompasses Baillie’s political agenda in the poem. At the end, what remains is the sense of community brought forward by the power of personal emotion and the alleviation of pain and fear by ‘sharing’ and unity. In this narrative, and in ‘any scene of haunting’, as Clery argues, emotions like fear are the ‘true object of the aesthetic’ and ghosts ‘a mere catalyst’.[[363]](#footnote-363) In Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, the feeling of terror created by Baillie in the poem is more prominent than proving the maid’s ghostliness.

Nevertheless, Baillie’s use of the ghostly aura of the maid is different from ballads like Lewis’s ‘Alonzo the Brave’, Scott’s ‘The Daemon Lover’, and Bannerman’s ‘The Perjured Nun’, where death is occasioned by the encounter of the living with the dead. Baillie supports reconciliation and places emphasis upon the way haunting comes from the inside to effect change when and if addressed. The ghost-like maid represents the trauma that exists between the couple. The maid ‘returns’ to force resolution, being what Derrida calls a ‘familiar’ but also ‘disquieting’ presence that makes us feel ‘observed’ and creates inner fear.[[364]](#footnote-364) By the end of Baillie’s poem, fear is cast away and opposites like ‘cold’ (157), ‘securely’ (158), ‘drizzly’ (159), ‘dry’ (160) are dissolved in the couple’s union. Once again, Baillie’s poetry provides proof of her interest in mental anatomy, and, as Elliott argues, her view that ‘the passions were not simply psychological states, but physical states, with unique and particular dangers’ that Baillie nevertheless weaponised to instruct her readers. This is why Baillie adopts what Angela Monsam calls ‘anatomical rhetoric’ and language in general to talk about anatomising feeling and fostering the reader’s ‘sympathetic curiosity’.[[365]](#footnote-365)

Indeed, at the end of ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, the bridegroom repents having abandoned the maid because of ‘the golden price’ (157) that accompanied his current bride, and curses ‘woman’s art’ (141) for being faithless to his true love. The whole dynamic of the poem changes upon the groom’s contact with the ghostly figure of the maid, and the change of mind that ensues as they are reunited. By the end of the poem, the groom promises the maid that ‘Nor friend nor foe, nor life nor death’ shall separate them again (163) as the resolution of the poem is beautifully unravelled, with fear and haunting playing a central role in re-collecting meaning. By employing the power of affect, Baillie creates a space by jolting us into ourselves through fear caused by the imminent presence of ghostly figures, since these bodies, as Bergen says, ‘are not static but dynamic’, and trigger the mind into sympathetic exploration through feeling.[[366]](#footnote-366) I will now turn to Anne Bannerman and how she handles ghostly horror in her poetry.

**2.4. Anne Bannerman and the Poetry of Horror**

The biographical information available for Anne Bannerman is scarce and concentrates mostly on her two volumes of poems. Apart from a few critical studies on Bannerman’s poetry, Bannerman has been largely under-researched.[[367]](#footnote-367) Timothy Ruppert acknowledges this by saying that Bannerman’s ‘continuing absence from all save a very few studies seems especially regrettable in view of what her ardour for success and belonging can teach us about literary relationships and ideas of poetic tradition during the Romantic age in Britain’.[[368]](#footnote-368) Bannerman formed relationships with notable figures of the time, and was esteemed by both Walter Scott and Joanna Baillie, among others. Born in Edinburgh in 1765, Bannerman came to be ‘part of the Edinburgh poetic circle that also included John Leyden, Thomas Campbell, and Dr Robert Anderson’, who was ‘the editor of the *Edinburgh Magazine*’ which published Bannerman’s work, together with the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Poetical Register*.[[369]](#footnote-369) Like Baillie, Bannerman did not use her own name when she took her first publishing steps. Instead, she ‘began her career by publishing in the periodicals, as Augusta, as B, and’, eventually, under her own name.[[370]](#footnote-370) Also like Baillie, Bannerman struggled with critics, especially when her *Tales* were published after the successful first volume of *Poems* (1800). Bannerman struggled financially throughout the rest of her life, writing to support herself and finally accepting a position as a governess in Exeter, before eventually going back to Scotland ‘in the early 1810s’, and dying in 1829, ‘an invalid and in debt’.[[371]](#footnote-371) Despite the apparent hardships of her life, however, it seems that Bannerman was an active part of Edinburgh’s intellectual circle, and even influenced the poetical compositions of other writers like John Leyden, whose famous ‘The Mermaid’ ‘appeared two years after Bannerman’s own remarkable ode, ‘The Mermaid’, was published in her 1800 *Poems*’.[[372]](#footnote-372) Bannerman’s ‘The Mermaid’ was included in her first published volume of poems which, although not as inclusive of the Gothic as the subsequent *Tales*, contains the seeds of the supernatural that Bannerman came to be (in)famous for, and which excited controversial contemporary criticism.

Bannerman is scarcely included in studies of the Romantic period, even today. Hoeveler contends that, ‘[b]uried in a pauper’s grave outside of Edinburgh’, Bannerman was ‘almost completely forgotten, until a computer-assisted recovery process suddenly resurrected her, her mermaids and nuns, her knights and Kings, staring out at us from a dark screen, asking us to hear their voices—not our own’.[[373]](#footnote-373) Bannerman’s writing reveals huge potential both compositionally, and on the subject of female empowerment from a poet that struggled financially throughout most of her life, especially since the death of her mother and brother in 1803.[[374]](#footnote-374) Although her *Poems* and *Tales* did not receive much critical acclaim, it was recognised by poets like Sir Walter Scott, who was also one of Baillie’s most intimate friends, that Bannerman was one of the talented representatives of Scottish balladry. In his ‘Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad’ prefacing the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1807), Scott includes Bannerman in his praise of Scotland’s ballad writers:

Miss Anne Bannerman likewise should not be forgotten, whose *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* appeared about 1802. They were perhaps too mystical and too abrupt; yet if it be the purpose of this kind of ballad poetry powerfully to excite the imagination, without pretending to satisfy it, few persons have succeeded better than this gifted lady, whose volume is peculiarly fit to be read in a lonely house by a decaying lamp.[[375]](#footnote-375)

Scott refers to Bannerman as a ‘gifted lady’ who excelled in writing mystical ballads better read ‘in a lonely house by a decaying lamp’, which curiously brings to mind the eerie atmosphere that surrounds the portrait of the three ladies reading scary stories in James Gillray’s ‘Tales of Wonder!’ (1802) and puts Bannerman within the controversial discourse about the place of the Gothic as an acceptable source of entertainment, especially for female readers.[[376]](#footnote-376)

A picture containing text, gallery, altar, picture frame

Description automatically generatedFig. 12: James Gillray, *Tales of Wonder!*, 1802 © The Art Institute of Chicago

Gillray’s famous parody of Lewis’s horror ballads in *Tales of Wonder* (1801) is relevant here, because Bannerman’s *Tales of Superstition* seems to have been ‘unfairly associated with Matthew Lewis’s *Tales of Wonder*,’ as Lyndsey Brown argues, ‘causing some to believe that Lewis himself was the author’ of Bannerman’s *Tales*.[[377]](#footnote-377) As expected, this ‘association with Lewis was particularly damaging for Bannerman, as Lewis’s ballads were criticized for their deliberate extravagance’, and the school of horror he came to represent, of which William Blake’s Gothic bodies are a prime example, was ‘the most scandalous of Gothic associations for a woman’.[[378]](#footnote-378) In his brief mention of Bannerman, Scott bestows his praise cautiously by adding that Bannerman’s work may be considered ‘too mystical’ and ‘too abrupt’, which shows both Bannerman’s precarious affinity with writers of the Matthew Lewis school and Scott’s careful distancing from the German gothicisms he used to court, and what Gamer calls Scott’s ‘so-called German “adolescence”’.[[379]](#footnote-379) However, Scott does not fail to register his admiration of the effect Bannerman’s ballads potentially have on the readers of her work, and even recommends, as Mary Shelley imploringly does in her essay ‘On Ghosts’, reading such works of mystery at night for optimal fear effect. As one of the foremost representatives of gothic ballad use in Britain, together with Percy, Hogg, Leyden, and Lewis, Scott includes Bannerman in a varied tradition of Gothic writers who recognise and excel in the ballad’s political viability. Indeed, all the aforementioned writers employ the ballad ‘as a nationalistic literary tool’ which affirms national sentiment in its ‘anti-Augustan and therefore anti-French’ character, but also as a vehicle for the expression of the nation’s ghosts.[[380]](#footnote-380) As I will argue, Bannerman’s ghosts serve exactly this function of re-surfacing at the moment they are called away, and their persistence speaks to the impossibility of ultimately suppressing them, a political persistence that Baillie’s poetry also reiterates.

Bannerman’s *Tales* are replete with ghosts, and there is plenty of evidence that the element of fear and haunting is foregrounded in many of the poems of the collection. One of these that come to mind is ‘Basil’, which is very different from Bannerman’s ‘The Mermaid’ because it does not feature a deadly female figure that lures the sailors to death with her song. This chapter is limited to an analysis of ghosts and haunting in the poetry of Baillie and Bannerman, so I am not going to approach Bannerman’s ‘The Mermaid’ in detail. However, it is worth noting that, along with the other powerful female characters of Bannerman’s poetry, the mermaid offers a model of female empowerment that Craciun also refers to in her analysis of Baillie’s poem (see *Fatal Women of Romanticism*). According to Craciun, Bannerman’s representation of a supernatural creature like the mermaid goes beyond male anxieties about the demonic female. What Bannerman does, Craciun argues, is link ‘sublime destruction and poetry, the magnificent destroyer and the visionary poet’ (p. 177). More than that, Craciun says that Bannerman ‘simultaneously offers a proto-feminist revision of the traditional associations of destruction with masculinity’ and re-affirms female agency through the power of darkness (p. 180). Indeed, the mermaid’s supernatural powers are materialised as her song becomes one with the dark powers of nature:

Then, [while](https://www.definitions.net/definition/while) the dark and [angry](https://www.definitions.net/definition/angry) deep  
[Hangs](https://www.definitions.net/definition/Hangs) his huge [billows](https://www.definitions.net/definition/billows) high in air;  
And the wild wind with [awful](https://www.definitions.net/definition/awful) sweep,  
[Howls](https://www.definitions.net/definition/Howls) in each [fitful](https://www.definitions.net/definition/fitful) swell—beware!  
Firm on the rent and [crashing](https://www.definitions.net/definition/crashing) mast,  
I lend new fury to the blast;  
I mark each [hardy](https://www.definitions.net/definition/hardy) cheek grow pale,  
And the [proud](https://www.definitions.net/definition/proud) sons of [courage](https://www.definitions.net/definition/courage) fail.

Here, too, Bannerman equates the mermaid’s power with chaos and fear, marked in the ‘hardy’ but ‘pale’ cheek of the sailors as they are about to enter their graves. Even though it lacks ghosts, ‘The Mermaid’ is useful as part of Bannerman’s series of vengeful supernatural creatures that challenge ideas of normality and own a voice through the power of darkness and Gothic fear, just like the female ghosts of Bannerman’s subsequent *Tales*, which will be the focus in the chapter.

‘Basil’ from Bannerman’s *Tales* is rather more Wordsworthian in its focus on romantic sublime solitude that turns dreary by means of an imminent, threatening Gothic sound, followed by a dead body on the doorstep of the solitary protagonist. Very craftily, Bannerman moves from the tones that ‘sooth’d’ Basil’s ‘lonely heart’, which ‘[c]ame not from human kind’, to the ‘one drear night’ when Basil suddenly ‘heard a moan’ that mingled with ‘the billow’s sob’ and the ‘wild sea-eagle’s cry’ to make the source of the dreariness even more indistinguishable. Bannerman carefully emphasises obscurity and mystery in description, just like Baillie does in her poem ‘To Fear’, and likewise registers the effects of fear on the body:

But the awe, the dread that o'er him came,

This fateful night he quak'd to feel!

It was not fear of tide or wind, [...]

'Twas that low breathlessness of mind,

When the heart-veins congeal.[[381]](#footnote-381)

It is evident that fear is the prevalent emotion in this second part of ‘Basil’, and it gradually creeps in as the sound nears Basil’s home. Bannerman explicitly names the ‘dread’ that intrudes upon Basil’s body and makes him quake, breathless, and congeals his ‘heart-veins’. Like Baillie, Bannerman seems to represent excess of emotion in her poem through bodily expressions. Like Baillie, too, Bannerman seems to internalise fear that comes from outside stimuli, thus breaking the boundaries between the inside and the outside, emotion and outward threat.

Bannerman based much of her poetry on Baillie’s theory of the emotions, primarily using the body to represent these emotions. In ‘Basil’, for example, fear is portrayed through Basil’s intensified senses when the groan ‘nearer came’; his breath was short, his ear was ‘stunned’, and the sound of the footsteps ‘rung around him still’, even after the sound died. Eventually, Basil encounters a decaying ‘corse’ lying ‘upon its face / As life did never lie’, and in this contact with the Gothic body of the deceased commences the haunting of Basil throughout the rest of the poem. Here, Bannerman does not go into much detail of the dead body’s features like she does with the female ghosts in her *Tales*, but the idea of haunting the place where something dreary was experienced and the emotion of fear was at its peak is sketched in Basil’s transformation into a ghost-like character by the end of the narrative, just as Baillie’s Orra is also transformed into a liminal figure after her encounter with the quasi-ghost of the castle. From that moment, Basil ‘wanders on the desert beach, / Like some lone ghost of air, / Scarce human like’. The concept of haunting is important here because it marks the moment when the body of fear – in this case, the corpse – and the body in fear – Basil – become indistinguishable. As far as female haunting is concerned, bodies of fear and in fear interact all the time in the *Tales*, as I will explore especially in poems like ‘The Dark Ladie’, ‘The Perjured Nun’ and the ‘Penitent’s Confession’.[[382]](#footnote-382) However, what Bannerman does in *Poems* is set the tone for the horror of haunting she comes to explore in the *Tales*. Poems like ‘Basil’ are joined by others like the ‘The Nun’ of the same collection, where an incarcerated nun is no ghost herself, but is entrapped in ‘a living tomb’, while the ‘keenest horror’ of the cell makes her see ‘the giant form of terror rise’ (30). Lord Byron’s *Prisoner of Chillon*, published after Bannerman’s ‘The Nun’ in 1816, also deals with the horror of incarceration and the haunting of the senses to the point when the inside and the outside are blurred and the prison becomes one’s own personal home.[[383]](#footnote-383) In ‘The Nun’, too, the description of the nun’s feelings are the ones of a troubled spirit whose only home is the prison: ‘Yes, ye dank cells, o’ergrown with hoary mould, / The only home I ever shall behold!’ (179-80). Here, the idea of entrapment and oppression is one that female ghosts in the *Tales* will try to rectify through the idea/longing of a ‘*return*’: ‘My weary spirit seeks another scene, / Nor bars, nor chains, can interpose between’.[[384]](#footnote-384)

In discussing this theme of ghostly return on the day of a feast to correct a wrong, Anne Bannerman’s ‘The Dark Ladie’ should hold an eminent place, not the least because of the similarities in subject matter and the emphasis on the psychophysical effects of fear in the poem. As Patrick Bridgwater observes, Bannerman’s ballad comes as a ‘continuation’ of Coleridge’s ‘Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie’ (1799), where Coleridge promises to supply the readers with the tale of the ‘Dark Ladie’, but never actually goes into any detail other than an invitation towards his readership to hear the woes of the lady: ‘Come, then, and hear the cruel wrongs / Befell the Dark Ladie’.[[385]](#footnote-385) These lines are repeated twice, but Coleridge does not go any further. Even in the ‘Ballad of the Dark Ladie’ that he wrote as part of *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), a fragmentary tale of love and cautious hope, Coleridge does not quite reveal what ‘befell’ the lady or explain the title of the ballad, other than a subtle but suggestive repetition of the word ‘dark’ to indicate the time Henry would ‘steal’ his beloved.[[386]](#footnote-386) It is Bannerman who basically provides the ‘sister tale’ that Coleridge mentions in his Introductory poem, and who breathes life into a woeful tale of horror that would create ambivalent impressions on the readers.[[387]](#footnote-387) De Quincey, for instance, was widely impressed by Bannerman’s *Tales* in general, and wrote in his journal entry for 12 June 1803: ‘Have you ever read the Tales of Superstition and’ – ‘and Chivalry,’ said I, […] Somebody (Mrs. Williams or Miss Kilpatrick) mentioning the “Tales of Wonder,” I observed that those were written by a much inferior man to the author of’ the *Tales*.’[[388]](#footnote-388) In the same entry, De Quincey adds that he holds more affinity with the author of the *Tales* than to Lewis’s writing, because whoever wrote the *Tales* has a certain ‘dark mystery’ about them.[[389]](#footnote-389) Indeed, what makes ballads like ‘The Dark Ladie’ stand out is their eerie supernaturalism that chills through the horror of their female ghosts.

‘The Dark Ladie’ uses this kind of supernatural horror to structure an empowered female character. As I will argue, Bannerman resembles Baillie in her foregrounding of emotions like fear through their psychophysical manifestation, but she turns Baillie’s carefully manufactured terror into a more intense horror of the female body. Whereas Baillie’s Orra was consigned to madness as a body of fear and in fear by the end of *Orra*, ‘The Dark Ladie’ takes the carefully integrated power of females like Baillie’s Storm-Beat maid a step further, and presents an empowered female ghost figure that avenges the Christians who took her away by luring them to the castle she was abducted to and making them ‘repeat the tale of her seduction and destruction’.[[390]](#footnote-390) The setting resembles ‘The Death-Bride’, but the role of the female figure in the feast is much more pivotal for the enactment of the curse upon the knights:

And when the feast was spread, and all  
The guests, assembled, were at meat,  
There pass'd them by, with measur'd step,  
And took the upper seat,  
A Ladie, clad in ghastly white,  
And veiled to the feet.[[391]](#footnote-391)

The lady takes her place on ‘the upper seat’ as the authoritative figure of the feast, resembling at the same time a ghost bride ‘clad in ghastly white’, and ‘veiled to the feet’, a powerful perversion of the passiveness and purity of a bride. Like a different version of the death bride, the dark lady is dressed in a bride’s white dress, with which ‘the foldings of her veil’ make a sharp contrast.

The veil is important here because it functions as a means of mystery, obscurity and seductiveness, and reverses the traditional idea of the veil as a symbol of modesty and purity. Craciun makes this point when she says that ‘the black veil’ of the lady signifies the opposite of life/marriage, which is death, and validates the lady’s position as an avenger that portends death upon the knights. In the poem, emphasis is given upon the lady’s ‘long black veil that swept the ground’, which serves to enhance the mystery of her presence created by her silence (‘She spoke not when she enter’d there / She spoke not when the feast was done’), and to conceal the body of the ghost, a fact that makes the lady’s appearance even more terrible. The figure of the veiled mystery woman is repeated in ‘The Death Bride’ mentioned earlier, as well as Bannerman’s ‘The Perjured Nun’, and Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*. In the latter, Antonia refuses to unveil in public in front of Lorenzo (signifying the importance of concealment), while the Bleeding Nun slowly removes her veil in horrible echo of this previous, chaste moment:

Her face was still veiled, but She no longer held her Lamp and dagger. She lifted up her veil slowly. What a sight presented itself to my startled eyes! I beheld before me an animated Corse. Her countenance was long and haggard; Her cheeks and lips were bloodless; The paleness of death was spread over her features, and her eyeballs fixed stedfastly [sic] upon me were lustreless and hollow.[[392]](#footnote-392)

The ghostly body of the Bleeding Nun reveals what is unspeakable and at the same time a familiar and unhealthy image of the mortal body. To borrow Kristeva’s words on abjection, these bodies are ‘both repellent and repelled’, ‘unapproachable and intimate’ at the same time, much as the body of Bannerman’s Dark Ladie is both otherworldly and strangely familiar in its uncanny seductiveness: ‘from the Ladie in the veil, / Their eyes they could not long withdraw’. Like Coleridge’s Geraldine and Keats’s La Belle Dame sans Merci, the Dark Ladie enthrals her victims with her contradictory body and her mysterious presence. Matilda’s disguise as Rosario in *The Monk*, too, empowered the demon beneath the surface of an innocent boy, as ‘no one had ever seen his face’ and the ‘sort of mystery’ enveloping him ‘rendered him at once an object of interest and curiosity’.[[393]](#footnote-393) Seductive, too, is the supernatural body of the ghost woman in Walter Scott’s ‘Glenfinlas’, where a maiden with a ‘chill’d’ cheek and a wet body appears before Moy.[[394]](#footnote-394)

In relation to Coleridge’s subtle representation of the lady as oppressed and passively seduced by Henry in the ‘Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie’, intended for marriage when taken away, Bannerman’s dark lady causes the knights to feel ‘chill amaze’ by her eerie, awe-inspiring presence at the feast. Craciun observes that Bannerman re-writes Coleridge’s ‘lamentable tale of yet another fallen woman’, and so too observes Diane Hoeveler when she claims that Bannerman’s attack ‘was focused on the representation of women as marginalized, abused, scorned, left with no role to play but that of avenger’.[[395]](#footnote-395) However, I would argue that this is exactly where Bannerman places the power of the dark ladie in the poem. As an avenging ghost figure, the dark ladie exercises the power that she did not have when she was living. Indeed, as Edmundson points out, such poets ‘use the female ghost as a way of transforming helpless women into empowered figures who, only in death, are able to speak and act for themselves’.[[396]](#footnote-396) In the interaction between the ghost-lady and the living knights, the lady holds an advantage that keeps the knights in thrall and turns them, as I will claim, into bodies in fear. Her status as a ghost transforms the lady into a revenant, powerful in her silence, physical impenetrability, and penetrating gaze:

And when they tried to speak, that glare  
Still kept them mute with awe!  
[…]  
Each wish'd to rouse his failing heart,  
Yet look'd and trembled all, the while;  
All, till the midnight clock had toll'd  
Its summons from the southern aisle.

The lady’s gaze is captivating and the main means by which she enthrals her victims. Because of her intense ‘glare’, the knights are unable to speak, which indicates a reversal of the silencing of the passive heroine that we traditionally see is rescued by the male hero and persecuted by the villain of the narrative. Instead, Bannerman centres the lady’s power on her ability to ‘trap’ others with her eyes. Interestingly, Derrida refers to this trait of the spectre (as a concept with very specific connotations in Derrida’s theory) to hold the advantage of being able to see us first:[[397]](#footnote-397)

[…] ghost or revenant, sensuous-non-sensuous, visible-invisible, the specter ﬁrst of all sees us. From the other side of the eye, visor eﬀect, it looks at us even before we see it or even before we see period. We feel ourselves observed, sometimes under surveillance by it even before any apparition.[[398]](#footnote-398)

As something other than human, and a type of haunting that stems from within, specters like Bannerman’s The Dark Ladie ‘looks at us before we see it’, thus intruding on our bodies and affecting them.

In Bannerman’s poem, the knights ‘look’d and trembled all’, locked in a deadly interaction with the fearful lady, and turned into bodies in intense fear. As I will argue in Chapter Three, it is through Geraldine’s gaze in Coleridge’s ‘Christabel’ that bodies of fear and bodies in fear interact, when the maid had ‘drunken in / That look, those shrunken serpent eyes’ (601-2). Likewise, in Robinson’s ‘The Maniac’, the liminal gaze of the poem’s maniac is a means of intrusion into the observant’s body, as I will see, hence the speaker’s supplication towards the maniac to ‘quickly turn those eyes away’ (46). In ‘The Dark Ladie’, there is an exchange of gazes initiated by the female ghost, but which goes around the knights to Guyon marked as one of the lady’s victims: ‘And then the knights on Guyon turn'd / Their fixed gaze, and shudder'd now’. Guyon seems to be one of the Christian knights that abused his power and mishandled the lady when living, therefore now death enables the lady to reverse roles and ‘drain’ the smile out of Guyon’s face: ‘But none, on Guyon's clouded face, / Had ever seen a smile’. As in Baillie’s Gothic poems, there is here a prevalence of the body as a site of fear, as Guyon’s face speaks of the lady’s dark influence. Here, too, we find words that show the effects of fear on the body. Bannerman’s language is replete with these: words like ‘trembled’, shudder’d’, ‘alarmed’, ‘no breath’, ‘no voice’, ‘no sound’, are among the examples that show the way Bannerman chooses to register fear in her poem of horror. Like Baillie, Bannerman seems to invite the reader to ‘interpret the bodies of others’ through a very physical language whose function is extremely affecting.[[399]](#footnote-399) The veil that was mentioned earlier serves to intensify this, since, as Craciun observes, the veil allows the ladie ‘to look out but prevent the knights from looking in’, thus frustrating ‘the Romantic desire for the ideal’, and replacing it with an air of mystery and penetration.[[400]](#footnote-400) By these means, Bannerman’s representation of female ghosts differs from Baillie’s in that Bannerman both foregrounds the feeling of fear in ‘The Dark Ladie’ and stages the ladie’s supernaturalism as a source of power.

In Bannerman’s *Tales*, fear may be internalised, but it happens in a different way as Bannerman explores the uncanny within. The Ladie’s eerie supernaturalism is not only staged by her veiled appearance, but also by the otherworldly voice with which she curses the knights:

And in a tone, so deadly deep,  
She pledg'd them all around,  
That in their hearts, and thro' their limbs,  
No pulses could be found.

There is an interesting reference here to fear and death, or maybe death by fear, as the lady curses the ‘pulse’ out of her persecutors’ ‘hearts’ and ‘limbs’, which reminds us of Baillie’s *The Dream* (1798), where Osterloo dies of fear at the end of the play (see epigraph to this chapter). The narratives takes an unexpected turn when the knights wake up, but as when a dream has palpable physical effects like in the case of Coleridge, the knights feel the fear out of the ‘Ladie, with the long black veil’ even after she is not near, and fall victims to a compulsory, ongoing re-telling of the ladie’s story: ‘I hear it still, / The lamentable tale’, as one knight after another refer to the story in a loop.

At this point, the reader perceives just how complicated Bannerman’s narratives can get. Timothy Ruppert also verifies this when he argues that Bannerman had received negative criticism from Anne Seward and other critics in the *Critical Review* and the *Poetical Register* for her *Tales* precisely because of this obscurity of meaning that the ballads encourage.[[401]](#footnote-401) According to Ruppert, Bannerman’s ‘The Dark Ladie’ is one which ‘aligns’ her with ‘Romantics like Baillie who eschew neoclassicism in favour of what seem specifically British imaginative legacies’, and she brings this home ‘by crisscrossing themes and ideas related to the visionary legacy with the tropes and trappings of Gothic balladry’.[[402]](#footnote-402) Indeed, the ballad’s theme of revenge and revolution against corruption and abuse of power is truly advanced by the ballad’s supernaturalism, which is more readily put forward by the mystery and obscurity around the dark ladie and the poem’s meaning. By the end of the ballad, the narrative obscurity turns into a gradual revelation of the way the lady was torn from husband and child, thus transforming the lady into a human ghost, only to go back to the impossibility of seeing through the lady’s veil: ‘[…] why, it cannot be remov'd, / That folded veil that sweeps the ground?’. This question may seem to reflect the reader’s excited frustration to achieve resolution, but it is also an affirmation that the supernatural element in the narrative persists as something uncanny that we wish to approach but nevertheless cannot. The lady is humanised, much like in Charlotte Dacre’s ‘The Lass of Fair Wone’ (*Hours of Solitude*, 1805), where Dacre traces the lamenting ghost of the lady who accidentally killed her own baby.

Just like Dacre, Bannerman ends with the lady’s ghostly body and its inability to be clearly comprehended, thus championing terrible obscurity that also crosses the horror threshold in its raw supernaturalism. In his essay ‘Why Distant Objects Please’ (*Table Talk*, 1822), William Hazlitt echoes Burke when he argues that distant objects reflect infinity and excite passion: ‘Passion is lord of infinite space, and distant objects please because they border on its confines, and are moulded by its touch’.[[403]](#footnote-403) The lady’s veiled appearance elicits this kind of passion excitement because it invites the idea of obscurity, yet the effects of the lady’s fearful body on the knights is fiercely visible throughout the narrative, this turning the ballad into a potential horror story. In ‘The Perjured Nun’, Bannerman similarly connects the appearance of the ghostly Nun with psychophysical expressions of fear: having guiltily wronged the nun as a former lover, Henrie’s cheek ‘grew pale’ and he ‘shudder’d at the name’ of the ghost-nun, who eventually kills him. Aside from the ending, which is significantly different from the reconciliatory ending of Baillie’s ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’, Bannerman goes even further in staging the actual physical interaction between Geraldine and the Nun: ‘Like the dead from the grave / Was the form she had clasp’d around!’. One is reminded of the ‘dead cold hand’ that Sir Bertrand felt upon the tolling of the clock in Aikins’s ‘Sir Bertrand: a Fragment’, and here, too, the Perjured Nun appears after the imminent tolling of the ‘clock’ from ‘the sounding tower’, a trope which is also repeated in ‘The Dark Ladie’ in the ‘deep’ning knell’ of the ‘midnight clock’, portending the occurrence of something supernatural. Therefore, it seems that Bannerman deviates from ‘the spirit of the passions of men’ that Wordsworth propounds in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*.[[404]](#footnote-404) Instead, Bannerman employs the Gothic ballad’s supernaturalism to talk about the multivalence of the female voice, and how it can be heard through the turbulence and havoc created by her female ghosts.[[405]](#footnote-405)

Whereas Coleridge condemned the ‘horrible and the preternatural’ as ‘powerful stimulants’ requiring ‘the torpor of an unawakened’ mind to work their magic, Bannerman, and Baillie, albeit more cautiously, saw the subversive possibilities inherent in such Gothicisms for the suppressed female voice in finding power within the deep wells of the Gothic unconscious that the Enlightenment was trying to suppress.[[406]](#footnote-406) Terry Castle notices the proliferation of ‘anti-apparition writings’ during the revolutionary years of the early nineteenth century as a reaction to an ambivalent ‘uncanny absorption of ghosts and apparitions into the world of thought’, as if people were trying to exorcise their own hauntings, [[407]](#footnote-407) or satirise them, a move evident in as early as Joseph Addison’s *The Drummer; or, The Haunted Castle* (1716).[[408]](#footnote-408) But the ghosts were there, evoked in the writings of authors like Baillie and Bannerman. The presence of the ghosts suggests the idea of the return of something abject, just like the ghosts of Baillie and Bannerman return to ‘haunt’ the living because of a trauma, a stigma of injustice that needs to be corrected. Years after, Catherine Crowe would write *The Night-Side of Nature* (1847), a comprehensive study of ghosts and ghost-seeing that addresses the growing scepticism of the nineteenth century towards ghosts. In her book, Crowe refers to this connection between trauma and haunting when she says that ‘when a crime has been committed which necessarily aroused a number of turbulent emotions’ like ‘fear’ and ‘grief’, there may be something that ‘may for some time hover over the spot’.[[409]](#footnote-409) Both Baillie and Bannerman find ground to explore Gothic traumas like these, and employ the Gothic ballad to tell stories about their heroines that help them establish a community of Gothic female authorship as varied as the female voices they are trying to represent.

**Chapter Three**

**Fear and Abjection: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Mary Robinson, and the World of Opium**

**3.1. Opium and the Narco-Gothic**

Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!

And shame and terror over all!

Deeds to be hid which were not hid,

Which all confused I could not know

Whether I suffered, or I did:

For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe,

My own or others still the same

Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame. (25-32)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Pains of Sleep* (1803)[[410]](#footnote-410)

‘There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark re-volts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable’ (p. 1)

Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (1982)

This chapter moves along similar lines to those of preceding chapters in this thesis in its consideration of variations of physical fear (fear as belonging in the spectrum of terror and horror as explicated in the introduction and throughout the thesis) in the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Mary Robinson, and the way it finds expression through poetic language. What primarily drives the detailed exploration of these two poets is their engagement with terror and horror in unconscious visions of imagination, and the multifarious ways they negotiate borders between terror and horror (in their distinction as terror as an aesthetic and even pleasurable experience and horror as repulsive and undesirable) in reference to the portrayal of Gothic bodies. The two poets knew each other and moved within similar circles that included, among others, Robert Southey and William Godwin, and it is very remarkable to also observe Coleridge and Robinson’s similarity of experience and thought, especially pertinent to a diseased body under the influence of opium. As Daniel Robinson argues, Mary Robinson had been ‘a regular opium-user since the mid-1780s, when, according to her daughter, she suffered partial paralysis resulting from rheumatic fever’.[[411]](#footnote-411) With the progression of her disease, a life-long struggle with a delinquent husband, and a number of painful encounters with lovers such as the Prince of Wales, nightmares became all the more recurrent, and the Gothic quality of her dreams infiltrated her best poetic expressions. Coleridge’s struggles in nightmares are also notorious and translated into the ghastly vision of poems like *The Pains of Sleep* (1816) and *Christabel* (1816), which will be the primary focus in this chapter, together with Mary Robinson’s ‘The Maniac’, a poem that is recorded as written in the context of Robinson’s opiated imagination.

In this respect, this chapter will be different from traditional studies of Coleridge’s opium poetry that rely heavily on *Kubla Khan* (1816) as a primary example. Both *The Pains of Sleep* and *Christabel* were chosen for this purpose because of the haunting Gothic bodies that they foreground, and the way they reflect Coleridge’s take on fearful bodies and dream-like states. While *Christabel* is not explicitly framed by Coleridge’s opium use, it is relevant to note that the poem was indeed published with *The Pains of Sleep* and *Kubla Khan* in an 1816 collection that featured these three poems alone. Another relevant point is that the first part of *Christabel* was written in 1797 during the same year that *Kubla Khan* was probably written, which indicates that Coleridge was already experiencing the effects of opium use and was very much affected by ideas of fascination and repulsion that would infiltrate how the Gothic bodies are portrayed in both poems.[[412]](#footnote-412) The second part of *Christabel* was written in 1800, when Coleridge ‘resumed it’ upon his ‘return to Germany’, where he ‘finished the second and a part of the third Book’. *Christabel* was part of Coleridge’s thoughts and conversation in the 1800s, since friends urged him to finish *Christabel*.[[413]](#footnote-413) This may be evidence that Coleridge may have been working on *Christabel* or thinking about continuing the poem after 1816, but what interests me is that it was published in fragmented form in 1816, coupled with Coleridge’s famous opium poems. Therefore, although there is no explicit connection between *Christabel* and opium, there is evidence that suggests *Christabel* reflects Coleridge’s experience with opium, from the fragmented form of the poem to its dream-like atmosphere and the Gothic bodies of pleasure and pain that feature in the poem. Similarly, the way in which Robinson’s *The Maniac* was composed, the account of which is given posthumously by Robinson’s daughter who records Robinson’s having seen the plot of the Maniac in an opium-induced dream, is not to be taken at face value. Instead, I will focus on the way Robinson portrays the Gothic body of the maniac. In both cases, the poets’ experience of tortured and diseased bodies finds its way into the Gothic bodies of their writings and reveals a fascinating dialogue taking place through the poetics of the narco-Gothic, a term to be explained further down my analysis. As I will argue, both Coleridge and Robinson’s narco-Gothic risks turning Gothic terror into Gothic horror through the process of self-evaluation and an encounter with imagined demons.

On October 9th, 1797, Samuel Taylor Coleridge writes a remarkable letter to Thomas Poole, one of a series of letters that Coleridge addressed to him recounting his boyhood and student years. The letter is an example of Coleridge’s literary ingenuity and an early, conscious contact with the world of spectral physicality in dream-like states. It is a story formerly related by Coleridge’s mother, in which a young and feverish Coleridge would ask her why Lady Northcote (the neighbour) would not come to visit him. Upon hearing of Northcote’s fear of catching the fever, Coleridge would reply: ‘Ah Mamma! The four Angels round my bed an’t afraid of catching it!’. In these difficult and fearful hours, Coleridge would pray:

Matthew! Mark! Luke and John!

God bless the bed which I lie on.

Four angels round me spread,

Two at my foot, and two at my head.

This prayer I said nightly, and most firmly believed the truth of it. Frequently have I (half-awake and half-asleep, my body diseased and fevered by my imagination), seen armies of ugly things bursting in upon me, and these four angels keeping them off. [[414]](#footnote-414)

The moment the ‘ugly things’ come upon Coleridge in his half-conscious state of bodily disease, the protective angels that he sees standing by his head and feet fend off the horrific threat and create a sense of security when in fear.

When seen in isolation, this incident may seem a child’s endearing way of coping with illness, but Coleridge’s extensive experiences with fear, disease, and dreams/reveries showcase the possible meaning of this oscillation between fear and security. Mary Robinson also presents a turbulent life of fear and pain in her poetry and *Memoirs*, published posthumously under Robinson’s instructions by her daughter one year after Robinson’s death. In this chapter, I move forward from the very physical depiction of Gothic bodies in Blake, Baillie and Bannerman, each in relation to varying degrees of fear and haunting, to explore the Gothic bodies that haunt poems by Coleridge and Robinson, as well as the way in which these might reflect Coleridge and Robinson’s opium use. The role of fear is key in my argument, not only because, like the poets in the previous chapters, Coleridge and Robinson would turn to sensational experiences in their search for meaning, but also because, again, in fear we witness the on-going interaction of bodies, and the negotiation of possible safety spaces through the world of pain and loss. Opium and Gothic bodies therefore will be the nexus of the chapter as it signifies an ongoing struggle to cope with fears and anxieties, both on an individual and on a more collective level. In addition, opium has a very physical impact on the body and the mind and encourages the presence of bodies in visions. In this chapter, I will attempt to demonstrate what the Gothic bodies in Coleridge and Robinson’s writings try to *show*. More precisely, the potential horror of dreams in the poetry of Coleridge and Robinson partly lies in the all-too-visible bodies that inhabit the poetic imagination, and whether they can be seen and felt as potentially threatening to self and society. Therefore, I am going to chiefly explore to what extent Coleridge and Robinson release and /or draw limits on horrible bodies that are inherently threatening. To do so, I will examine key texts that can shed light upon what Carol Margaret Davison calls ‘Gothic pharmographies’[[415]](#footnote-415), whose study is duly acknowledged by Jason Althofer and Brian Musgrove when they talk about the ‘narco-Gothic’.[[416]](#footnote-416) According to Althofer and Musgrove, the narco-Gothic refers to drug writing that brings out the Gothic, and their analysis revolves around ‘Gothic-inflected drug texts’ that provide a discursive space where authors confront thoughts and anxieties.[[417]](#footnote-417) It is relevant to note that Althofer and Musgrove refer to the connotation between opium, in particular, and the archetypal trope of the ‘Demon Lover’ from medieval ballads, who both lures and scares, in the same way that this struggle is depicted in the poetry of Coleridge and Robinson.

The history of opium during the poets’ lifetime warrants multiple layers of analysis, since it is essential to understand how widespread opium use was, and how it fascinated and mystified users and doctors. The use of opium as palliative both for the body and the mind was widespread by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Medical documentations of its benefits had been circulated throughout the eighteenth century, and included Dr. John Jones’s *The Mysteries of Opium Revealed* (1701), and George Young’s *A Treatise on Opium* (1753), which helped further medicalise opium’s mysterious reputation.[[418]](#footnote-418) Famous surgeon John Hunter commented in *A Treatise on the Venereal Disease* (1787) that ‘[o]pium for the future will be given with another view than what it has commonly been, not merely to allay pain, but to cure diseases’.[[419]](#footnote-419) Indeed, there were many accounts as to opium’s therapeutic qualities. Coleridge’s friend Thomas Beddoes, an eminent physician who got his medical degree from Pembroke College in Oxford in 1786, offers evidence in *A* *Collection of Testimonies* (1799) that opium was used sometimes in alleviating symptoms of venereal diseases like syphilis. One account presents a woman wishing to visit Beddoes because she had contracted syphilis from her husband; according to Beddoes, the woman, who ‘was weak and low-spirited’, could find ‘no rest from excruciating night pains without opium’.[[420]](#footnote-420) Nitrous acid seemed to be able to exterminate the effects of syphilis in this case, but the fact that opium was used by the woman as a cure for night pains caused by syphilis shows how frequently patients found recourse to it. Mr. Wilmer’s syphilis case was also one which required the use of opium to ‘reduce’ to a ‘torpid state’ the irritability of the bowel.[[421]](#footnote-421) It was also through Beddoes that Coleridge first became acquainted with cases of opium working wonders for torturing diseases; the ‘medical journal’ that Coleridge mentions in his Notebooks as teaching him the effects of opium was probably John Brown’s *Elements of Medicine* (1795), compiled and edited by Beddoes himself.[[422]](#footnote-422)

The term ‘narco-Gothic’ marks an ambivalent stance towards drug use and its artistic representations throughout the nineteenth century. According to Carol Margaret Davison, there is a ‘concurrent social shift whereby drugs like opium fell from the status of curative to poison, medicine to menace throughout the course of the century’, resulting in late nineteenth-century Victorian narratives of narcotic demonology like Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Marie Corelli’s *Wormwood: A Drama of Paris* (1890).[[423]](#footnote-423) However, for all the demonic representations of drugs later, there was an inherent ambivalence about the qualities of drugs like opium at the beginning of the century. For Coleridge and for Robinson, opium revealed a space by which to access the Other, the unconscious thought that lies dormant in the wakeful state, but which manifests in all its personal and political dimension in nightmares and dream-like states. Davison draws attention to the way the Gothic permeates such representations, since drug-induced narratives ‘frequently raised the spectre of the ‘Other’’ that vividly carried political connotations of desire, individual identity, race, and the nation.[[424]](#footnote-424) I will explore how the horror of the Other breaks the boundaries of terror and penetrates the writings of Robinson and Coleridge, in proportion to the proximity of the physical dimension of the Gothic.

Coleridge describes visions of Gothic, abject dread in his poetry that precariously verges on horror:

when the dream of night

Renews the phantom to my sight,

Cold sweat-drops gather on my limbs;

My ears throb hot; my eyeballs start;

My brain with horrid tumult swims;

Wild is the tempest of my heart;

And my thick and struggling breath

Imitates the toil of death!

('Ode to the Departing Year' (1796), 105-12)

In this passage, Coleridge combines psychophysical imagery of fear in connection to vision and acoustics. For instance, the speaker in Coleridge’s poem perceives the fearful dreams of night as phantoms to the sight, which makes them palpably physical and appearing in front of the speaker’s eyes. This physical manifestation has real psychophysical impact on the speaker’s body through throbbing ears and a turbulent brain. At the same time, the throbbing of the ear manifests a Gothic sound that comes from psychophysical manifestations of fearful phantoms at the speaker’s sight. For Coleridge, the phantoms have actual impact on the body, which is tormented by dreadful visions, throbbing ears, starting eyes, and cold sweat, much like the ghostly bodies in Baillie and Bannerman’s poems. Robinson refers to similar phantom visitations in her ‘Stanzas Written After Successive Nights of Melancholy Dreams’ (1793) when she addresses night-time entities that intrude upon her senses, in the same way that Coleridge encounters the spectre’s ‘horrid tumult’:

Ye airy PHANTOMS, by whose pow’r

Night’s curtains spread a deeper shade;

Who, prowling in the murky hour,

The weary sense with spells invade;

Why round the fibres of my brain,

Such desolating miseries fling …? (1-8, p. 130)

In this passage, Robinson’s speaker refers to the ‘airy’ phantoms that gain even more power in the night’s ‘deeper shade’, as the word ‘invade’ to describe the way the senses are caught by these manifestations points to a rather unwilling engagement with the forces of these ghosts. There is an eerie interaction of Gothic bodies in both cases that unravels a kind of ambivalent fascination and victimisation on multiple levels, induced upon a diseased, sensory-active, and opiated body.

The choice of the word ‘phantom’ in both passages can signify the threatening bodies of the imagination at night’s darkest hour. While the actions that follow the ‘PHANTOMS’ of the poets’ imaginations seem to have a very palpable physical presence, especially when they re-appear to the ‘sight’ and cause psychophysical manifestations of fear, there is a desperate attempt by both Coleridge and Robinson to neutralise the Gothic bodies of vision and rationalise their effect on themselves. For example, Coleridge’s interest in physiology is revealed when he starts to register symptoms of fear, the ‘Cold sweat-drops’ that ‘gather on my limbs’, the throbbing ears, the ‘tempest of my heart’ with its palpitating turmoil, and the ‘thick and struggling breath’. In a similar manner, Robinson refers to the ‘fibres of my brain’ that are assaulted by the phantoms with ‘desolating miseries’, as if she tries to re-assert the imaginary nature of her visions after she encounters their ‘prowling’ animal nature, just like Coleridge refers to these as dreams to cope with the threat. Therefore, the choice of the word ‘phantom’ is interesting, both because it tries to cancel the potential horror of seeing actual Gothic bodies that threaten one’s own body, and because it seems to suggest a vision of one’s brain, a figment of the imagination. Whether the phantoms are real or imaginary is less important than the fact that their presence heavily impacts the poets’ perception and interaction with Gothic bodies.

In her later essay ‘On Ghosts’ (1824), Mary Shelley observes the difference between actual ghosts, and ‘shadows, phantoms unreal’: ‘I have heard that when Coleridge was asked if he believed in ghosts, - he replied that he had seen too many to put any trust in their reality […] But these were not real ghosts.’ Shelley goes on to clarify that these visions, ‘while they appalled the senses, yet carried no other feeling to the mind of others than delusion, […] an optical deception which we see to be true with our eyes, and know to be false with our understandings’.[[425]](#footnote-425) Coleridge and Robinson’s efforts to stress the ‘airy’ and imaginary nature of the phantoms also echoes the distinction between ‘phantoms’ and ‘real objects’ that we see in Dr John Ferriar’s *An Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions* (1813), where Ferriar employs the epistemological term ‘apparitions’ to closely analyse the nature of ghosts. For Ferriar, phantoms ‘exist nowhere but within my mind’, which, as he says, he was used to examine with ‘calmness’.[[426]](#footnote-426) More specifically, Ferriar emphasises that ‘spectral impressions’ are a product of a morbid physiological disposition that heavily affects the brain and causes these hallucinations.[[427]](#footnote-427) Apparitions, therefore, are presented as products of a diseased imagination, according to Ferriar, ‘delusions’ that are conditioned as much from internal as from external stimuli.[[428]](#footnote-428) For Ferriar, the body is at the centre of this delusive experience and brings forward an intrusive feeling of haunting, whose horror disturbs the affected brain. As I will also argue in relation to ‘The Maniac’, the physiological language in Coleridge’s poem and the desperate effort by Robinson to find out ‘Why’ the visions are so intrusive ascribe to the passages a flickering sense of control/agency to keep the horror of their dreams at bay.

In approaching how this theme of agency and intrusion work, I am not going to rely on a dualistic conception of Gothic narcotics that precipitate representations of the Gothic as either good or evil, or both. The difference between terror and horror that I explored in relation to the authors in the previous chapters will also permeate my analysis of Gothic bodies and fear in the poetries of Coleridge and Robinson. Gothic pharmology will be shown in the way these two poets frame the poems under consideration here, as well as the way they handle the Gothic bodies in their works, which will be looked at in relation to opium use and the spaces of fascination and resistance it creates. The narco-Gothic in Coleridge and Robinson’s case lies on the dynamic spectrum that exists ‘from the honeymoon period of escapism, desire and seduction to the terminal phase of enslavement and decay’.[[429]](#footnote-429) The issue of terror turned horror will be studied in relation to the question of agency as Coleridge and Robinson handle the Gothic bodies of their poetry and their imagination with varying degrees of control. Both poets are in contact with the world of fearful bodies in dreams, which trigger a reconfiguration of identity under the physical proximity to bodies of abjection. The body of the opium user is made self-aware, just as the bodies of fear and *in fear* under discussion discharge their own abject physicality.

**3.2. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Pains of Opium**

Coleridge was an occasional opium user when he was a student at Christ’s Hospital. However, Coleridge’s steadier opium use started in the late 1790s, while the date of his even deeper opium immersion would be ‘the autumn and winter of 1800-1801, when Coleridge suffered a protracted illness.’[[430]](#footnote-430) As part of Coleridge’s lifelong struggle with disease, the cause of an early contact with opium was an agonised body. In his year-long journey with bodily pain which both caused opium indulgence and sustained it, Coleridge’s became more self-conscious about the workings of his own body. In Coleridge’s letters, his opium use is recorded from as early as 1796.[[431]](#footnote-431) More specifically, in a letter to John Thelwall, Coleridge writes that a ‘nervous affection from my night temple to the extremity of my right shoulder almost distracted me & made the frequent use of Laudanum absolutely necessary’. The debilitating illness that ‘confined me to my bed’, which started ‘in the stump of a tooth’ and its subsequent effects on Coleridge’s eyes and stomach, are recorded in a 1798 letter to George Coleridge, while an acknowledgement of opium’s ambivalent qualities are evident in Coleridge’s mention of ‘Laudanum’ as something that ‘gave me repose, not sleep’. In the same letter, Coleridge moves on to comment on ‘how divine that repose is – what a spot of inchantment [sic], a green spot of fountains, & flowers & trees, in the very heart of a waste of Sands!’.[[432]](#footnote-432)

As the years go by, Coleridge’s immersion in and abstinence from opium becomes even more palpable, and always in reference to his pained, diseased body. For example, in a May 1804 notebook entry, Coleridge writes while on a voyage to Malta:

[…] but the Obscure, or the disgustful – the dull quasi finger-pressure on the Liver, the endless Flatulence, the frightful constipation when the dead Filth *impales* the lower Gut – […] for Sleep a pandemonium of all the shames & miseries of the past Life from early childhood all huddled together, & bronzed with one stormy Light of Terror & Self-torture / O this is hard, hard, hard! – Oh dear God! give me strength of Soul to make one thorough Trial – if I land at Malta / spite of all the horrors to go through one month of unstimulated Nature – yielding to nothing but manifest Danger of Life! […] Grant me grace truly to look into myself.[[433]](#footnote-433)

This desperate plea goes on to show how Coleridge’s tortured body (probably caused by his experimental abstinence from opium and his feeble physical condition) leads to something more than an acute awareness of liver pain and bowel trouble. It awakens a deeper need for self-examination, even atonement from a sense of guilt and fear. The synonymity between ‘Obscure’ and ‘frightful’ serves to intensify this sense of fear through the invisibility of the threat, something within that disturbs the self. According to Burke in the *Enquiry*, and as we saw in the previous chapters, obscurity is something that induces and intensifies fear, because when ‘we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes’.[[434]](#footnote-434) Obscurity, a prominent element fearful sublimity, signals both an imminent threat and a disturbance of identity in apprehension of danger. The same element of obscurity can be found in the threatening lack of distinguishable shape that Burke sees in the description of Death in *Paradise Lost*.[[435]](#footnote-435)According to Burke, the description of Death as ‘the king of terrors’ is admirable because it is conveyed with a ‘gloomy pomp’ and ‘expressive uncertainty of strokes’ that wrap Death in a mystery of obscurity and confusion, which implies something looming, terrible and dangerous.[[436]](#footnote-436) This apprehension of a threat is frightful for Coleridge, and if it takes shape and comes even closer, it freezes and horrifies. Radcliffe also refers to obscurity when she talks about terror. In her essay ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, Radcliffe writes: ‘Obscurity leaves something for the imagination to exaggerate’.[[437]](#footnote-437) However, too intense exaggeration can lead to horror, which is different from terror in Radcliffe’s theory because, as I have already mentioned, it ‘contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates’ the ‘faculties’. Terror, on the other hand, ‘expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life’.[[438]](#footnote-438) Coleridge’s terror of what threatens him leads to a re-awakened awareness of the body and creates visions of the imagination that risk the release of the horror of abject mortality and meaninglessness. The passage from Coleridge’s journal portrays the sufferings of someone who struggles with the threat of his own body and strives to maintain control.

Daniel Robinson argues that Coleridge and Mary Robinson, both notorious opium-eaters, experienced a ‘fearful suggestion’ that ‘opium has merely unleashed an evil buried deep within themselves during the waking hours’.[[439]](#footnote-439) Thus, the repetitive ‘hard, hard, hard!’ interpolates a link between Coleridge’s bodily suffering on the one hand, and a ‘pandemonium’ of nightmares which intensify his torment and bring into bodies ‘all the shames and miseries of the past Life’ that cannot help but inflict terror. In the notebook entry quoted above, it seems that Coleridge is afraid of the haunting bodies that inhabit his dreams, the phantoms of his imagination that come to haunt much like the female bodies in Baillie and Bannerman’s Gothic poetry. Rei Terada identifies this as Coleridge’s ‘fear of spectres’, which stems out of his general contact with the world of phenomenality.[[440]](#footnote-440) One very important origin of the word ‘phenomena’, after all, is the Greek *φαινόμενα*, which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, means ‘things that appear’, and that *φαίνονται*, or are shown as ‘objects of sensation or perception’.[[441]](#footnote-441)

As I will argue, this fear of spectres and haunting figures would also translate into Coleridge’s Gothic poetry such as *The Pains of Sleep* and *Christabel*, both of which present a fearful contact with othered bodies that both fascinate and repulse, just like opium and its general reception during Coleridge’s time. We can trace what Coleridge’s opium indulgence from as early as the late eighteenth century. The popularity of opium can be ascertained by a pervasive mixture of reserve and fascination as to its effects felt by the medical profession, as well as by the common people. As Alethea Hayter observes, by the nineteenth century there was ‘no difficulty and little expense in getting supplies, no public opprobrium, no legal danger, a divided opinion among doctors about the merits and dangers of the drug’ and an increasingly proliferated variety of ‘travel books about the opium-eaters of the East to stimulate curiosity and experiment’.[[442]](#footnote-442) Hayter’s detailed analysis of opium during the Romantic period remains to this day pivotal for any study of Coleridge and his relationship with drug use, and scholars working on Coleridge and opium like Earl Leslie Griggs, Lydia Wagner, and Elisabeth Schneider, among others, have informed the way Hayter and subsequent studies approach Coleridge’s addiction.[[443]](#footnote-443) The story of how Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* (1816) came to be is renowned, and questions around poetic creativity being heightened by drug use have been speculated on for at least twenty years. What I am mainly interested in, however, is not whether opium is responsible for Coleridge’s most intense Gothic poetry, or whether Coleridge and Robinson were actively under the influence of opium when they conceived the poems under question in this chapter. Rather, I will see how opium marks for Coleridge and Robinson a point of re-direction and self-analysis that is primarily caused by the physical and its contact with other physicalities to create a fearful albeit helpful Gothic space where unconscious thought can be accessed. As in Blake’s case, and especially in Wordsworth’s poetry as I will argue in the final chapter, where physical stimuli allow Gothic sound to manifest and condition perception, Coleridge is exposed, even momentarily, to a different kind of consciousness. Again, as in Wordsworth, the ‘esemplastic’ power of affective imagination crucially impacts the experience.[[444]](#footnote-444) On the subject of Coleridge and his dream-terrors, Hayter contends that Coleridge’s already active imagination and predisposition to dreams has been an important factor for his nightmares after opium: ‘If he had not already been a dreamer, opium could not have stimulated in him the more frightful night terrors which he endured after he became an addict’.[[445]](#footnote-445) Thomas de Quincey, famous for recording the impact of opium taking on memory and dream-states, writes of the opium’s special ability to affect dreams in Suspiria de Profundis (1845). For de Quincey, opium is inexorably related to dreaming, and comprises one of the ‘physical agencies’ (my emphasis) that most intensely, and ‘preternaturally’, ‘can and do assist the faculty of dreaming’.[[446]](#footnote-446) The word ‘physical’ explicitly associates opium with the body and marks opium indulgence as a primarily physical activity that involves both mind and body in a whirlwind of mixed perception. As de Quincey observes, opium has a ‘specific power’ (de Quincey’s italics) both ‘for exalting the colours of dream-scenery’ and ‘for deepening its shadows’.[[447]](#footnote-447) For Coleridge, too, opium would be an agent of pleasure and terror.

By the winter of 1804-1805, Coleridge would write in his notebook: ‘No night without its guilt of opium and spirits’.[[448]](#footnote-448) It was during this period that his notebook entries intensified as references to what Coleridge felt, read, and thought, and as records of the contradiction between Coleridge’s life as ‘a busy, punctilious bureaucrat, bustling between the Treasury, the palace and the Admiralty Court’ in Malta, ‘dining cheerfully with the Governor and gossiping with senior clerks like Mr. Underwood in the corridors, and his life at night, which was mainly ‘solitary, introspective, and often intoxicated’.[[449]](#footnote-449) In another notebook entry, he writes:

During the years of ill health from disturbed digestion I saw a host of apparitions, & heard them too – but I attributed them to an act in my brain / You according to your own [sic] see and hear nothing but apparitions in your brain, and strangely attribute them to things that are out of side of your skull / which of the two notions is most like the philosopher, which that of superstitionist.[[450]](#footnote-450)

The subtle distinction between the active nature of Coleridge’s inner world and of passive empirical perception indicates Coleridge’s ‘horror of immobile thought and hunger for lyric freedom’.[[451]](#footnote-451) Opium may have worked as a sedative, but it also allowed Coleridge to actively engage with the multi-faceted worlds of his imagination, and ultimately explore the stream of his disturbed thoughts.

Nevertheless, it also had lasting implications on an already diseased body. His friends were initially mostly unaware of the extent of Coleridge’s opium use, but by the time Coleridge had returned from Malta his addiction became more widely acknowledged. Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards observe that Coleridge’s friend Joseph Cottle, ‘while on a visit to Coleridge in Bristol in 1813, noted the strangeness of his look’, and when ‘both men called on Hannah More, Coleridge’s hand shook so much that he spilled wine from the glass he was raising to his lips’.[[452]](#footnote-452)

Again, the body lies at the centre of Coleridge’s experience with opium. In his Notebooks, he spoke about ‘the Horrors of Indigestion’[[453]](#footnote-453), which ranks among the bodily symptoms Coleridge believed were the cause of his disturbing dreams.[[454]](#footnote-454) According to Jennifer Ford, the ‘effects of opium account for Coleridge’s singling out of the digestive system as possible cause for his dreams’.[[455]](#footnote-455) By the start of the nineteenth century, opium was indeed also used for reasons other than palliative. Long before Coleridge’s actual addiction and suffering from opium effects, the drug was considered ‘the major analgesic in surgery’, toppled only by Joseph Priestley’s discovery of the gaseous nitrous oxide in 1776, which was used officially as an anaesthetic in 1844, by which time opium even came to be associated with something dark, transgressing, and unruly, but necessary at the same time.[[456]](#footnote-456) Still, Coleridge ‘insisted’, as Hayter contends, that it was never for him ‘the hope of pleasure, but always the fear of pain, that made him take opium.’[[457]](#footnote-457) Indeed, Coleridge often thought of opium as ‘a necessary protection for him against such extreme pain and nightmare horror as darkened his days and nights, and might even kill him in his sleep’.[[458]](#footnote-458)

The stigma of opium during this time nevertheless persists. Coleridge desperately tried to free himself of his addiction and asked in 1816 for a one-month stay with Dr. James Gillman, ultimately remaining in his care ‘for eighteen years’ until his death in 1834.[[459]](#footnote-459) Coleridge was never truly free of opium. As late as 1814-17, there are traces in his friends’ correspondence of mutual concern and awareness of Coleridge’s degraded state. In a letter to Robert Southey, Cottle writes:

I [had long] {have latterly} perceived unquestionable marks, in Coleridge, of his taking Opium, but he ha[s]d never acknowledged it to me, or expressed the least consciousness of {my knowing} his habitual drinking more than he ought. […] I like [illegible deletion] his supposition of going to Dr Fox (who knows him) He wants restraint for three Months (to break him of his inveterate Habits,) and might not an {effectual} appeal be made in that case, to his friends? Perhaps I am wrong, but it is to be feared that he will soon kill himself with Opium, if left to himself.[[460]](#footnote-460)

It is indicative that in another letter to Southey in 1817, Cottle refers to ‘the Satanic trammels of Opium’, a statement that seems to attribute a Gothic, demonic quality to the drug and the addiction that ensues after using it.[[461]](#footnote-461) In Coleridge’s poetry, we find this Gothic element steadily emerging in poems like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), *The Pains of Sleep* and *Christabel*, which foreground Gothic bodies as products of fearful dreams and hallucinations. In these poems, we can find the language of terror from the dark recesses of unconscious thought, and that plays upon the interior/exterior of bodily senses, which also prevails in Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821). Opium emerges as a stimulant that is officially used to alleviate unpleasant emotions like pain and fear, but which is also harbinger of the scariest of visions, which in *The Pains of Sleep* seem ‘Up-starting from the fiendish crowd / Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me’ (16-17). In these poems, Coleridge moves further from the dissolution of ‘pale Fear’ by ‘meek Piety’ in his earlier *Religious Musings* (1794) and enters a more informed re-consideration of fear in dreams and poetry.

**3.3. Coleridge’s *Christabel* and the Horrors of the Narco-Gothic**

Coleridge’s *Christabel* (1816) will be the first point of my analysis as a distinctive specimen of Gothic romance and a story of intrusion, where Gothic bodies physically enter the consciousness of the poem and the characters. Indeed, *Christabel* dramatises what happens with the ‘dread’ of falling asleep that Coleridge mentions in his 1803 letter to Thomas Wedgwood. Falling asleep in the poem refers to falling in actual sleep, but also to being physically intruded upon by nightmares, incarnated by the figure of Geraldine. Sleep facilitates this contact with dreaming where nightmares acquire a very physical existence that induces fear at the same time as it is produced by fear. *Christabel* alludes to a precarious loss of control that comes from contact with dangerous bodies of fear in dreaming. Even more obtrusively than in the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, we see in *Christabel*, Tim Fulford observes, Coleridge’s perception of how ‘we shape ourselves in subservience to and/or in power over others’.[[462]](#footnote-462) Written in 1798 (part I) and 1802-3 (part II), but not published until 1816 for reasons ‘owing to William Wordsworth’s concerns and Coleridge’s inability to finish the poem’, *Christabel* is eventually placed alongside *The Pains of Sleep* and *Kubla Khan*, all of which register psychophysical anxieties.[[463]](#footnote-463)

*Christabel* introduces a fairly conventional Gothic setting with ‘dark’ nights, a castle, and the ominous hooting of the owls (reminiscent of Wordsworth’s use of the same physically penetrating sound in ‘There Was A Boy’), which joins an avalanche of Gothic acoustics like the ‘crowing’ of the cock in the repetitive ‘Tu—whit! Tu—whoo!’, the ticking of the clock, and the howling of the ‘toothless mastiff bitch’ (7), all portending Geraldine’s entrance in the castle. More than titillating the senses of the reader through reiterating, almost in a mocking manner, Gothic tropes, the audio-visual Gothicism of the poem’s beginning craftily prologues a feeling of imminent danger and obscurity which frames the juxtaposition between Christabel’s dreams of ‘Of her own betrothèd knight’ (28) and the nightmare on ‘the other side’ of the oak (41) where Geraldine lies as an exotic visitor wrapped in mystery. Geraldine is invited to find shelter in the castle by Christabel, while Geraldine’s double nature of enthralment and terror remains carefully concealed.

The plot unfolds around the issue of contamination and disease by Geraldine’s evil presence, which carefully spreads contagion through touch after Christabel invites Geraldine to ‘share your couch with me’ (122):

'In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,

Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!

Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,

This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow.

[…]

And Christabel awoke and spied

The same who lay down by her side—

O rather say, the same whom she

Raised up beneath the old oak tree!

Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!

For she belike hath drunken deep

Of all the blessedness of sleep! (Part One, 267-70, 370-6)

The physical interaction of Christabel and Geraldine bespeaks the oscillation between the bewitching and draining influence of Geraldine’s Gothicism that is activated ‘at the touch of this bosom’, and the physical grasp of one body from another.[[464]](#footnote-464) Touch, according to Coleridge, signifies a ‘sense of immediate power’,[[465]](#footnote-465) which turns into an even more enthralling encounter through Geraldine’s eye. By the strangely tangible power of the eye, bodies are transformed through the physical moment with each other, as the Gothic body of Geraldine changes into a ‘more fair’, and ‘fairer yet’ form after she has ‘drunken deep’ into Christabel’s sleeping body. The ‘mark of shame’ that is mentioned is never allowed to be revealed. The mark is only followed by a highly idealised description of the fair Geraldine, and the way the slumber works to both imply and shun the potential horror of Geraldine’s presence. The words Coleridge chooses to describe Geraldine’s fairness, which are not followed by a description of the ways in which Geraldine is fair, creates a sense of obscurity that engages the imagination and renders Geraldine both alluring and fearful in its effect on others, an effect that seems to increase the more mysterious Geraldine gets.

In this context, the ‘couch’ of repose holds double significance. On the one hand, the couch is a site of dreaming in repose, a kind of surrender into the world of unconscious thought and interaction that happens partly willingly, ‘just as’, James Mulvihill argues, Geraldine ‘is able to enter the castle only through Christabel’s active cooperation’.[[466]](#footnote-466) On the other hand, it is a site of dreaming where agency is contested because the dreamer falls prey to bodies of intrusion, fearful bodies as sights ‘to dream of, not to tell!’ (253), just like the visions of guilt and horror that we will see haunting Wordsworth in *The Prelude*. According to Jennifer Ford, dreams and bodies are integrally bound, and Coleridge reflects this connection in his *Pains of Sleep* and *Christabel*, where ‘the imposition of a diseased physical self is perceived to create nightly experiences’ that are ‘deeply bound up in issues of morality and ethics’, as is evident in Christabel’s ‘Sure I have sinn'd!’. Geraldine, like opium, as I will argue, represents this contact with the Gothic body brought out by nightmares and reveals fears. Both opium and Geraldine act as an activating force that makes reflections even more urgent and felt. The boundaries between inner and outer world are dissolved, and nightmares tell us that representations of evil are closer to the inside than we think, both personally and politically. According to de Quincey in *Suspiria*, dreaming is that ‘faculty’ which, ‘in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy’.[[467]](#footnote-467) If *Kubla Khan* draws a picture of Coleridge’s ‘Orientalist-Gothic’ with the image of ‘the drugged poet as preternaturally possessed’, where the poet, ‘with holy dread’, ‘drunk the milk of Paradise’ (52, 54), *Christabel* shows how ghastly dreams of a diseased body reveal more about the anxieties of self through the (un)conscious exposure to Gothic bodies.[[468]](#footnote-468)

This train of anxieties in *Christabel* and *The Pains of Sleep* also informs Coleridge’s perception of the changing landscape of the body politic, especially on the peak of fears for a French invasion from the last decade of the eighteenth century. Coleridge’s fear of meaninglessness and the loss of identity finds expression in Geraldine’s intrusion, not as an external force to be eliminated, but as the ‘evil’ bordering on horror that comes from within. The ‘serpent eyes’ that *hold* Christabel and cause her to imitate ‘passively’ ‘That look of dull and treacherous hate’ (606) indicate the self’s surrender to an addictive but life-threatening inner conflict that translates into a diseased, autoimmune body politic at war with itself. According to Mulvihill, Geraldine functions as a ‘blankness’, a site where ‘the poem’s other characters may project their respective hopes and fears’, just like in a nation where ‘suspicion existed on a par with superstition’.[[469]](#footnote-469) Nicholas Roe observes that the suspicious climate that pervaded the reaction to the Reign of Terror partly explains ‘Wordsworth’s, Dorothy’s and Coleridge’s journey to Germany in September, 1798, as a flight from opposition and exclusion in Britain.[[470]](#footnote-470) However, the intensity of reaction to and obsession with an external enemy belies a dual function that we also see in Coleridge’s poem and addiction to opium. The intoxication and repulsion of a potential threat plays on Geraldine’s representation as a snake that preys upon its victims under the form of the sexually fascinating, ‘lady of a far countrèe’ (225) that nevertheless remains terrible in her potential to become a body of horror.

Opium, a product that ‘first grew’ in ‘Egypt and Asia Minor’, could resonate with Geraldine as ‘lady of a far countrèe’. Hayter shrewdly observes Coleridge’s implicit identification of Geraldine ‘with another kind of agent, one that sucked vital force and froze impulse […], opium itself’, also present in the figure of ‘Life-in-Death’ with ‘yellow locks’ and ‘phantom ship’ in the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. [[471]](#footnote-471) Opium both fascinates and repulses, as Coleridge and De Quincey make evident in their writings. In fact, there is an interesting account of one very disturbing dream that De Quincey records about horrific animals like the crocodile preying on him, which he describes in his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*:

The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him; and (as was always the case almost in my dreams) for centuries. […] the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions: and I stood loathing and fascinated.[[472]](#footnote-472)

De Quincey chooses his words carefully when he traces in the crocodile an object of both ‘loathing’ and fascination that disturbs his dreams as a product of chronic opium usage. In fact, De Quincey connects his experience with the realm of dreaming in a very similar manner to the later crocodile incident in De Quincey’sessay ‘The English Mail-Coach, Or the Glory of Motion’ (1849), where Fanny’s uncle is presented as a threatening crocodile on a par with ‘a dreadful host of semi-legendary animals’ like ‘griffins, dragons, basilisks, sphinxes’[[473]](#footnote-473). The passivity that the word ‘compelled’ in De Quincey’s *Confessions* suggests points again to a threatening loss of agency. In the second part of *Christabel*, this passivity is allegorised by Christabel’s imitation of Geraldine in the former’s ‘dizzy trance’ (588), while Geraldine’s look is portrayed as both serpentine and with ‘eyes so innocent and blue’ (612). Kristeva sees ‘jouissance’ as a state ‘in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant. One thus understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims—if not its submissive and willing ones’.[[474]](#footnote-474) Again, we see the fascination−repugnance dynamic in *The Pains of Sleep*:

Desire with loathing strangely mixed

On wild or hateful objects fixed.

Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!

And shame and terror over all!

Deeds to be hid which were not hid,

Which all confused I could not know

Whether I suffered, or I did. (25-29)

Coleridge’s state in this passage is one of ‘desire’ mixed with ‘loathing’ for visions that he tries to shun, but nevertheless indulges in. The balance between fascination and repulsion is what holds Geraldine’s potential horror within bounds by rendering Geraldine a perpetual mystery and sensational terror. Nevertheless, identities are ‘confused’ and the possibility for agency is compromised as Coleridge wonders ‘Whether I suffered, or I did’.

The terrible proximity of Geraldine’s body is the cause of disturbed dreams that endanger the concept of identity in the poem. According to Anya Taylor, we see this very vividly with Sir Leoline’s betrayal of his own daughter under the thrall of Geraldine, where Christabel’s identity crumbles and shifts to reflect Geraldine’s power to affect the bodies around her in a variety of ways.[[475]](#footnote-475) When Christabel sees what is happening to Sir Leoline in Part Two, she brings to mind the ‘vision of fear’ (453) by the touch of Geraldine’s bosom, and ‘shrunk’, and ‘shuddered’ (454), which indicates the psychophysical effects of a body in fear and uncertainty. In studying the affective power of fear as an emotion, Sara Ahmed suggests that this ‘shrinkage’ means ‘fear works to contain some bodies such that they take up less space’; this happens only through interaction with other bodies, and fear, in this case, ‘works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others’, like Geraldine’s.[[476]](#footnote-476) More importantly, the body in fear and the body of fear interact through Geraldine’s haunting gaze:

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,

She nothing sees ̶ no sight but one!

The maid, devoid of guile and sin,

I know not how, in fearful wise,

So deeply had she drunken in

That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,

That all her features were resigned

To this sole image in her mind:

And passively did imitate

That look of dull and treacherous hate! (Part Two, 597-606)

As Taylor contends, since Christabel’s ‘final abandonment erases her’, she seems to have taken ‘the imprint of Geraldine’s shrunken snake eyes’ and she ‘exchanges faces and voices with her dominator’ in a metamorphic interaction of fearful bodies that we also see in Blake.[[477]](#footnote-477) The ‘serpent eyes’ are reflected in Christabel’s glance and reaffirm Bard Bracy’s dream of a serpent coiling around the dove, reminiscent of Blake’s hybrid serpentine bodies of fear (see ‘The Ghost of a Flea’ and the figure of the dragon, among others). The description of Geraldine’s look as one of ‘dull and treacherous hate’ that Christabel reflects serves to affirm this association with numbing, serpentine bodies of fear. More importantly, Christabel seems ‘drunken’, a word that occurs more than once in the text and echoes intoxication from an addictive substance. Coleridge carefully controls the narrative through the lack of explicit reference to Geraldine’s horrors, and the fragmentary nature of the poem can be interpreted as one of the ways to contain what would happen in the case Geraldine’s full powers were revealed, and sustain a carefully-controlled fear through uncertainty.[[478]](#footnote-478) In his review of *The Monk*, Coleridge, joins Wordsworth in condemning such novels in recoil from ‘[s]ituations of torment, and images of naked horror’, which Lewis basks in.[[479]](#footnote-479) In this passage, Coleridge openly associates encountering naked horror with being dragged to witness the dissection of a human body, thus making the intimate connection between horror and physical proximity with abhorrent abject bodies. The exposure of the nakedness of the horror body is carefully concealed in the fantastic world of *Christabel*. However, the poem’s own story perpetually risks the release of horror, mainly because of the pervasive dream-plot that penetrates the narrative. The dream-like atmosphere of the poem is foregrounded by its fragmentary, unfinished nature, which couples it with *Kubla Khan* and the way it is framed. Unintentional or not, *Christabel*’s unfinished nature pertains to Coleridge’s experience with whimsical dreams and Gothic bodies intruding and haunting these dreams, much like Geraldine’s mysterious presence haunts the narrative in the way her interaction with Christabel and her father is described. A pained, heavily opiated Coleridge had extensive experience on such dream-states and nightmares, and ‘the possibility that, somehow, the ‘blessed’ state of sleep could be contaminated by an evil, unwholesome force was at times unbearable’.[[480]](#footnote-480) The dynamic between Geraldine and Christabel therefore exists only in so far as the mysteriousness is there. As Kristeva claims, ‘abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens [sic] it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger’.[[481]](#footnote-481) We also see this in *The Pains of Sleep*, in which Coleridge speaks of the ‘Life-stifling fear’ (32) that informs his ‘fiendish’ (38) dreams, letting out the ‘shapes and thoughts’ that burden him. In his moments of anguish, Coleridge seems inescapably connected to Gothic bodies that show the ‘unfathomable hell within’, and that keep him in perpetual anxiety through their unavoidability. In *Christabel*, the burden that causes Christabel’s nightmares is foregrounded in Part One by presenting Geraldine as a ‘weary weight’ (131) over ‘the threshold of the gate’ (132), a line echoed in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s ‘Marianne’s Dream’ (1819) when he talks about the ‘weight of fear’ that tortures the Lady in the sixth stanza of the poem.[[482]](#footnote-482) However, the ‘weight’ that Christabel carries over the gate is also carried proudly ‘with might and main’ (130), just as pleasure and pain interact when it comes to both terror and opium use.

The space offered by opium-induced nightmares lies on the borders between terror and horror, where Gothic shapes and bodies are both held back, and invited over. Therefore, the opium acts as palliative and poison at the same time. Jacques Derrida speaks of the concept of the ‘pharmakon’, which ‘acts both as remedy and poison’, and emits a ‘power of fascination’ that creates confusion:

This charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination, can be - alternately or simultaneously - beneficent or maleficent. The pharmakon would be a substance – with all that that word can connote in terms of matter with occult virtues, cryptic depths refusing to submit their ambivalence to analysis, already paving the way for alchemy – if we didn’t have eventually to come to recognize it as antisubstance itself: that which resists philosopheme, indefinitely exceeding its bounds as nonidentity, nonessence, nonsubstance.[[483]](#footnote-483)

The ‘nonidentity’ of opium as pharmakon can function both as a comfortable space of allurement and an evil stimulant. The contact between bodies is a trigger for the pharmakon, expressed in the ambivalent nature of Geraldine. As G. F. Matthew says in his 1816 review of the poem, Geraldine is described as having ‘a withered side – a mark of shame upon her – of fearful shuddering effect to the beholder; but from whom the touch of which takes away the power of expressing the abhorrence which it excites’.[[484]](#footnote-484) Therefore, this ‘doubling’ that Jerrold E. Hogle perceives in the relationship between Christabel and Geraldine dissolves boundaries between the self and the other, as ‘Christabel’s hidden tendencies gradually emerge in the uncanny Geraldine who then seems to mirror back a fiendish anamorphosis onto the title character’.[[485]](#footnote-485) In *Christabel*, as in *The Pains of Sleep*, the narrative dissolves what Claire B. May calls ‘[s]table oppositions’ like ‘good’ and ‘evil’ through the narco-Gothic bodies of fearful dreams, and bodies *of* fear eventually become indistinguishable from bodies *in* fear.[[486]](#footnote-486)

**3.4. Mary Robinson, Opium, and the Gothic Body**

Daniel Robinson argues in his analysis of dream and poetry in Coleridge and Mary Robinson that Robinson seemed to be ‘a regular opium-user’ after a ‘partial paralysis’ in the 1780s, and a perpetual struggle with an unfaithful husband always in debt, a series of rather turbulent relationships with lovers like the Prince of Wales and Lord Tarleton, and ‘the pressures of chronic financial distress’.[[487]](#footnote-487) Added to the list of hardships was her ascending but precarious path to celebrity life as actress and writer, which always marked her as a target for the most intense satire and criticism.[[488]](#footnote-488) Her *Memoirs* (1801), published by Robinson’s daughter Maria Elizabeth after her mother’s death, stands as a more personal and nuanced record of her pains and pleasures, while her chronic relationship with opium is only mentioned with reference to the peculiar composition of ‘The Maniac’ (1792).[[489]](#footnote-489) ‘The Maniac’ is a poem thought of at the peak of Robinson’s physical agony but increasing literary fame. Interestingly, ‘The Maniac’ was conceived during the same year as Robinson’s ‘Ainsi va le Monde’, a personal but disguised tribute to the Revolution.[[490]](#footnote-490) The latter was published by John Bell as Robinson’s answer to the Della Cruscan Robert Merry’s ‘Laurel of Liberty’ (1790), a correspondence that may provide a linking point between Robinson and the liberal Della Cruscans at a time of revolutionary upheaval.[[491]](#footnote-491)

According to Daniel Robinson in *The Poetry of Mary Robinson: Form and Fame* (2011), Mary Robinson managed to keep her political affiliations ambivalent, which ‘worked to her professional advantage’, but I would also argue that the issue of empowerment is prominent in determining Robinson’s radical affiliations.[[492]](#footnote-492) The two poems are anything but common in theme, but their temporal convergence shows how poetically and politically involved Robinson was at a time of intense bodily pain and anxiety about the loss of control over her infirm body. Poetry afforded a space for the expression of thought and feeling with which to cope with personal and political anxieties. In the *Memoirs* it is clearly acknowledged that the ‘popular approbation’ that followed Robinson’s first attempts at poetical publication allowed Robinson’s mind to be ‘beguiled by these pursuits from preying upon itself’, to the point where she ‘became gradually reconciled to the calamitous state of her health’ and her ‘total and incurable lameness’.[[493]](#footnote-493) However, poetry, like opium itself, can be a *pharmakon* in Derrida’s sense, meaning a cure and a poison which allowed Robinson to express her most disturbing thoughts and nightmares, ‘affected the system of her nerves, and contributed to debilitate her frame’.[[494]](#footnote-494) ‘The Maniac’ is one of these poems where madness and horror offer a space for re-negotiating identity through physical interaction and physical transformation, as Robinson explores the theme of control and agency in a world of bodies in fear and bodies of fear. In exploring the theme of Gothic madness during the years of the Revolution, Robinson echoes contemporary discussions on madness which, as Frederick Burwick describes, prevailed in an era of ‘a mad king on the throne of England, mad prophets in the marketplace, and mad poets’.[[495]](#footnote-495) Madness became synonymous with the deviant and the subversive, going against reason, order, and the norms of the body politic.

As I have argued in Coleridge’s history of opium addiction, medical treatises of the eighteenth century like Jones’s *The Mysteries of Opium Revealed* link the sedative powers of opium in relieving bodily pain to a state of sleep. Way into the nineteenth century, the use of opium as sedative continued to be affirmed in medical accounts like William Cullen’s *A Treatise of the Materia Medica* (1808), which was part of a general interest in the pathological body and theories of association firstly expounded by the empiricists like David Hume and David Hartley.[[496]](#footnote-496) As the eighteenth century progressed into the nineteenth century of further scientific exploration, prevalent theories of the nervous system also informed medical treatises on the pathology of opium, which, for Cullen, ‘suspended the motion of the nervous fluid to and from the brain’.[[497]](#footnote-497) Indeed, for Cullen, the intensity of irritations in the system directly affected the state of someone’s sleep and determined whether their dreams were of ‘a frightful kind’.[[498]](#footnote-498) The force of opium for Cullen is related to this intensity of the irritations: ‘Such […] is the force of the sedative power of opium in inducing sleep, that if the dose be large it will overcome very strong irritations’.[[499]](#footnote-499) Opium’s power as a stimulant is equally powerful, as it often ‘irritates the sanguiferous system, and excites the force of circulation’.[[500]](#footnote-500) Opium had as many faces as scientists of the time could explore, and its effects always depended on the individual and the frequency of its use.

Images of opium and the nerve theory are reproduced in Robinson’s poetry. In the ‘Ode to the Muse’ from *Poems* (1791), Robinson refers to the ‘wreath of poppies’ that sleep ‘shall spread / round my head’ (59-60), transporting her to a world where ‘the song of inspiration’ will penetrate ‘my quiv’ring nerves’ (86, 89).[[501]](#footnote-501) The image of the ‘quiv’ring nerves’ re-appears in ‘The Adieu to Love’ (1791), where the ‘proud delight’ of love’s song has a direct effect on her body. In her *Stanzas: Written After Successive Nights of Melancholy Dreams* (*Poems*, 1793), a tribute to the haunting dreams Robinson experienced under the influence of a diseased, opiated body, Robinson speaks of ‘the fibres of my brain’ surrounded by ‘desolating miseries’, and ‘airy PHANTOMS’ (1-8). Opium also produced nightmares when used persistently, which are reminiscent of Robinson’s imagery of the phantoms pursuing her in her sleep, Coleridge’s Gothic visions, and De Quincey’s ‘dreadful faces throng’d and fiery arms’ in the *Confessions*.[[502]](#footnote-502) However, there was a negative impact to a diseased body.[[503]](#footnote-503) Coleridge knew and sympathised with Robinson’s affliction. In a letter to William Godwin in 1800, Coleridge writes: ‘Davy has discovered a perfectly new Acid, by which he has restored the use of limbs to persons who had lost them for many years. […] At all events, Davy says, it can do no harm in Mrs. Robinson’s case’.[[504]](#footnote-504) Robinson would have been familiar with Davy’s experimentations, and Thomas Beddoes’s Clifton Project developed around theories of stimulation and the nerves. According to Sharon Ruston, Brown’s *Elements of Medicine* (1795) was based on theories of excitability in connection to the nervous system. Beddoes published Brown’s book, ‘set up the Medical Pneumatic Institution at Clifton in Bristol’ and employed Humphry Davy, a close acquaintance of both Coleridge and Robinson, in order to help him ‘test the efficacy of a number of new gases that Joseph Priestley had discovered on a variety of diseases’.[[505]](#footnote-505) The self-experimentation with opium, nitrous oxide, and other substances that Davy describes in his Notebooks affirm both the persistent effort to make sense of the pathology of drugs like opium, and the scientific thirst for access to the sublimity that drug use sometimes offers.[[506]](#footnote-506) In one of his Notebook entries, Davy writes: ‘I constantly bless the supreme Intelligence for the favour of some gleams of divine light which have been vouchsafed to me in this our state of darkness & doubt’, and experimentation with drugs was definitely part of accessing ‘gleams of divine light’ in science.[[507]](#footnote-507) Even more relevant to an analysis of ‘The Maniac’ from the narco-Gothic perspective is that the irritability of the nervous system was considered responsible for diseases like neurosis and manias. In discussing pathological bodies, Corinna Wagner contends that William Cullen ‘pinpoints the nervous system as the origin’ of diseases like ‘melancholia, hypochondria, splenetic moods, imaginative excess, mania, and other nervous ailments’.[[508]](#footnote-508) Drug experimentation and the pathological body were part of the effort to understand pain in the mind and in the body.

**3.5. The Narco-politics of Madness: Fear, Drugs and Robinson’s ‘The Maniac’**

The representation of Mary Robinson’s fearful bodies reflects this on-going struggle with opiated nightmares and terror that can also be found in Coleridge’s poetry. The two of them were acquainted and respected each other both personally and as poets. Having met through William Godwin on the 15th of January 1800, Coleridge and Robinson ‘exchanged letters and poems’, and shared mutual esteem.[[509]](#footnote-509) In a letter to Godwin in 1800, Coleridge writes about Robinson’s *Jasper* (*The Poetical Works*, 1806) and her remarkable cleverness: ‘She is a woman of undoubted Genius. There was a poem of her’s [sic] in the Morning’s paper which both in metre and matter pleased me much – She overloads everything; but I never knew a human being with so full a mind’.[[510]](#footnote-510) Some of Coleridge’s poetry alluding to Robinson includes ‘A Stranger Minstrel’ and ‘Alcaeus to Sappho’, and very often, Robinson seemed to respond to Coleridge’s poetry. Apart from the sonnet ‘To the Poet Coleridge’ (1800), – which shows that Robinson read *Kubla Khan* before its publication – and the ‘Ode Inscribed to the Infant Son of S. T. Coleridge’ (1800),[[511]](#footnote-511) Stuart Curran argues that Robinson’s *Lyrical Tales* was published ‘one month before the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*’, which points to the fact that the two collections coexisted.[[512]](#footnote-512) The volume can be seen, at least partly, as ‘Robinson’s response to her male associates’, which means that, as Curran rightly observes, ‘to ‘recontextualize’ *Lyrical Tales* means ‘to recontextualize’ *Lyrical Ballads*, because of mutual literary convergence and influence.[[513]](#footnote-513) It is worth noting that the publication of ‘The Maniac’ preceded *Lyrical Ballads* and Coleridge’s dream-poem *Kubla Khan*, something that assigns a certain insightfulness to the way Robinson pioneered stories of oppression in new and original poetic contexts. Together with the fact that Robinson read *Kubla Khan* in manuscript, the publication of ‘The Maniac’ before Coleridge’s poem further foregrounds Robinson’s importance in discussions of dreams and poetry.

Further than that, Robinson drew on some of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads* to write compositions in her own voice. Her skill allows her to tread on issues of social oppression, something that the Gothic character of her poetry extensively accommodates. Robinson’s Gothic oeuvre renders her Gothic bodies visible. In his discussion of the Romantic Gothic in Robinson’s *Lyrical Tales*, for instance, Jerrold E Hogle traces the ways Robinson re-configures Wordsworth’s use of the Gothic in poems like ‘The Idiot Boy’ from the *Lyrical Ballads*. As Hogle contends, Robinson’s ‘The Alien Boy’ is a direct answer to Wordsworth’s somewhat ‘dismissive satire’ on the Gothic, which is more evident when Wordsworth transforms the fear of Johnny’s turning into a ghost to the habitual hymn in praise of nature’s redemptive powers. Robinson dispels this by foregrounding the boy’s abject subjectivity. According to Hogle, the Alien Boy seems to be ‘a Gothic différend suspended between the haunting past, the too-real present, future possibilities’, an in-betweenness that disturbs any traces of stable identity, just as Coleridge’s encounter with the Gothic bodies of his opium-induced imagination turn terror into self-evaluation.[[514]](#footnote-514) In his *Mary Robinson and the Gothic* (2023), Hogle argues that, through the Gothic, Mary Robinson brings forth personal and political realities that foreground the ‘half-buried ideological conflicts’ already there in Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Ballads*.[[515]](#footnote-515) More specifically, Robinson makes the Gothic ‘act as a haunting specter’ that ‘unearths’ these conflicts.[[516]](#footnote-516) Utilising the Gothic body is one way in which Robinson brings forward what remains concealed in the *Ballads*.In the case of ‘The Alien Boy’ in *Lyrical Tales* (1800), for example, from the moment the ‘furious billow’ struck down ‘the steep’, young Henry gradually descends into an abject physicality, as he ‘stood aghast: his Eye wide fix’d’ felt ‘Despair’ creeping ‘[o]n his cheek’ (113-5).[[517]](#footnote-517) By the time he gets home, Henry is turned into ‘the Alien Boy’, a ‘maniac wild’ whose mind is now ‘disorder’d, chang’d, / Fading’ (129-31). In this poem, Robinson introduces one of the many mad characters of her poetry who live on the threshold, fearing and fearful of their beholders, but also survivors of a ‘horror-giving cheerless hour’ (118) that has marked them permanently. ’All alone’ (112), young Henry witnessed the storm, ‘fear-struck’ to the point of ‘madness’ (97), and his dreadful silence marks the difference between the former tempest of the storm and the current desolation. By the end of the poem, the remoteness of the Alien Boy from a sense of humanity and community, coupled with his intense contact with the death of his protector Hubert, renders him wild, fixing ‘his eye in madness’ (127), crossing the border of the human and changing into something else entirely, a ‘melancholy’ trace. This also happens to Jemmy in ‘The Maniac’, a poem that, according to Robinson’s daughter as I will argue, came to Robinson in the form of a dream brought on by opium.

As the only opium-related reference in the *Memoirs*, the story behind ‘The Maniac’ is intriguing because it signals Robinson’s take on the interaction of bodies and its political import. The connection between Robinson and ‘mad Jemmy’ would be formed even before Robinson writes the poem about the empathetic encounter between the maniac and the speaker. According to the account of the poem’s composition, on her way home one evening from her therapeutic bath, Mary Robinson beholds ‘mad Jemmy’: ‘She would gaze upon his venerable but emaciated countenance with sensations of awe almost reverential, while the barbarous persecutions of the thoughtless crowd never failed to agonise her feelings’.[[518]](#footnote-518)

In the account, Robinson’s opiated imagination is triggered by the tormented body of ‘the poor maniac’ persecuted by a ‘thoughtless crowd’ that targets him ‘with mud and stones’. It is relevant to note here that whether Robinson saw mad Jemmy and was influenced by her encounter with him in real life is not the point. Rather, what is important is how the poem’s composition is framed by this interaction with the mad body, as Jemmy’s presence is established in very physical terms, and Robinson’s experience with opium use. The focus will be on Jemmy’s Gothic body and how fear is negotiated in the interaction between the poem’s speaker and the body of madness in a physical account of fascination/repulsion that goes hand in hand with the way Robinson thought opium impacts the mind and the body. Also, the appellation ‘mad’ sets Jemmy apart from the crowd and the ‘barbarous persecutions’ of the law that they represent. For Robinson, the issue of submissive victimisation hits home because it speaks to her own experiences of female submission/persecution. We see that, as Mellor indicates, Robinson sketches herself in her *Memoirs* ‘as the victim of a Gothic romance, born in the ruined abbey of Bristol Minster’[[519]](#footnote-519), and her novels pervasively adhere to this model of Radcliffean victimisation in characters like Elvira in *Vancenza; or the Dangers of Credulity* (1792), and Madame and Mademoiselle de Sevrac in *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796), with a twist of stronger individual agency in settings of Gothic horror. Opium works to unleash these visions of oppression that Robinson develops in her thoughts, and provides, through the power of sleep and visionary nightmares, a space by which one comes perilously closer to inner dark fears and anxieties. The manner of composition behind ‘The Maniac’ is central to understanding the politics of the narco-Gothic in Robinson’s poetry:

One night after bathing, having suffered from her disorder more than usual pain, she swallowed, by order of her physician, near eighty drops of laudanum. Having slept for some hours, she awoke, and calling her daughter, desired her to take a pen and write what she should dictate. Miss Robinson, supposing that a request so unusual might proceed from the delirium excited by the opium, endeavoured in vain to dissuade her mother from her purpose. The spirit of inspiration was not to be subdued, and she repeated, throughout, the admirable poem of "The Maniac," much faster than it could be committed to paper.

The ‘eighty drops of laudanum’ that Robinson consumes to treat her debilitated body leads to poetic inspiration, and the figure of the poet, as in Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*, is passively receptive to the opium’s intense visions, regaining poetic agency through the poem’s composition.[[520]](#footnote-520) Through the pained body, opium is rendered a ‘necessary evil’, a way of appeasing the pain that accompanies the deepest imaginative visions. In her sonnet ‘To the Poppy’, Anna Seward addresses the ‘scarlet POPPY of the pathless field’ (4) and the ‘false peace’ that it brings, ‘lulling grief and pain’, but being at the same time ‘FLIMSY, SHEWY, MELANCHOLY’ (13-15).[[521]](#footnote-521)

In Robinson’s case, we see a far more personal identification of the poet’s opium state with the maniac’s portrayal, as illustrated, for example, by the poet’s ‘eagerness to share the maniac’s pain’.[[522]](#footnote-522) The speaker’s questions in ‘The Maniac’ are an attempt to look, almost with medical intensity, into the maniac’s Gothic body of madness (‘WHAT ARE THOU’ and ‘Why dost thou rend thy matted hair’, 1, 7). This leads to the gradual immersion into the maniac’s state through the power of the gaze, which leads to the speaker’s final plea to ‘TELL ME, tell me all thy pain’ (115). Throughout the poem, the speaker refers to the ‘mind’s unpitied anguish’ that separates the maniac as a ‘THING FORLORN’, a ‘SHRUNK ATOM OF MORTALITY’ (6, 44), a Gothic body living outside the law because it has crossed the border. The maniac is portrayed in the poem as an abject body which, as I will argue, lives on the threshold of fear, and, like opium itself, both attracts and repulses the beholder through a penetrating gaze resembling Geraldine’s in Coleridge’s *Christabel*, but contextualised differently.

‘The Maniac’ starts with a series of quasi-scientific questions that focus on the maniac’s physiology and objectification. Indeed, we see that the maniac is ‘thinged’, an almost inhuman existence that the speaker tries to make sense of. The series of questions addressed to the maniac frame the representation of the maniac as object:[[523]](#footnote-523)

AH! WHAT ART THOU, whose eye-balls roll

Like *Heralds* of the wand’ring soul,

While down thy cheek the scalding torrents flow?

Why does that agonizing shriek

The mind’s unpitied anguish speak?

O tell me, THING FORLORN! And let me share thy woe. (1-6)

For the speaker, the maniac constitutes a mystery open to interpretation, a body in fear that is seen rolling its ‘eye-balls’ and producing ‘agonizing’ shrieks. Robinson here employs psychophysical imagery of fear to register the physiology of a ‘wand’ring soul’, a body that is both afraid, and the source of fear for the beholder. Although there is no evidence of a direct influence, the phrase ‘wand’ring soul’ echoes the ‘wandering mother’ (205) that we see in Coleridge’s *Christabel*, whose identity is obscured and enmeshed in the two female characters of the poem. In her analysis, for instance, Karen Swann explores the possibility that the identity of the wandering mother of *Christabel* may be projected by the Christabel/Geraldine dynamic. Swann argues that there is an ‘ambivalence about becoming absorbed into a body which may be “the same” as one's own, or may belong to an adversary, a “worker of harms,” and which is associated with, or represented by, the maternal body’.[[524]](#footnote-524) The significance of such similarity lies less in a possible linguistic influence by Coleridge than in the concept of a wandering identity that is indistinguishable of one’s own familial self. This convergence of identity between the maniac and the oppressed female self of Robinson’s experience.

The primal wandering of the maniac’s identity is registered in the language of fear. Among the examples, we can find the ‘agonizing shrieks’ and the rolling eye of the maniac, which also echoes Christabel’s ‘unsettled eye’ upon the mother’s appearance in the poem. There is also Geraldine’s case, when she ‘slowly rolled her eyes around’ while undressing in Christabel’s room. The language of fear focuses on body images, as the body is turned into a site where Gothic fear can be inscribed. Throughout the poem, the maniac is seen rending his ‘matted hair’, groaning, seeking ‘caverns’ and cherishing ‘thoughts untold’ that chase away sleep. He is ‘pale’, ‘distorted’, and ‘SHRUNK’. We see these featuring as primary effects of fear in Charles Darwin’s later *The Expressions of Emotion in Man and Animals* (1859) and Alexander Bain’s *The Emotion and the Will* (1865), where the ‘death-like pallor’ (Darwin) and the ‘stare of the eye’ (Bain) are primal characteristics of a body during the fearful state.[[525]](#footnote-525) This indicates that the way fear is described in these physical terms was prevalent during Coleridge and Robinson’s time, and persisted later in the century. The ‘pale’ faces and the ‘hollow eyes’ appear in Robinson’s ‘The Haunted Beach’ from *Lyrical Tales* (1800) in the portrayal of the Spectre Band that haunts the fisherman for his crimes, as well as in ‘Golfre: A Gothic Swiss Tale’, where the description of the mad Baron marks a sense of fear imprinted on his physiognomy: ‘His face was pale, his eyes were wild, / His beard was dark; […] / His forehead was all gash’d and gor’d’ (142-3, 147).[[526]](#footnote-526) As these examples indicate, descriptions of madness concentrate on the mad body and the physical manifestations of madness through the body. The mad Baron is described as pale, with wild eyes and gory features, characteristics that mark him as a Gothic body of fear.

The physiological nature of fear has already been discussed, but expressions of fear in face and body were also prevalent in discussions over madness, and Robinson participates in these discussions through her poem In the nineteenth century, medical treatises like Darwin’s *Expression of Emotions* *in Man and Animals* directed mental health studies to physiognomy and physiology to show how these ‘expressions’ would ‘reveal our animal origins’, rather than consign madmen to the completely separate category of the less-than-human, like Charles Bell seemed to do in *Essays on the Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression* (1824).[[527]](#footnote-527) You can tell a madman from the expressions of his face and of his body, but where this body lay in the humanity/animality spectrum was up for debate. Representations of madness subtly or bluntly showed this animal perception of a madman. Charles Mandeville, rendered insane in William Godwin’s three-volume novel *Mandeville* (1817), talks about the way Clifford is responsible for his confinement: ‘Had he not by his machinations reduced me to the condition of a beast?.’[[528]](#footnote-528) Madness is represented as something that needs to be restrained because active, dangerous, and unstable. In her novel *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), Wollstonecraft refers to ‘the energy of Maria’s character’, and how this was perceived by Jemima as ‘the effect of madness’, which made her suspicious of Maria’s stability.[[529]](#footnote-529) From the beginning of Wollstonecraft’s novel, we see Maria perceived as a mad character that has lost her thoughts and is studied by the penetrating gaze of her carer. Her presence in prison indicates the way what is perceived as the mad body is to be restrained and confined, as well as constantly under the searching gaze of reason. In Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), we read all about the excruciating agonies of Alonzo Monçada when led on the verge of madness by the monks in his convent, ‘ragged, meagre, livid, and obdurate, the very personification of an evil spirit summoned before the angels of judgement’, running through galleries ‘like a maniac’.[[530]](#footnote-530) Reduced to such a subhuman creature, in Robinson’s ‘The Maniac’ Jemmy is convulsively active, climbing ‘yon craggy steep’ and howling, ‘pacing to and fro’, and darting ‘from cave to cave’, with a perceived hyperactivity that alludes to a dangerous, mad animal that has resigned control, and causes fear, and that, through the convulsions, feels fear himself. The body is important as an indicator of powerful sensations like fear and mental derangement.

Joanna Baillie studies the passions through a psychophysiological perspective in the ‘Introductory Discourse’ to the *Series of Plays*, where she comments on the power of affect that the body emits under strong passions: ‘even the smallest indications of an unquiet mind, the restless eye, the muttering lip, the half-checked exclamation, and the hasty start, will set our attention [...] upon the watch’.[[531]](#footnote-531) It is this ‘watch’ that Robinson studies in ‘The Maniac’ as she encounters Jemmy as a body of madness and fear. For Baillie, what is important in art and literature is ‘the study of human nature’ and its passions through the power of affect, and physiological expressions are at the centre.[[532]](#footnote-532) The portrayal of the maniac as a wild, fearful animal is particularly pertinent to contemporary perceptions of the mad body, seen as having resigned its humanity/reason, and has become de-centred and cast away from the ‘unity’ of the law that David Punter refers to in connection with the fluidity of the Gothic.[[533]](#footnote-533) Coleridge wrote about the five types of madness in an essay titled ‘The Soul and its Organs of Sense’ included in *Omniana* (1812), and one of the types of madness he refers to is the one associated with the loss of reason, the loss of mind as opposed to an impairment of the senses.[[534]](#footnote-534) Like the human and the animal, the madman feels, and is open to the same sensations as the sane, but his final end is ‘irrational’ and deviates from reason.[[535]](#footnote-535) Fear is one of these sensations that relay a place of abjection, of a disturbed identity that functions outside the borders of reason and security. Fear is the central point of identification between the abject maniac and the speaker, as fear, according to Zygmunt Bauman, ‘is a feeling known to every living creature’, and humans ‘share that experience with the animals’ in the most primal level.[[536]](#footnote-536)

Indeed, the maniac is presented as an outcast, animal body throughout the poem. The maniac moves around shrieking, groaning, tearing the ‘rude straw’ of the bed and ‘wildly’ singing: ‘Why dost thou climb yon craggy steep, /That frowns upon the clam’rous deep, / And howl, responsive to the waves below?’ (19-21). Similarly, Charlotte Smith’s description of the lunatic in Sonnet 70 of her *Elegiac Sonnets* entails ‘a solitary wretch’ whose ‘hoarse, half-utter’d lamentations’ echo as ‘[m]urmuring responses to the dashing surf’ (1, 7-8).[[537]](#footnote-537) Deserted and animal-like, Smith’s maniac resembles Robinson’s Jemmy, ‘wildly wandering’ around, and being ‘uncursed with reason’ (12-3). The perceived irrationality renders the identity of the maniac unpredictable, free from the constraints of analytical thinking, so much so that Smith admits that ‘I see him more with envy than with fear’ (10). This makes the maniac a seductive figure in his unpredictability and his functioning outside reason’s borders. Nevertheless, the precariousness of madness caused madmen to be othered and constrained. In his *Madness and Civilization* (1961), Michel Foucault argues that, in the eighteenth century, ‘the age of reason confined’ and/or exhibited deviants like madmen, who, in the eyes of the law, ‘remained monsters […] beings or things to be shown’.[[538]](#footnote-538) According to Foucault, madness ‘borrowed its face from the mask of the beast’, ‘as if ‘madness, at its extreme point, freed from that moral unreason in which its most attenuated forms are enclosed, managed to rejoin, by a paroxysm of strength, the immediate violence of animality’.[[539]](#footnote-539) Because of the raw bestiality of the maniac, Robinson’s personal encounter with Jemmy borders precariously on horror. Animality, as I argued in Chapter One, is a crucial aspect of the horror body. Blake’s spectres are pictured in *Jerusalem* as ‘wild beasts’ raging in the mountains, and (anthropomorphic) beasts like *The Ghost of the Flea* proliferate in both his art and his poetry. Interestingly, the beasts of Blake’s visions were the more powerful for the physical proximity and a more direct interaction with Gothic bodies. Beasts are resilient sources of fear, going against reason, and shunned from the presence of reason, according to Foucault, in case it contaminates society’s human qualities.[[540]](#footnote-540) This is relevant to the depiction of the maniac in Robinson’s poem because of his portrayal as a wild beast, a source of fear whose encounter with the speaker both fascinates the speaker and repulses in its otherness.

The speaker’s series of questions in Robinson’s ‘The Maniac’ reads like a desperate attempt to regain agency in the face of an incomprehensible, thinged body, which seems to deviate from the conventions of reason, sanity, and the law. As Judith Halberstam highlights, monsters and outcast bodies ‘metaphorized modern subjectivity as a balancing act between inside/outside, female/male, body/mind, native/foreign, proletariat/aristocrat’, and proved to be a threat nurtured on the borders of fear.[[541]](#footnote-541) The repetition of the word ‘why’ by which Robinson begins the five stanzas of the poem, – ‘Why dost thou rend thy matted hair, […] / Why dost thou from thy scanty bed / Tear the rude straw […] / Why dost thou climb yon craggy steep, […] / Why dost thou strip the fairest bow’rs, […] / Why dost thou drink the midnight dew’ (7, 13, 20, 25, 31) – communicates a poetic invocation to reason to define the undefinable body of the maniac, which appears to contest the borders between human and animal, reason and madness, natural and supernatural, and whose ever closer proximity to the speaker will reach climax in the encounter of the speaker with the maniac’s gaze. Robinson’s attempt at maintaining agency through reason is compromised by this inability to fix the identity of the maniac. Beasts, for example, are immune to conventional illness, because they are almost supernatural. As Foucault observes, [a]nimality ‘protected the lunatic from whatever might be fragile, precarious, or sickly in man’, just as Robinson tells us that the maniac’s form has now ‘grown familiar with the blast, / Defies the biting FROST and scorching SUN’ (38-9). In Robinson’s eyes, ‘ALL SEASONS are alike to THEE’, and the maniac’s body seems free of mortal, natural inflictions, as if this was an undisclosed signifier of his loss of humanity.[[542]](#footnote-542)

Robinson’s representation of the maniac in the first part of the poem as a wild and ‘parch’d’ animal puts her in a unique position of proximity to the ghastly nature of his Gothic body. The proximity of Jemmy’s body both forces the speaker’s confrontation with Jemmy’s otherness and creates a desire to ‘share thy woe’, as if Robinson crushes the terror/horror spectrum and precariously aims to identify with the maniac. The contiguousness of the raw dread reaches its apex in the interaction of fearful bodies through the maniac’s gaze:

Fix not thy steadfast gaze on me,

SHRUNK ATOM OF MORTALITY!

Nor freeze my blood with thy distracted groan;

Ah! quickly turn those eyes away,

They fill my soul with dire dismay!

For dead and dark they seem, and almost chill’d to STONE! (43-8)

Just as Christabel’s body is invaded by the penetrating gaze of Geraldine and marks the moment their identities blend, so too the maniac’s gaze dissolves the inquisitive gaze of reason and replaces it with a horrific moment of fearful physical interaction. The maniac’s body of fear is channelled in a ‘steadfast gaze’ that creates aversion and urges the speaker’s demand to dissolve the connection of fear, commanding the maniac to ‘Fix not’ his piercing gaze on the body of the speaker, and to ‘quickly turn those eyes away’. At this moment, the fear that penetrates the maniac’s body threatens invasion into a supposedly stable identity, and fear, transferred into the speaker’s body, marks that body’s dissolution, whose transformation into a body in fear is symbolised by the maniac’s capacity to ‘freeze my blood’ and ‘fill my soul with dire dismay’.[[543]](#footnote-543) According to Mary Douglas, ‘[e]ven to gaze steadily at distorting apparatus makes some people feel physically sick, as if their own balance was attacked’.[[544]](#footnote-544) Mary Robinson utilises this threatening physical aversion to facilitate a re-direction of the self. It seems as if the horror of the contact with the maniac through the gaze has shifted Robinson’s manner of identification with him, delving deeper into the ‘thoughts untold’ (12) that she sought to explore in the first part of the poem. Now, it is more evident than before that, as Daniel Robinson observes, Robinson has found ‘in the maniac a kindred spirit’, both seeking to ‘explore through their dreams’.[[545]](#footnote-545)

The role of opium is exactly that of releasing the possibility of accessing an unconscious part of an inevitably fragmented subjectivity, which seems to eventually embrace the horror of physical interaction with the body of insanity and to regain agency. Whether or not Robinson was under opium’s influence when she conceived the poem is not relevant, but rather the way the conception of Robinson’s ‘The Maniac’ is framed as a product of opiate visions on Robinson’s part. Opium plays a central role in that it creates a space of interaction between Robinson’s speaker and Jemmy’s Gothic body, the horror of whose interaction the speaker comes to embrace by the end of the poem. E. J. Clery talks about women’s Gothic and the ‘assumption’ of some ‘commentators on Gothic of the works of’ male writers as ‘a superior class of “horror Gothic”, while the female Radcliffean school of “explained supernatural” […] represents a lower, more timid form of “terror Gothic”’.[[546]](#footnote-546) The radical possibility of a horrific encounter in Robinson’s ‘The Maniac’ is a proof against this assumption, since Robinson’s representation is different from the model of veiled terror that permeates *Christabel* and poems like Wordsworth’s *The Thorn* (1789), whose employed uncertainty only hints at crimes like Martha’s, without embracing the horror that lies beneath the beautiful thorn. Robinson dares to enter the place ‘Where REASON scorns to lend a ray’ (50) and re-define humanity by presenting the maniac as a ‘WRETCH FORLORN’, infected by the sting of ‘FAMINE’, ‘AVARICE’, and ‘MENTAL torture’ (79-80, 82-3). Their point of identification allows Robinson to imagine the ‘causes of his madness’, which, as Anne Milne observes, can be ‘greed, ambition, poverty, and guilt’. Indeed, Milne talks about Robinson’s ‘feral openness’ in both her life and in her poetry, which can be read as a ‘dynamic […] ephemeral term’ associated with wildness and ‘powerful spaces, identities and practices such as borderlands, margins, thresholds hybrids, becomings’, and which allows Robinson to understand ‘Jemmy’s madness as a social phenomenon’.[[547]](#footnote-547) Her ‘fear of crossing from marginal to madness’ labels Robinson’s deep knowledge of ‘the ethic of care within the community’, in which she herself has felt largely marginalised, both because of the issue of underrepresentation and because of personal anxieties as a woman and an author.[[548]](#footnote-548) The mental agonies that Robinson refers to in relation to the debilitated frame of the maniac offer their point of identification as creatures of affliction, injustice, and pain in the mind and in the body. Their tears are mingled in their shared, reconfigured humanity: ‘Oh! Let me all thy sorrows know; / With THINE my mingling tear shall flow’ (52-3). Lenora Hanson observes that Robinson’s poem ‘has been read as offering an anti-Wordsworthian mode of sympathy’ because of ‘its refusal to turn away from its subject, mad Jemmy, for the sake of reflection’.[[549]](#footnote-549) Instead of reflecting on Jemmy’s misery from a safe distance, Robinson seeks to establish contact.

Opium offers a space for this re-definition to take place by soliciting dreams of mental and bodily pain and re-considering Jemmy’s identity as a ‘POOR MANIAC’ by the end of the poem. As a *pharmakon*, opium’s healing and destructive powers work on the threshold of addiction, a persistent attraction to and repulsion from the visions it opens, and the re-connection with a more intense sense of one’s own body, just as the maniac’s body is presented in Robinson’s poem as abject. Like opium, and like Jemmy’s body, abjection is both balm and pain: ‘Abjection […] is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you’.[[550]](#footnote-550) Scenes of horror entail this contradictory dynamic. As John and Anna Letitia Aikin comments in ‘On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror’ (1773), objects of various degrees of fear are ‘wild, fanciful, and extraordinary’, and the more they are so, the more ‘pleasure we receive from it’.[[551]](#footnote-551) In the ‘Invocation to Oberon’ (*Poems*, 1793), Robinson calls the ‘magic potency’ (23) of opium that she refers to in her ‘Ode to Health’ (1791) ‘Mortal’s Balm, and mortal’s Bane!’ (66),[[552]](#footnote-552) both a blessed healer and an ghastly curse that brings the ‘new scenes of mental pain’ (7) lamented in her ‘Stanzas: Written After Successive Nights of Melancholy Dreams’ (published with ‘The Maniac’ in her 1793 edition of *Poems*).[[553]](#footnote-553) This function of opium as both balm and bane also appears in Robinson’s ‘Ode to Apathy’ (1791), where another reference to the ‘poppy wreath’ signals Robinson’s persistent preoccupation with opium, and where she admits that, ‘while to thee I pay my vows, / A chilling tide shall rush thro’ ev’ry vein, / Pervade my heart, and ev’ry care beguile’ (19-21).[[554]](#footnote-554) Opium’s narco-Gothic created a space where the politics of addiction can lead to a re-examination of the self through fear.

Robinson’s narco-Gothic in ‘The Maniac’ blends the personal and the political to explore the instability of identity. As Anne Mellor argues, Robinson’s ‘identity […] can be nothing more or less than the sum total of the scripts she performed both in public and in private, in her own narratives and in those of others’.[[555]](#footnote-555) The trope of madness employed in many of Robinson’s writings, which re-appears in *Jasper*, carries a revolutionary import that extends to the body politic in general. As Roy Porter claims, this was a time when ‘Fear was the king’: ‘Public opinion declared the politics of the Terror deranged, branding its leaders as madmen and monsters’.[[556]](#footnote-556) The idea of national purity was endangered, and the body politic lived vicariously through the fear that endangered it, just like the ‘Reasoning Power’ in Blake’s *Milton*, which absorbs the ‘filthy garments’ (6) of the abject to purify itself (see Chapter One). The war in England against the Terror in France has always been a war of fear and maintaining control, and ‘The Maniac’ explores this tension between narratives of the stable self, and the mad other that threatens agency. Robinson, though appalled by the later atrocities of the French Revolution, could relate to the instability of representation, and the issue of empowerment always resurfaces in her poetry and prose, especially in relation to her image of ‘bestial sexuality’ that she could not shake off.[[557]](#footnote-557)

This label enables Robinson to weaponise the most contradictory genre of the eighteenth century, the Gothic. Through the power of affect, and by personalising the narrative of personal experiences, Robinson wanted to re-assert that ‘independence’ that had so often been compromised during her life.[[558]](#footnote-558) This may imply the loss of control, but agency is re-asserted when the speaker in the poem invites the maniac to ‘TELL ME, tell me all thy pain; / Pour to mine ear thy frenzied strain, / And I will share thy pangs, and soothe thy woes’ (‘The Maniac’, 115-7). The maniac seems to be a fractured part of the speaker’s self, who the speaker embraces and invites home through ‘soft PITY’s balm’ (120). The word ‘home’ is particularly relevant here, because it places Robinson in the context of a series of women writers like Anna Seward and Sara Coleridge, who, as Hannah Cowles suggests, place ‘the presence of opium’ and its politics ‘not in a distant Eastern climate’ like De Quincey and Coleridge in *Kubla Khan*, but ‘in the heart of England’, and the personal.[[559]](#footnote-559) In the *Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799), Robinson talks about women’s need for ‘self-preservation’ in the face of inequality and fear, and argues for the establishment of woman’s ‘claims to the participation of power, both mentally and corporeally’, a cry that she does not fail to voice in her poetry, and that places her on a par with Mary Wollstonecraft’s declarations in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).[[560]](#footnote-560) With Wollstonecraft, Robinson is one of the women writers who, in Adriana Craciun’s words, ‘addressed the role of the body in the construction of gender’, and the space provided by opium brought her even closer to the dynamics of her own body, and an even stronger desire for empowerment.[[561]](#footnote-561) The narco-politics of Gothic madness in ‘The Maniac’, therefore, show that there is only one way by which one can regain agency, and that is by recognising that the dark other which haunts the self is part of ourselves. Only then can you even begin to ‘calm thy fears’ and be exhorted? ‘TO REPOSE’ (120). The final chapter of this thesis will focus on William Wordsworth’s Gothic acoustics of fear and bodiless sound turns into bodily presence by bringing forward Wordsworth’s haunting bodies.

**Chapter Four**

**William Wordsworth’s Acoustics of Fear**

**4.1. Hearing Fear, Feeling Fear**

The moon was up, the lake was shining clear  
Among the hoary mountains: from the shore  
I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again  
In cadence, and my little Boat moved on  
Just like a man who walks with stately step  
Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth   
And troubled pleasure; not without the voice  
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on,  
Leaving behind her still on either side  
Small circles glittering idly in the moon.

Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1799, Book First, 85-94)

‘Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up

Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.’

*The Prelude* (1805, Book First, 305-6)[[562]](#footnote-562)

So far, the thesis examines the way psychophysical imagery of fear finds expression in the horror bodies of William Blake’s poetry, as well as Baillie and Bannerman’s spectral bodies that exhibit different manifestations of fear, on to Coleridge and Robinson’s narco-bodies, manifest in dreams and nightmares. In this chapter, I am going to demonstrate how bodies in fear/of fear infiltrate Wordsworth’s Gothic writings in the context of the poet’s interaction with the (dis)embodied and dissonant rhythms of Gothic sound in his effort to find meaning in the middle of the horrors of the French Revolution. Having focused on different expressions of fearful, trembling bodies, each resulting in very real physical manifestations, I will move on to examine how Gothic sound works in Wordsworth’s poetry, as sound is considered bodiless. Rather than escaping from the physical terror that Wordsworth allegedly detested in German tragedies, however, I will look at the way Wordsworth depicts how disembodied sound produces very real and physical Gothic bodies which escape control, even momentarily.

In this chapter, I will focus on the *Fragment of a Gothic Tale* (1797) and the *Prelude* (1805), to see how Wordsworth registers how the body of the hearer is affected by fear in his earlier Gothic writings and his later *Prelude*, and how this fear, manifest in body imagery, is dealt with through this interaction with rhythm. Indeed, sound in relation to Wordsworth’s poetry, especially Gothic sound, is under-researched. Susan Wolfson studies sound and Romantic poetry and makes occasional references to Wordsworth and sound, rightly claiming that, for Wordsworth, ‘sound is a memory’ that is able to evoke a vision, an argument with which I agree.[[563]](#footnote-563) Wolfson focuses on the way sound connects the self with the place and the memory in Wordsworth’s poetry, but there is no mention in her study of how Gothic sound works in Wordsworth’s poetry, and its impact on the body. Kirstie Blair studies pulsating rhythm in Victorian poetry, where she considers how poetic rhythm echoes ‘motions within the body’[[564]](#footnote-564). While Blair concentrates on Victorian poetry because nineteenth-century studies on physiology and pulsation impressed poetic theories of pulse and rhythm in the Victorian period more than in any other time before, she recognises that the seeds of rhythm in poetic theory were more firmly consolidated by Wordsworth and Coleridge, both of whom extensively studied theories of physiology.[[565]](#footnote-565) In her book *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature* (2018), Angela Leighton refers to earlier academic work on sound, listening and the body, such as Don Ihde in his *Listening and Voice* (1976), and Murray Schafer in his *The Soundscape* (1977). The latter argued that ‘[h]earing and touch meet where the lower frequencies of audible sound pass over to tactile vibrations’[[566]](#footnote-566), and this is paradoxically how what Leighton calls the fleeting ‘preternatural’ power of sound enters the body and becomes more tangible through movement and physical impact.[[567]](#footnote-567) Jonathan Ashmore explains this in purely physiological terms: ‘The role of the cochlea is to feed information about sound as a physical stimulus into the auditory nerve, which relays an encoded form of the sound on to the brain as a pattern of activity in its separate fibres’.[[568]](#footnote-568) The word ‘fibres’, which echoes Blake’s fibrous suffusion of meaning through interconnected bodies, acquires additional relevance in discussions of how rhythm creates sounds of fear that connect or disrupt bodies, and open up or contest portals of communication in Wordsworth’s poetry through a rippling effect. In both Blake and Wordsworth’s case, the body is at the centre of the feeling experience. As Don Ihde observes, ‘I do not merely hear with my *ears*, I *hear* with my whole body’.[[569]](#footnote-569) In Wordsworth’s case, hearing with his body is part of the instructive beauty and fear that fostered his poetic and personal sensibilities. As I will argue, Gothic sound makes Wordsworth confront personal and political anxieties through foregrounding Gothic bodies of fear.[[570]](#footnote-570) More specifically, I will focus on the way fear fosters this kind of instructive experience of Wordsworth and the way Wordsworth engages with the Gothic bodies that come out of this experience.

Right before the boat episode in the first Book of *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth recollects the infinite powers of nature in shaping the young poetic mind, which ‘is fashioned and built up / Even as a strain of music’ (67-8). For Wordsworth, beauty and fear were both powers that equally conditioned his early poetic experiences and created memories that would follow him right to the end of his career. In this part of *The* *Prelude*, the boat skims along the ‘silent lake’ (104) and generates a rhythm that interacts with the external sounds of nature. Rather than merely interacting, the sounds and rhythms seem to affect and implicate each other, as ‘from the shore / I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again / In cadence’, urged on by ‘the voice of mountain-echoes’ (86-8). Following the eurhythmic harmony of sounds like these, the boat craftily ‘disturbs’ the silent rhythm of the lake by leaving ‘Small circles glittering idly in the moon’. It is even more remarkable that Wordsworth’s openness to sound precedes one of his first and scariest experiences with the sublimity of nature, since, gradually, the rhythm of the oar seems to bring into sharper focus the monstrous proportions of the overhanging cliff that so intimidated Wordsworth:

[…] I struck, and struck again,   
And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff  
Rose up between me and the stars, and still  
With measured motion, like a living thing,  
Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned,  
And through the silent water stole my way  
Back to the cavern of the willow-tree. (110-6)

The ‘huge cliff’ turns into a gigantic, ‘living thing’ and a much-too-physical presence that is perceptively foregrounded by the rhythm of the oars. This foregrounding affects the poet’s feeling of terror, which increases the more it seems to be getting closer. This was among the first sublime experiences he would record in *The Prelude* as the poem firmly expanded throughout the years. The word ‘trembling’ acquires relevance here because of its physiological connotations and because it points to the way the increasing terror of the ‘living thing’ standing before Wordsworth was felt through his body as the sound of the oars and the silence of the lake affected his imagination. The physical presence of this living thing that materialises in front of Wordsworth as he sailed through the lake was shaped by the combination of sounds around him as well as the silence that created the space for the terrible presence to appear through the interaction of sounds.

Although its impact as a source of the sublime has been quite under-researched, sound is integral in experiencing sublime fear.[[571]](#footnote-571) Sound not only creates a mystery that plays upon presence/absence, but also builds suspense and intensifies the feeling of imminent danger in ways that trigger the imagination. However, excessive fear should be cautioned against, or the effect can be destructive, as Edmund Burke pointedly warned in his *Enquiry*.[[572]](#footnote-572) Burke also refers to the sublimity of sound in the *Enquiry* and connects excessive sound to sublime terror. Here, too, Burke implies that terror can be transformed to something horrible if excessive (I will make a reference to Burke’s ‘Sound and Loudness’ chapter further on). The intensity of Gothic sound is directly proportionate to how close the threat is, and how terror can be turned into horror. At the end of the passage quoted above, Wordsworth’s increasing fear towards the living thing that neared him makes him turn back to the cavern ‘through the silent water’ (116), in fear lest the experience becomes too horrible.

In this chapter, I will examine Wordsworth’s preoccupation with Gothic sound, and how Wordsworth’s personal and poetic *raison d’être* was in many ways determined by the acoustics of fear both in his early Gothic writings and in *The Prelude* (1805). In so doing, I will study Wordsworth’s effort to battle meaninglessness in times of change and uncertainty, especially after the atrocities he witnessed during his second time in France, and England’s eventual war declaration. More specifically, I argue that Wordsworth can be seen as a ‘rhythmanalyst’, who, as Henri Lefèbvre theorises, employs a ‘power of metamorphosis’ of sorts in order to change the rhythmic present ‘into presences’ by being able ‘to “listen” to a house, a street, a town, as an audience listens to a symphony’.[[573]](#footnote-573) For Lefèbvre, rhythm and the human body are internally connected, as rhythm activates and constitutes the body, which interacts with rhythm (rhythm within and rhythm outside the body) to make sense of its surroundings and reach understanding through the senses. According to Lefèbvre, the power of the rhythanalyst lies not in his ability to simply observe, but to recognise and activate rhythm as presence. In that sense, ‘the rhythmanalyst has nothing in common with a prophet or a sorcerer’, but a person of sensibility who ‘changes that which he observes: he sets it in motion, he recognises its power. In this sense, he seems close to the poet, or the man of the theatre’.[[574]](#footnote-574) This is a pivotal point of connection with Wordsworth, for whom sensibility was central in the poetic self’s effort to make sense of experience as well as the world. In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth famously defined poetry as ‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’, thus confirming how crucial sensibility is in relation to making meaning.[[575]](#footnote-575) The word ‘feelings’ that Wordsworth uses is intrinsically connected to the senses and the body’s participation in the poetic experience of active receptivity by which the poet opens himself to the rhythm outside. As I will see, fear is central in the way it fosters this active receptivity through the power of Gothic sound and the way Wordsworth interacts with it.

Indeed, according to Lefèbvre, the rhythmanalyst listens with his body. While he ‘thinks with his body’, [t]he rhythmanalyst will not be obliged to *jump* from the inside to the outside of observed *bodies*; he should come to listen to them *as a whole* and unify them by taking his own rhythms as a reference; by integrating the outside with the inside and vice versa. […] To the attentive ear, [the object] makes a noise like a seashell.[[576]](#footnote-576)By thus interacting with external bodies, at the same time as listening to the rhythms of his own, Wordsworth seems alert to a variety of rhythms among which the dysrhythmia of Gothic sound seems particularly subversive. This sound is of the kind the narrator of ‘There Was a Boy’[[577]](#footnote-577) implicitly tries to listen to by standing silent near the grave of Wordsworth’s school fellow William Raincock, a boy particularly keen on imitating the hooting of the owls and receptive of the ‘shock of mild surprise’ (18) that entered his body every time he sat ‘Listening’ (19) amidst ‘pauses of deep silence’ (17). Wordsworth’s ‘There Was a Boy’ is a poem dedicated to rhythmic interaction, as it moves back and forth between sound and silence, culminating in a subtle reference to the silence of the grave. More specifically, the poem’s Boy stands making hooting sounds to the silent owls so that they may answer him, and thus the speaker starts weaving the intimate communication between the boy and the answering owls, which then brings forward intermittent sounds of nature the Boy is receptive to, all based on the power of sound and the interaction between the internal and the external. The final line of the poem finds the narrator ‘looking at the grave in which he lies’ (34), but the word ‘Mute’ (34) that precedes it anticipates the sonic receptivity of listening to the sound of death. The muteness in front of the Boy’s grave is different from the muteness of nature at the beginning of the poem, but the poem ends before the theme is explored further. Indeed, Wordsworth ends the poem without exploring the silence of the grave, choosing instead to focus on the self and its rhythmic communication with nature. But the grave is there, a palpable reminder of mortality. In one of his 1798 letters to William Wordsworth, written from Ratzeburg to Goslar, Samuel Taylor Coleridge shrewdly observes that ‘had I met these lines running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should have instantly screamed out ‘Wordsworth!’’, as the poem echoes Wordsworth’s poetic presence and his take on the themes of nature and mutability.[[578]](#footnote-578)

## One such indication of Wordsworth’s poetic presence is the theme of death. Speaking of death and mourning in his *Upon Epitaphs* (‘The Friend’, 1810), Wordsworth cautions against an inordinate contact with death, which endangers the creation of strong love bonds among people, and eliminates the feeling of fear that death inevitably induces:

[…] it is to me inconceivable, that the sympathies of love towards each other, which grow with our growth, could ever attain any new strength, or even preserve the old, after we had received from the outward senses the impression of death, and were in the habit of having that impression daily renewed and its accompanying feeling brought home to ourselves. [[579]](#footnote-579)

According to Wordsworth, death and dead bodies should not be anti-transcendental, mundane and commonplace. On the contrary, it is the ‘belief in immortality’ that sustains communal feeling. To illustrate his point, Wordsworth mentions an ancient Greek Philosopher who, ‘chancing to fix his eyes upon a dead body [...] regarded the same with slight, if not with contempt’.[[580]](#footnote-580) The dead body is hereby seen as empty after the soul has departed. It is only in the soul that the body finds meaning and reanimates. Without the soul, the dead body is devoid of feeling, and dismissed as something unimportant, even disgusting. For Wordsworth, sensation and feeling should remain aligned with moderate stimulation and transcendental mystery in nature, death, and poetry. As James Castell rightly observes, for Wordsworth ‘silence and obscurity are intimately connected to the material phenomena of both the natural world and the aesthetic world of verse’, where obscurity leaves room for imagination and safely keeps the beholder / reader from experiencing the ghastly and horrible.[[581]](#footnote-581)

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge integrated into their poetic theories their life-long belief in the transcendent powers of the imagination, and the way externality and the senses affect imaginative activity. Part of it was their loudly protested aversion to extravagantly sensational literature imported from Germany, followed by a wave ‘of gothic writing’, as Michael Gamer observes, ‘in the decades following the French Revolution’[[582]](#footnote-582)**.** For Wordsworth, German literature exemplified eighteenth-century literary over-indulgence, compared to which the natural poetry of Robert Burns was duly on the pedestal of poetic inspiration. According to Wordsworth, Burns’s verse is immortal and spontaneous, ‘rather the ebullition of natural temperament and a humour of levity, than a studied thing’.[[583]](#footnote-583)In contrast, ‘in these foreign Writers, and in some of our own Country not long deceased, the evil, whether of voluptuousness, impiety, or licentiousness, is courted upon system, and therefore is greater, and less pardonable’.[[584]](#footnote-584) Gothic poetry from abroad, ‘sickly and stupid German tragedies’ and ‘frantic novels’, all of which Wordsworth attacks in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800),[[585]](#footnote-585)are less pardonable because stronger and more threatening, an ‘evil’ that conspires to degrade contemporary poetic taste. However, despite what Gamer calls ‘the Gothic’s stigma’,[[586]](#footnote-586)Wordsworth and the other Romantics experimented with the multifariousness of the Gothic, and the Gothic creeps into many of their poems. Indeed, Gamer observes that an example of the stigma of the Gothic is the ‘public outcry’ caused by Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* also mentioned in Chapter One, and which forced ‘Matthew Lewis to censor himself and disavow any political relevance to his work for the rest of his career’.[[587]](#footnote-587) However, Wordsworth himself seemed deeply immersed in Gothic literature like ‘Gothic poetry of Gottfried Bürger’, whose infamous *Lenore* (1774) helpfully ignited the rise of the English Ballad during the 1790s. It is even true that Wordsworth’s reading of Bürger and Thomas Percy’s collection of manuscript ballads, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), pushed him to try his hand in ‘a series of his own ghostly ballads, including the Lucy and Matthew poems’.[[588]](#footnote-588)More than that, Gothic writing instilled in Wordsworth some of the devices and elements he would use in his own poetry, and the workings of sound he exploited, as I argue here, would bear traces of the use of sound in his early Gothic readings.

Some of Wordsworth’s Gothic readings also include Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Ann Radcliffe’s novels,[[589]](#footnote-589) Lewis’s *The Monk*, Friedrich Schiller’s *The Robbers* (1792), James Beattie’s *The Minstrel* (1779) and Collins’s ‘Ode to Fear’ (1746), among many more.[[590]](#footnote-590) Influenced by these, juvenile attempts by Wordsworth in the Gothic genre entail *The Vale of Esthwaite* (1787) and his play *The Borderers* (1795-7), while his Fragment of a *Gothic Tale* (1797) clearly follows widely used Gothic conventions of the eighteenth century, and utilised the acoustics of fear, which refers to sounds of fear, to convey meaning.[[591]](#footnote-591) Very often, Gothic sound in these writings follows Ann Radcliffe’s tendency to subtly restore ‘any dissonance’, any rhythmic discordance created by the introduction of terror in the novels. As Angela M. Archambault observes, ‘unsound sounds’ in Radcliffe’s writings ‘are made sound again’, and the reader is spared the horror of fear realised, unlike Matthew Lewis’s texts, which ‘would not offer such refuge’.[[592]](#footnote-592) Even in less profoundly Gothic poems like Wordsworth’s ‘The Two April Mornings’ (1798) from his *Lyrical Ballads*, this dysrhythmia that Radcliffe restores becomes only discreetly evident. The poem recounts the story of Matthew, a schoolmaster who lost his daughter many years ago and tells the story of a day thirty years ago when he ‘stopp’d short / Beside my daughter’s grave’ (31-2), a little girl who had scarcely seen ‘Nine summers’ (33). The poem explores the idea of death and loss, and the little girl that Matthew sees ‘Beside the churchyard yew’ (42) echoes the image of Matthew that the speaker sees near Matthew’s grave at the end of the poem. What might be interpreted as the ghost of Matthew is seen standing in front of his own grave: ‘Matthew is in his grave, yet now / Methinks, I see him stand, / As at that moment, with a bough / Of wilding in his hand’ (57-60). However, the carefully placed word ‘Methinks’ in the middle of the stanza strategically tempers a potential horror scene where the actual body of the deceased Matthew is rather before the narrator’s eyes, than consigned to a blurry memory. The rhythmic discordance of death and the dead body is carefully controlled throughout the poem, but what seems to have brought forward this contact with death’s potential terror is the narrator’s act of listening to Matthew’s tale of how he lost his daughter, from whom all that Matthew mentions is her transcendental song.

The element of obscurity that we find in many examples of Wordsworth’s poetry is what Burke expounds in his *Enquiry*, andinforms the way that Wordsworth handles the quasi-spectral moment of Matthew standing by his grave, much like Joanna Baillie does in spectral poems like ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ (1790).For Burke, and for many theorists of the eighteenth century, obscurity seemed to be a trademark of the sublime. Hugh Blair, for example, a Scottish rhetorician who developed ideas of writing and the senses, theorises sublimity, writing, and sense perception in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), where he underlines the importance of ‘feeling and experience’ in observing ‘superior pleasure’, always under the mild temperance of reason.[[593]](#footnote-593) Even more suggestive is Blair’s analysis of obscurity when he discusses sublime objects:

OBSCURITY, we are farther to remark, is not unfavourable to the Sublime. Though it render the object indistinct, the impression, however, may be great; for, as an ingenious Author has well observed, it is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination; and the imagination may be strongly affected; and, in fact, often is so, by objects of which we have no clear conception. Thus we see, that almost all the descriptions given us of the appearances of supernatural Beings, carry some Sublimity, though the conceptions which they afford us be [to] confused and indistinct. Their Sublimity arises from the ideas, which they always convey, of superior power and might, joined with an awful obscurity.[[594]](#footnote-594)

According to Blair, the sublime is powerfully affective whenit is obscure and stirs the imagination. This anticipates a kind of Radcliffean creation of mystery and anticipation that nevertheless remains ‘indistinct.’ However, the sublime pertains to exhibitions of superior power that not only address the eye, but the ear as well. In his *Enquiry*, for instance, Edmund Burke claims:

Sounds have a great power in these as in most other passions. I do not mean words, because words do not affect simply by their sounds, but by means altogether different. Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror. The noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakes a great and awful sensation in the mind, though we can observe no nicety or artifice in those sorts of music.[[595]](#footnote-595)

In this extract, Burke equates sublime sound with power and loudness, which have the capacity to overwhelm the listener. However, Burke also seems to imply that too intense and affective a sound can and will be dangerous in shaking and controlling those who hear it. By this and many other examples, it seems clear that, for Burke, as for Blair, the sublime must stay connected with a carefully balanced, delightful terror, one that titillates the senses without becoming repulsive. In her Introduction to *A Series of Plays*, Joanna Baillie makes a similar point when she talks about fear: ‘the bravest man’, she says ‘will not refuse to be interested for one under the dominion of this passion, provided there be nothing in the circumstances attending it to create contempt’.[[596]](#footnote-596) In this respect, Gothic bodies tend to create this kind of contempt because they are excessive and loud in the intensity of reaction they evoke, and this contempt stems from the self’s contact with these bodies of fear and in fear. This is also the reason Coleridge rejects the ‘naked horror’ that pervades Lewis’s *The Monk*, and Wordsworth never goes too far in keeping his ‘reader in the company of flesh and blood.’[[597]](#footnote-597) Bodiless sound, as Archambault argues, ‘functions as a Gothic body’, both in terms of its ability to know ‘no real barrier’, and because it ‘is ungovernable’, dissonant, and disrupting a seemingly intransigent well-crafted eurhythmia by creating vibrations and disturbances. To listen to this interplay, a shift to the sensational is necessary.[[598]](#footnote-598) Wordsworth’s role as a rhythmanalyst is particularly pertinent when it comes to being receptive to sensational experience and sonic harmony, as well as what disturbs and re-configures it. As a rhythmanalyst, Wordsworth is actively receptive to the workings of the Gothic sound as a Gothic body and encounters the way it triggers Wordsworth’s interaction with bodies of terror that threaten to become horrible.

There is a tempered organic balance with which Wordsworth develops his theory of action and reaction between man and sensations, which is based on tranquilly recollecting the synthesis of man and feelings: ‘What then is the role of the poet? He considers ‘man and the objects that surround him as acting and reacting upon each other so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure’[[599]](#footnote-599), which he should nevertheless control, especially when ‘there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds’.[[600]](#footnote-600) Again, Wordsworth follows Burke in clarifying that the mixture of pain and pleasure when experiencing over-heated passion must not become too vivid. In his ‘Observations on Objects of Terror’ (1799) published in *The Edinburgh Magazine*, Dr John Aikin (brother to Anna Letitia Aikin, later Barbauld) expands on the necessity of sublime mysteriousness in a work of art:

Unaccompanied by those mysterious incidents which indicate the ministration of beings mightier than we, and which induce the thrilling sensation of mingled astonishment, apprehension, and delight […] it will be apt to create rather horror and disgust than the grateful emotion intended.[[601]](#footnote-601)

On Aikin’s account, a robber, who was set on opening a ‘repository of the dead’ with the purpose of stealing ‘some rich ornaments’ out of a corpse, could not go on with his gruesome work because he could not stand ‘the hideous spectacle of mortality which presented itself when he opened the coffin’, and he ended up running away ‘trembling and weeping’.[[602]](#footnote-602) Burke’s language of exaggerated sentimentality on the sufferings of the royal family and the age of chivalry at threat in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was severely criticised by rationalists like Mary Wollstonecraft for its ‘pampered sensibility’: ‘vain of this fancied pre-eminence of organs’, Wollstonecraft writes, ‘you foster every emotion till it fumes, mounting to your brain, dispel the sober suggestions of reason’.[[603]](#footnote-603) For Wollstonecraft, excessive emotion can be dangerous because it ‘inflames your imagination’, and blurs the judgement. In these cases, reason is seen as palliative to the inflammations of the imagination, and Wordsworth’s Preface subtly refers to the ‘rational sympathy’[[604]](#footnote-604) that a poet aims to excite in his readers and which poetry can invite by expressing powerful emotions. In relation to the sublime in Wordsworth’s images of fear, as I argue, there is an element of obscurity and elevation, which tempers the physicality that the acoustics of fear bring forth.

**4.2. The Pedagogy of Trembling Fear: William Wordsworth and Gothic Sound**

An extraordinary episode of Wordsworth’s early life at Hawkshead shows both how preoccupied Wordsworth was with the interaction between material and immaterial, and his life-long anxiety about the existence of external bodies. As John Worthen describes in his detailed biography of the poet, one of Wordsworth’s major fears as a child was ‘that everything might just be ideas’, and the ‘deeply disturbing’ position of subjectivity in relation to the external world.[[605]](#footnote-605) Wordsworth’s account to Isabella Fenwick of how he used his senses to ascertain external reality is particularly revealing:

I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence & I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality.[[606]](#footnote-606)

While Worthen justifiably gives full attention to this anxiety of self as ‘a striking terror for a child, and a revealing one for a child recently orphaned’ because of his mother’s unexpected death, I want to stress how important it is that this terror of existence *was* generated in Wordsworth’s mind at a very young age.[[607]](#footnote-607) The question of the reality of mind and body has concerned theorists of the day like John Locke and David Hume, but the idea of grasping ‘at a wall or tree to recall myself’ to reality, as Wordsworth does, contains the seeds of a powerful imagination, and a very concrete reliance on the senses to explore externality. Even more importantly, Wordsworth would come back to these early tangible experiences as something vital to coping with death and loss. At the time of his father’s death, Wordsworth would remember ‘the sounds to which / I often would repair’ (*1799*, 368-9), ‘the bleak music of that old stone wall’ and the ‘noise of wood and water and the mist’ (364-5) he would listen to while he was ‘waiting for the horses’.[[608]](#footnote-608) The play of rhythm in his eyes and ears, and the way they would make him feel would help Wordsworth understand ‘his own “anxiety of hope”’ right before death becomes reality.[[609]](#footnote-609)

These fears that arise in Wordsworth’s mind justify his premature poetic development, and early artistic and personal experiences are progressively integrated in the instructive experience of fear Wordsworth unravels. Steven Bruhm refers to this as the ‘discipline of fear’ in Wordsworth’s poetry[[610]](#footnote-610), which conditioned his imagination early on in his life, especially in the way that traumas and fears are sublimated. Through the power of recollection, ‘feeling comes in aid / Of feeling’ (325-6)[[611]](#footnote-611) and rejuvenates meaning, as is very much the case in Wordsworth’s encounter with the troubling consequences of the French Revolution. As Slavoj Žižek put it in his *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), what emerges from Wordsworth’s acoustic explorations is a body ‘of the *sublime* material, of that other “indestructible and immutable” body which persists beyond the corruption of the body physical.’[[612]](#footnote-612) In this section, I will explore Wordsworth’s search for meaning through the didactics of acoustic fear as the only way he attempts to grapple with ‘the symptom’. In Slavoj Žižek’s words, the symptom is ‘a cyphered message’, a kind of unconscious power that the subject sometimes uncomfortably touches in his attempt towards ‘a certain signifying, symbolic formation which assures a minimum of consistency to our being-in-the-world’.[[613]](#footnote-613) The symptom was also briefly referred to in Chapter Two in connection to spectres, as ghosts tend to bring forward the symptom, something that haunts us and makes us afraid. In the case of Wordsworth, Žižek’s symptom takes the form of a fear of meaninglessness and nothingness that stems out of life-changing personal and political experiences that called for a re-definition of self and society. To make sense of externality, and the symbolic process in general, Wordsworth transforms and transcends this symptom of trauma (and the fear of nothingness) that his experiences of the French Revolution brought forth through the generative powers of the imagination, and the process of sublimation. The Gothic represents contact with this trauma, the resented dark side of experience which comes back to haunt us. Wordsworth’s version of the ‘symptom’ that we perceive as fostering our connection to life is what he deems ‘but accidents’ in a Fragment from the manuscript of *Peter Bell* (1799), ‘Relapses from that one interior life / That lives in all things’ (9-10), and which exist ‘in one mighty whole’ (17).[[614]](#footnote-614) For Wordsworth, transcendence hushes the trauma of nothingness, and conditions meaning. However, according to Žižek, an important way of comprehending the symptom is by dissolving its logic and the boundaries by which one tries to interpret trauma. The Gothic provides a space for Wordsworth to deal with this trauma and come in contact with Gothic bodies as symptoms, even if eventually he tries to suppress them.

Wordsworth’s early attempts at the Gothic are particularly telling. *The Vale of Esthwaite* (1787)[[615]](#footnote-615) both shows Wordsworth’s literary influences when he was still a student at Cambridge, and it provides a fine specimen of how Wordsworth responded to the awe of the natural landscapes that surrounded him, the ‘gloomy glades’ and ‘Religious woods and midnight shades’ (25-6) that more often than not instructed his early poetic sensibility. [[616]](#footnote-616) More or less mechanically, Wordsworth employs in this poem a profundity of Gothic tropes[[617]](#footnote-617) like the ominous ‘mist’ that surrounds the landscape, and the awful apparitions that inhabit the ‘Gothic mansion’ in the black woods. A similar atmosphere also pervades the Fragment of the *Gothic Tale*, where Wordsworth gradually introduces us to the ‘dim-discovered form’ of the castle, as darkness and isolation speedily take grip of the narrative. The same quality of darkness to reveal Wordsworth’s poetic sensibility is evident in *The Vale of Esthwaite*. More evident, however, is the profusion of sounds that runs through the narrative and create a play of rhythms oscillating between the transcendental and the ghastly. In Wordsworth’s poem, sound can be soothing and redemptive, as the voice of Twilight that the narrator listens to near Esthwaite lake, a voice that resembles the ‘strain’ of angels ‘hovering round the bed’ of the dying and soothes them so that ‘they may tempt without a fear / The night of Death so dark and drear’ (90-94). A similar kind of sound penetrates the narrative of Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) in St. Aubert’s enjoyment of the nightingale’s song, ‘breathing sweetness, and awakening melancholy’,[[618]](#footnote-618) and *The* *Italian* (1797) in the influence of the religious procession’s solemn song upon the villagers. In Joanna Baillie’s *De Monfort* (1800), too, both De Monfort and Rezenvelt pause to listen to the screaming of the owl, harbinger of the bell’s solemn sound that invites him to a shelter (Act IV).[[619]](#footnote-619)

A similar screaming of the owl pervades *The Vale of Esthwaite*, marks ‘the train of fear’ (134-5), and gradually reveals a fir-girt mansion ‘[w]ith many a turret on its head’ (139-40). According to Carol Landon and Jared Curtis, the passage is most probably influenced by John Aikin’s ‘Sir Bertrand: a Fragment’ (1773), especially because of Sir Bertrand’s act of listening to ‘the sudden toll of a bell,’ which introduces, ‘by fitful moonlight, an antique turreted mansion’. [[620]](#footnote-620) John and Anna Letitia Aikin’s ‘Sir Bertrand’[[621]](#footnote-621) is a specimen of terror literature more akin to John Aikin’s views, because its eeriness facilitates the fear of the unknown, especially when Sir Bertrand hears the ‘deep sullen toll’ that terrifies him and renders him ‘motionless’.[[622]](#footnote-622) This fragment is particularly important in that it almost certainly infiltrated, as I will claim in the next section, Wordsworth’s *Vale of Esthwaite*. The ‘hideous spectacle of mortality’ that so horrifies the robber, as well as the sound of the toll in Aikin’s story, echoes Burke’s repugnance to the French Revolution. In ‘Sir Bertrand’, too, we find the sonorous foretelling of a Gothic presence: ‘[h]e had not long continued in that posture, when the sullen toll of a distant bell struck his ears he started up; and, turning toward the found, discerned a dim twinkling light. Instantly he seized his horse's bridle, and with cautious steps advanced toward it’.[[623]](#footnote-623) This and many other echoes of Aikins’ fragment find their way to Extract XVI of *The Vale of Esthwaite*, particularly in ‘the dungeon episode’. [[624]](#footnote-624) The Gothic mansion is steadily revealed as Sir Bertrand immerses into his eerie adventure of elaborate grisly passages and displaced icy hands further leading him to the lady in the coffin.[[625]](#footnote-625) As in the boat-stealing episode, the sounds of nature amplify the imagination to the point reality becomes too physical:

And while the wild wind raved aloud,   
And each his grim black forehead bow’d,   
And flung his mighty arms around   
That clang’d and met with crashing sound,   
They seemed unto my fear-struck mind   
Gigantic Moors in battle join’d;   
While each with hollow-threat’ning tone   
Claimed the hoar castle as his own.   
I started. (141-9)

Here, the mind is ‘struck’ by fear through the ‘crashing sound’. The word ‘struck’ refers to an intensely invasive and physical quality of sound that strikes the mind with its ‘crashing’ force and disturbs it.

In a sense, it seems that sounds of fear forcefully touch the mind and make it more imaginatively alert, but this happens only at the moment of disintegrating meaning. The acoustics of fear turn into presence at the time of what Lefèbvre calls ‘passing through a *crisis*’[[626]](#footnote-626) (Lefèbvre’s italics) exemplified by the ‘fear-struck mind’ of the speaker and the start of the body as a psychophysical effect of fear. In the Gothic surroundings of the owl scream and the roaring wind, which disturb the smooth eurhythmia of sounds like the angels’ song near the lake, the turrets of the mansion turn into ‘Gigantic Moors in battle join’d’ amidst the imaginary ‘hollow-threat’ning tone’ of battle. In the passage, the speaker feels ‘the rhythmic changes that follow revolutions’[[627]](#footnote-627) and the play of rhythm in the speaker’s surroundings turn into a tangible audible presence, ‘a creation’ that happens when fear takes hold. The struggle to contain the discord of dysrhythmia in the narrative is subtly evident by the carefully constructed rhyme of the passage, which makes clear how language works for Wordsworth as another means by which he is trying to control and contain fearful sensations.

However, the abruptness of ‘I started’ toward the end shows exactly how precarious and out of control the dysrhythmia of fear can be. Here we can see a significant difference between Wordsworth and Blake in their respective representation of Gothic spaces and dysrhythmia. Wordsworth desperately tries to re-gain control over chaos and the Gothic bodies that issue forth, whereas Blake embraces Gothic sound and reveals the sound’s ghastly connection to Gothic bodies in his descriptions of the ‘deep thunder’ (p. 221) in *The French Revolution* and the incessant war trumpets in *Jerusalem*. For Wordsworth, too, listening can trigger the interaction of the listener with Gothic bodies of fear. The start of the body re-appears after the act of listening once again a little further down the narrative (Extract XVII from MS 5), when ‘aghast / Listening to the hollow-howling blast / I started back’ at the moment ‘at my hand / A tall thin Spectre seemed to stand’ (XVII, 1-4). The alliteration/adjective ‘hollow-howling’ is carefully placed here to foreground even more the fear-inducing auditory background upon which the spectre appears and which causes the speaker to start. The power of sound is at the centre of the speaker’s experience:

The Spectre made a solemn stand

Slow round my head thrice waved his [hand]

And cleaved mine ears then swept his [lyre]

That shriek’d terrific shrill an[d] [dire]

Shudder’d the fiend. The vault a[lo]ng

Echoed the loud and dismal song.

‘Twas done. (244-50)

The act of the lyre’s singing sharply contrasts with earlier accounts of the birds’ songs and produces the Dunmail Raise spectre’s ‘terrific shrill’ sound that disturbs the hearer. At this moment of transference[[628]](#footnote-628) between the minstrel’s fear (‘Nor dares revert his eyes for fear’ [60]) and the internalised fear of the speaker, there is a profusion of imagery recording the reaction to ‘the dismal sound’ (59) that scares the minstrel. The body of the speaker reacts to ‘Deep murmurings’ that ‘creep upon my ear’ (XVI, 18), thus intruding the frightened body and conditioning its perception. More specifically, the sound acquires a very physical quality when it threateningly creeps ‘upon my ear’, thus making the effect of sound much more tangible. However, well into the poem Wordsworth makes it even more clear that his poetic musings are a product of imagination. ‘[F]ancy’ seems to be ‘shot from wondrous dream to dream’ (66), and to temper, in the form of the dream-like state, the ghastliness of ‘brooding Superstition’ (27). However, while it is self-consciously acknowledged that imagination is the generator of these visions, imagination is also the primary force that conditions them, and that brings Wordsworth closer to the Gothic sublime. As Jack Vespa contends, the ‘ironic distance for which Wordsworth strives is only imperfectly achieved, but seems to be deliberate’, provoked, for instance, by sounds of pebbles gliding down the mountain, as well as sounds of birds and animals.[[629]](#footnote-629)

In the process of listening, Wordsworth refers to the process of sense-making itself, where ‘the sound of sense is how it refers back to *itself* or how it *sends back to itself* […] or *addresses itself*, and thus how it makes sense’ (emphasis in original).[[630]](#footnote-630) In this sense, Wordsworth echoes and contests Jean-Luc Nancy’s views on listening and presence. In contrast to the eye and ‘visual presence’, Nancy contends, ‘sonorous presence’ is something that ‘entails an *attack*’, by which ‘the human body’ cannot but receive,[[631]](#footnote-631) because it happens at the same moment of the subject’s presence, and cannot be stopped consciously, much like the creeping of the sound upon the ear that we saw earlier. In other words, sound and listening make the subject more self-conscious because of the very act of listening, of a sonorous interaction that entails ‘a call to that same self’.[[632]](#footnote-632) However, Wordsworth’s case shows something different than the passive receptivity of the body. Instead of simply listening or passively receiving sound’s attack, the poet actively engages his body in sonic interaction, in which he also participates, in order to generate meaning. In Wordsworth’s poem, resounding the ‘the mighty Lyre / Of Nature’ generates a ‘Hell-rousing sound’ (170-1) whose song paralyses the poet’s soul ‘with fear’, and bids him ‘le[ap] / Down, headlong down the hideous steep’ (174-6). This confrontation with death, pain, and nothingness is what Mishra sees as ‘the always recurring/repeating presence that threatens the subject but to which it compulsively returns’,[[633]](#footnote-633) and which is a fundamental attribute of the Gothic sublime. At the heart of the Gothic sublime, like in Wordsworth’s immersion into the pervasive power of sound that opens the secrets of the night, is ‘the tremendum, the terror, which in Kant was a compensatory offer made to the Imagination by Reason to capture for a moment the indeterminate, frenzied, moment of the sublime’.[[634]](#footnote-634)

The Gothic sublime, in Mishra’s view, is the encounter with a ‘dreadful Other’, when there is ‘no room for the transformation of the dread into a moral allegory’, and we ‘cannot return to the security of Reason’, as Wordsworth desperately tries to do after the physical dread of the Carousel episode in *The Prelude*.[[635]](#footnote-635) I will return to *The Prelude* in the next section, but it is helpful to observe at this point that the sublime rises as a symptom, by which we access, in transit, a dread that only exists precisely in the process of experiencing it, in our listening to it. This dread is not manifest in the way ‘the meanest flower’ can pass down ‘Thoughts’ of transcendence that ‘do often lie too deep for tears’ (203-4), as in *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* (1807).[[636]](#footnote-636) Nor does it come in the form of the quasi-religious, prophetic presence of the Leech-gatherer in Wordsworth’s later ‘Resolution and Independence’ (1807),[[637]](#footnote-637) introduced as if to calm down fears of nothingness in the poet’s mind. The glimpse of the symptom comes only through the senses and listening breaks barriers by allowing for places of transition, which are only ephemeral and short-lived. In the Gothic sublime, there is a mixture of pleasure and pain very similar to the one outlined in Burke’s *Enquiry*, but, as we also see in Burke and in Wordsworth, it is always lived at a distance.

In the Fragment of the *Gothic Tale*, the dysrhythmic sound of the Gothic pervades the narrative from the very beginning. The poem is about a young man who is thinking about killing the old sailor who depends on him because he is blind, and whom he leads through a dark passage. Hollow Gothic sounds enter the narrative to indicate the adversities of the weather as the two men walk their way into a safe space through whirling winds which eventually progress into ‘a demon’s call’, a ‘fiercer blast’ that forms into a tempest. The centrality of sound in the experience of the two wanderers is even more foregrounded through the blindness of the old man, who could not see but could hear the ‘bolt of terror’ that made him shudder to his core. The stillness of the sound in the dungeon provides another contrast to the thunder outside; as the young man and the old sailor immerse themselves deeper into the dungeon, every sound from outside is blocked and the sailor refers to the warmth that he feels, the irony of which is even more transparent because of the ‘bloody purpose’ of the young man, portended by the ‘moaning gust’ and the ‘momentary dread’ that impacted the his senses because of the darkness.

The phantom that appears in the middle of the narrative embodies the whole import of the poem, as the ‘black Appearance’ is a manifestation of the young man’s demons. The ‘hand’ of the phantom appears when the young man is standing over the sleeping body of the sailor. However, it disappears within an instant, as, at the moment the ‘hand of fleshy hue’ (160) is revealed deep in the dungeon of the castle, the ‘grim shape’ vanishes (163-4). Similarly, when the sailor begins ‘to lift his murderous aim’ at his friend’s grave, ‘a sound / Of uncouth horror’ shakes the vault and wakes him from his dream (210-16). If pressed too closely, this traumatic trace will dissolve a very important illusion that it simultaneously sustains because of its too frightful nature: in Zizek’s words, the ‘overlooked, unconscious illusion’ is the structuring principle of ‘our real, effective relationship to reality’, and ‘what may be called the *ideological fantasy*’,[[638]](#footnote-638) as in the case of ‘the Romantic sublime’. For Mishra, Wordsworth engages with the Romantic sublime, since the delight in the experience of sublimation surpasses and extenuates the pain.[[639]](#footnote-639)The pain, in other words, should not be too overpowering, something that Wordsworth continuously strives to achieve in his poetry. In Wordsworth’s Fragment, the story of what happens remains untold, and the shapes of horror are consigned to the possibility of a dream, ‘sights that obey the dead or phantoms of a dream’. According to Mishra, ‘at precisely the moment the murder of the father figure is about to take place, Wordsworth stops abruptly’.[[640]](#footnote-640) In Blake, on the other hand, pain and fear exceed the limits of the human body and elicit horror when the reader (and the viewer of Blake’s art) encounters abject Gothic bodies whose horror is at full display. Bodies in Blake are being dissected, whereas Coleridge and Wordsworth recoil from spectacles like these (such as Coleridge’s review of *The Monk*). Bruhm very correctly remarks that Wordsworth

is looking for a way to contemplate bodies that are no bodies, sorrows that are not painful. He is trying to find here a way of imagining pain that is a delight in the Burkean sense – an absent pain, a corporeal horror transformed by the discipline of fear. And this transformation [is] one that negotiates sublime and edifying terrors without exploiting Gothic horrors.[[641]](#footnote-641)

However, while Bruhm’s comment is in line with my own exploration of fear’s pedagogy, he concentrates less on fear, viewing it merely as a path to explore how pain is contemplated. I am going to place much more emphasis on how affective the Gothic sound of fear is in Wordsworth’s meaning making. Uninvited as they are, the sounds of fear, confronted by Wordsworth both in his early poetry and his later one, are present. More than that, Gregory Dart connects Wordsworth’s early ‘accumulated experiences of natural sublimity’ with his later ‘revolutionary enthusiasm’ and a cause that transcends the human.[[642]](#footnote-642) However, alongside what Hicham Ali Belleili sees as Wordsworth’s storage of ‘[a]uditory experiences’ that would later be recollected as harmoniously transcendental,[[643]](#footnote-643) there is also the underlying influence of Gothic sound that threatens to break the harmony. Connecting with Gothic sound happens primarily through glimpses in Wordsworth’s search for meaning, a moment of listening that inaugurates presence, like the ‘death-bell’ (5) presaging the presence of Death in Wordsworth’s ‘Death a Dirge’ (1788).[[644]](#footnote-644)

The political possibilities of the Gothic sound’s dark world is only accessible to Wordsworth in flashes, visions that offer a more than conjectural account of human suffering, like ‘the yell / Of every Briton’ who ‘fell / When Edmund deaf to horror’s eyes / Trod out the cruel Brother’s eyes’ (262-264) in *The Vale of Esthwaite*. In *The Vale of Esthwaite*, there is a level of abstraction when Wordsworth describes the response to human suffering, however, one, like Pity, that, as James H. Averill argues, ‘becomes a self-defining, if ill-defined’ and ‘autonomous’. By the end of Pity’s description, imagery turns the outside into the inside, as Wordsworth refers to ‘The laughing landscape of the breast’ as ‘dead’ (146-7).[[645]](#footnote-645) By the end of *The Vale of Esthwaite*, the ‘forms of fear’ (p. 367) fade away, and a mellower tone remains, reinforced by the alleviating figure of Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy as representing ‘all my soul would wish from Heav’n’ (385). Nevertheless, the trace of the Gothic sublime lingers in the psychosomatic reactions to Gothic sound that we see scattered throughout the narrative.[[646]](#footnote-646) As in Blake’s poems and the Gothic sublimity that Colebrook sees destroying rationality through horror bodies, in Wordsworth’s poem we can hear / see shrieking, shuddering (see the shuddering of the Spectre before the speaker’s eyes), bodies ‘mad with fear’ (261), ‘wild affright’ (149), ‘trembling’ and ‘murmuring’ (229-30), like the ‘blind man’ that ‘shuddered to life’s inmost source’ when in his mind ‘the flash’ of thunder produces ‘sudden apparition’ (94-6) in the Fragment of the *Gothic Tale*. As in eighteenth-century Gothic novels, there is in *The Vale of Esthwaite* the ‘idea of sound being capable of infiltrating the body and producing a negative reaction’.[[647]](#footnote-647) This reaction to the Gothic sublime of Wordsworth’s stimuli turns into something more tangible, even if what is left behind is only traces, and a more peaceful, yet melancholy sensation when it passes away, as in the case of Wordsworth’s reaction to the effects of the French Revolution and the Gothic bodies that would come to haunt him.

By 1792, Wordsworth would return to France,[[648]](#footnote-648) and his personal as well as political affinities would certainly be intensified after his acquaintance with Annette Vallon, with whom he would later have a daughter, Caroline.[[649]](#footnote-649) In France, he could see first-hand the revolutionary power building up, and for poet with ‘a sense of radical humanity’,[[650]](#footnote-650) the chaos of the city reflected the atmosphere of change:

I saw the revolutionary power

Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;

The Arcades I traversed in the Palace huge

Of Orleans, coasted round and round the line

Of tavern, brothel, gaming-house, and shop,

[…]

I stared and listened with a stranger’s ears,

To hawkers and haranguers, hubbub wild,

And hissing factionists with ardent eyes. (*The Prelude*, 1805, IX, 50-4, 57-9)

This is one of the many instances of contact Wordsworth had with the chaotic tumult of revolutionary cities like Paris and Orléans and announces Wordsworth’s search for meaning in the possibility of chaotic nothingness, trying to listen ‘with a stranger’s ears’ to the ‘hubbub wild’ that prevailed. The alliteration in the last two lines, which introduce ‘hawkers’ and ‘haranguers’, as well as the ‘hubbub’ that echoes through the city, mirrors precisely the rhythmic ‘pulsation’ in poetry that Blair analyses, in which case the poem actively assumes the role of the living body and uses the sound created by the rhythms to generate meaning.[[651]](#footnote-651) Using rhythmic sounds to create meaning is key in a poet that tries to interpret everything that is happening around him. There is a mixture of hope and pain in the whole *Prelude*, and the more personal response to human suffering started in the early 1790s, together with Wordsworth’s gradual descent into a feeling of meaninglessness ‘when war was declared on France’.[[652]](#footnote-652)Intimations of fear, however, will help him connect to a renewed sense of self, which is rather more tempered and informed, and *The Prelude*, as Dart observes, in its confessional ‘autobiographical mode’ enabled him to balance different representations of the ‘revolutionary legacy’ of the 1790s as simultaneously condemnable and as ‘paradigm’ for ‘self-consciousness’.[[653]](#footnote-653) In the way that Coleridge encourages fear when he encounters the Spectres as recorded in his *Notebooks*, Wordsworth finds in the sublimity of nature a proper outlet for the revolutionary turmoil that prevailed and enhanced his sensibilities. ‘By autumn 1792’, Nicholas Roe says, ‘when he was working on ‘Descriptive Sketches’, Wordsworth was certainly familiar with Paine’s idea of Revolution as ‘a renovation of the natural order of things’,[[654]](#footnote-654) and he saw in all a visionary possibility of change. I am now going to turn to the way the sound of fear is negotiated during the Revolutionary years, by focusing on *The* *Prelude* (1805).

**4.3. Re-sounding Fear: Wordsworth’s Gothic Sound and *The Prelude***

On May 17th, 1792, Wordsworth writes to William Matthews from Blois, France:

The *horrors* excited by the relation of the events consequent upon the commencement of hostilities is general. Not but that there are men who felt a gloomy satisfaction from a measure which seemed to put the patriot army out of a possibility of success. An ignominious flight, the massacre of their general, a dance performed with savage joy round his burning body, the murder of six prisoners, are events which would have arrested the attention of the reader of the annals of Morocco, or of the most barbarous of savages.[[655]](#footnote-655) (my italics)

Wordsworth begins to grasp the cabbalistic character of intense revolutionary activity.[[656]](#footnote-656) This is Wordsworth’s second crossing to France, for reasons both personal and political, which mostly appertain to Wordsworth’s fear of a possible career as a curate,[[657]](#footnote-657) and the desire to participate more actively in the French experience. At the time he and Jones crossed the channel, events were already boiling up, and by 1792 ‘the Tuileries were invaded, the monarchy suspended, the King arrested, and the National Assembly dissolved into a National Convention’.[[658]](#footnote-658) The Reign of Terror was quite steadily ascending, and a ‘fear-incensed mob of Paris’ responded to ‘an army of émigré princes’ who crossed the eastern border at Longwy’ by slaughtering ‘traitorous-looking prisoners for three days’.[[659]](#footnote-659) It is relevant to note that, instead of simply documenting what is happening, Wordsworth’s letter to Matthews strangely echoes Burke’s description of the mob’s cannibalism that we saw in Chapter One. In Burke’s case, we find a similar allusion to primitivism that rather discreetly runs through Wordsworth’s account of the general’s brutal death on his retreat in Lille (upon which was performed ‘a dance […] in savage joy’). In a more blatant manner, Burke expresses his apparent disgust for the ‘nameless, unmanly, and abominable insults’ of the revolutionaries ‘on the bodies of those they slaughter’, even of the bodies of ‘their own’.[[660]](#footnote-660) Seen in this light, the ‘monsters’ that Wordsworth sees as ‘Ephemeral’ in *The* *Prelude* after he witnesses the ‘Lamentable crimes’ and the work / Of massacre’ (X. 31-33) in Paris and Orléans are not glimpsed but once and then are gone, as he very emphatically recollects having in his mind (rather hoping) the moment he arrived in Paris. Once seen by Wordsworth, the monsters would be there, for all the republican spirit that patriots like Michel-Arnaud Bacharetie de Beaupuy and Henri Gregoire inspired Wordsworth with, especially during the second half of 1792.[[661]](#footnote-661) As I have already mentioned in the Introduction, the ‘monster’ metaphor was widely used to represent the Terror of the French Revolution.[[662]](#footnote-662) In this context, Wordsworth’s dramatic use of ‘Ephemeral monsters’ to describe the ‘necessary’ violence of revolutionary turmoil betrays both Wordsworth’s initial hopes for the revolution and the later realisation that the monsters could *not* ‘only show themselves and die’ (X. 36-7).

By the time Wordsworth returned to England in 1793, war on French terror was spreading fast. Responses to the French Revolution varied, but by the time France had declared war on England the discourse was mostly patriotic, as was, ultimately, Wordsworth’s position, whose conservatism would fully pervade writings like *The Convention of Cintra* (1808). Satires on the fear of French invasion included G. M. Woodward’s ‘Who’s afraid or: the effects of an invasion’ (1796) with faces of aggressive English people clutching their fists and saying things like ‘Let them come to Billinsgate [sic] if they dare, we’ll shew them the spirit of British Fish Women’, or, ‘They had better keep away from our village’.[[663]](#footnote-663)



Fig. 13: George Moutard Woodward, *Who's afraid or: the effects of an invasion* (1796) **©** Bodleian Libraries, Curzon Collection, 2019

Another instance is the portrayal of France as a cartooned monster with black smoke around its head and a guillotine for a hat, and a begging Britannia stands there offering terms of peace in James Gillray’s ‘The genius of France triumphant,--or--:Britannia petitioning for peace. Vide, the proposals of opposition’ (1795).[[664]](#footnote-664)



Fig. 14: James Gillray, *The genius of France triumphant, -- or --: Britannia petitioning for peace. Vide, the proposals of opposition* (1795) **©** Bodleian Libraries, Curzon Collection, 2019

In another sketch, France’s Jacobinism looms like a monstrous snake in the cave, recoiling from the light of truth in Gillray’s ‘A peep into the cave of Jacobinism’ (1798).[[665]](#footnote-665) Similarly, Isaac Cruikshank’s ‘The Modern Leviathan’ (1796) depicts an anthropomorphic monster with human head and beastly bulk wallowing in the ‘ocean of Royal Bounty’.[[666]](#footnote-666)



Fig. 15: James, Gillray, *A peep into the cave of Jacobinism* (1798) **©** Bodleian Libraries, Curzon Collection, 2019



Fig. 16: Isaac Cruikshank, *The modern Leviathan!!* (1796) **©** Bodleian Libraries, Curzon Collection, 2019

Fear of invasion acquired even greater strength after Napoleon’s ascent, but it was gathering force even before the Napoleonic wars. The ‘stormy weather’ that ‘dispersed the French ships’ after their initial landing at Fishguard in 1797 did not stop pamphleteers and political commentators from spreading the fear of a possible second invasion by depicting the French as degenerate and defiling[[667]](#footnote-667), especially in the aftermath of the French invasion threat:

Those wretches are accustomed, whenever they prevail to subject the women to the most brutal violence, which they penetrate with an insulting ferocity of which the wildest savages would be capable. […] Two officers went to a house, in which was a woman in child-bed, attended by her mother, who was upwards of Seventy Years old. The French brutes tied the husband with cords, and in his presence, defiled both the wife and the mother!!![[668]](#footnote-668)

These were usually contrasted with narratives of aristocratic heroism during the Reign of Terror, and Robespierre’s tyranny. Under the title ‘Female Heroism; as evinced during the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution’ (1810), the *Weekly Entertainer* followed a Burkean account of ladies like Mademoiselle Delleglan and Mademoiselle Bois Berenger, who defied danger just to be with their families and/or help those in need.[[669]](#footnote-669) English patriotism was considerably reinforced after such accounts of French brutality, and the fear of French invasion turned to the importance of inspiring terror. The poem ‘On His Majesty’s Ship Britannia’ (1804), published in *The Anti-Gallican* (1804) is indicative of the way ‘Britannia’ was called to ‘reign, / The pride and terror of the main’.[[670]](#footnote-670) The English Constitution and pride that was previously venerated by Burke, the ‘miserable deformed gothic idol’ that Thomas Christie previously referred to in his *Letters on the Revolution in France* (1791)[[671]](#footnote-671) in response to Burke’s awe for antiquated institutions, and that critics like Paine, Wollstonecraft, and Priestley found problematic, was now colouring discourses around the Revolution and its possible effects on England. By 1850, Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* would be republished and considerably altered, with a long passage in Book VII praising Edmund Burke, inserted in the spot where, in the 1805 version, it was empty. For the older Wordsworth, Burke would now be presented as a visionary orator who was right about the French Revolution all along.

At this point, I am not going to focus on the detailed events that led Wordsworth to lose faith in the Revolution and the way in which he perceived it. Critics like Nicolas Roe and Stephen Gill[[672]](#footnote-672) very skilfully contextualise Wordsworth’s responses in the 1790s and later. Instead, I will consider the text as a *result*, a memorandum of expression, in which sounds of fear express themselves to reveal more profoundly Wordsworth’s life-long relationship to fear. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth refers to the ‘unquiet sounds’ that penetrate ‘peaceful houses’ (168) in France, caused by the ‘powers, / Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day’ (181-2) that spread everywhere and are ‘felt through every nook of town and field’ (183). It is almost as if sound escapes the text to reach the reader, much like the way it spreads through the whole country and portends revolution. Feeling and affect, for Wordsworth, were the centre of poetic composition, and sounds are there to convey these and affect the reader’s imagination. Such are the ‘unquiet sounds’ of revolution would turn into the ‘substantial dread’ Wordsworth sees in his isolated moments, the ‘place of fear’ (X. 80), which is the lonely hotel room he would come to occupy during his time in Paris. The whole Book X of *The* *Prelude*,which recounts Wordsworth’s experiences of the French Revolution, centres around this episode of the way fear conditions his perception of the massacres and re-surfaces as another of his spots of time to help him deal with trauma.[[673]](#footnote-673) As such, *The* *Prelude* is much more than an account of Wordsworth’s response to the French Revolution. Rather, as John A. Hodgson argues, the revolution takes place within the poet himself[[674]](#footnote-674) and successively complements his life-long education, especially in the context of contrasting Wordsworth’s natural education, with his experiences of London’s ‘motley imagery’ (151) in Book VII, and Paris’s clamour during the French Revolution. London’s St. Bartholomew episode anticipates the horrors Wordsworth would witness during his trip in France in the early 1790s, exemplifying the times when

[…] half the city shall break out

Full of one passion – vengeance, rage, or fear –

To executions, to a street on fire,

Mobs, riots, or rejoicings?

[…] What a hell

For eyes and ears, what anarchy and din

Barbarian and infernal – ‘tis a dream

Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound. (*1805*, VII, 646-649, 660-663)

This description of London’s public executions[[675]](#footnote-675) and festivals could have very easily belonged to Book X of *The* *Prelude*, where Wordsworth comes closer than ever to the fear of loss that he is so desperately trying to make sense of through the sublime of nature and feeling.[[676]](#footnote-676) Again, dysrhythmic Gothic sound dominates the narrative through the ‘anarchy and din’ that travels through the city and takes hold. The hell that Wordsworth is repulsed by is a hell ‘For eyes and ears’, monstrous not only in sight, but also in sound, and determines his role as a pedestrian that walks through the city of London. Lefèbvre talks about this in his chapter ‘Seen from the window’, and Wordsworth steps into the middle of the street to lend his perceptive ear to the power of the city and its hidden secrets. In fact, Lefèbvre calls this ‘the music of the City,’ which presents ‘a scene that listens to itself’, the perception of which ‘requires equally attentive eyes and ears, a head and a memory and a heart’.[[677]](#footnote-677) As a rhythmanalyst, Wordsworth is receptive to the sound of the city and what it can reveal.

The reference to ‘executions’ and ‘a street on fire’ in the middle of hellish sound speaks to what Lefèbvre calls ‘[s]treams’ of rhythm that ‘break off’, inviting or repulsing pedestrians to the spectacle that takes place.[[678]](#footnote-678) In Wordsworth’s case, this spectacle of fear that generates the streams is replete with socio-political ideas on fear and the human. Appalled by public executions, for example, both Wordsworth and Coleridge showed in their poetry the fear of imprisonment and public death. Both Wordsworth’s ‘The Convict’ (1796) and Coleridge’s ‘The Dungeon’ (1798) are typical examples of how they responded. In prison, the convict’s ‘bones are consumed, and his life-blood is dried’,[[679]](#footnote-679) much in the same way as Blake’s *The French Revolution* (1791) and Lord Byron’s *The Prisoner of Chillon* (1816). Influenced by William Godwin’s ‘views on crime and punishment’, expounded in the *Political Justice* (1793), Wordsworth was fully aware of debates around ‘penal reform that followed the 1774 Parliamentary Commission into Gaols and the publication of John Howard’s *State of the Prisons* in 1777’. [[680]](#footnote-680) Wordsworth showed concern about many penal practices. Wordsworth was concerned, as Quentin Bailey argues, ‘with the inability of the penal system to provide an adequate response to the suffering and remorse of convicted criminals.’[[681]](#footnote-681). The wasting away of the prisoner in ‘The Convict’ and the inability of society to render him active and find a place for him is told by the resounding walls that enclose this ‘outcast of pity’ (9-12). We see that Wordsworth strangely echoes the utilitarian mentality of philosophers like Voltaire who believed that making a criminal work is much more beneficial.[[682]](#footnote-682) Following his humanitarianism, therefore, it is highly significant that fear of torture and incarceration were among the first revolutionary principles imbibed

by Wordsworth and which were addressed by the French Revolution at its early stages. The storming of the Bastille was hailed universally, and reports like the ones in Helen Maria Williams’s *Letters* offered eyewitness accounts of revolutionary activities in France, and reported the way sound played a paramount role in exciting the feelings of the people:

[…] [w]hat completed the effect was, when the sound of a loud and heavy bell mixed itself with this awful concert, in imitation of the alarm-bell, which, the day before the taking of the Bastille, was rung in every church and convent in Paris, and which, it is said, produced a confusion of sounds inexpressibly horrible. At this moment the audience appeared to breathe with difficulty; every heart seemed frozen with terror; till at length the bell ceased, the music changed its tone, and another recitative announced the entire defeat of the enemy.[[683]](#footnote-683)

To Williams’s ears and to the readership of her *Letters*, the bell produces a heavy ‘confusion of sounds’ with a terrible effect that chills the hearers and echoes the ‘loud bell’ in her ‘The Bastille, A Vision’ (1790) whose ‘Shrill’ (V) creeps into the prison. A similarly chilling effect is seen emanating from ringing bells in the works of Baillie, Bannerman, Aikin, Coleridge, and Mary Robinson’s *Golfre, A Gothic Swiss Tale* (*Lyrical Tales*, 1800), and foregrounds the introduction of ghosts and other Gothic elements. Similarly, Williams uses the Gothic sound of the bell to represent the sinister feeling of fear in her narrative. These are examples which show that Gothic sound is utilised in these poems in a very physical way that portends the actual physical presence of a Gothic body, as in Wordsworth’s being haunted by the trauma of the way the French Revolution had turned into massacre and the Gothic bodies of fear it produced.

The sound of fear just before the storming of the Bastille in Williams’s account is quickly replaced by a ‘music’ different in tone, which signified ‘the entire defeat of the enemy’. Revolution, sensation and feeling again predominate, and serve to solidify the belief in the French cause, of which Williams, as well as Wordsworth up until his repeated visit to France, were avid proponents.[[684]](#footnote-684) *The Critical Review* even remarked that ‘miss H. M. Williams seems to be a little too fond of revolutions’,[[685]](#footnote-685) and her *Letters* were variously received as confirmation of radicalism and cautiousness by the most sceptical, despite her animated descriptions of French events in the early 1790s. Nevertheless, Williams’s friend Anna Seward, herself a poet later repulsed by the Terror in France, warned early on of the revolution’s course, as ‘its dangers’ seemed to be ‘imminent’.[[686]](#footnote-686) Even Williams would affirm, during the Reign of Terror, that ‘these horrors must stain the page of revolution for ever’, and the ‘bloody characters [...] remain indelible on the wall’.[[687]](#footnote-687) However, despite the horror that the Revolution would inspire, Williams’s *Letters* remind us that Wordsworth himself moved along the same lines in speaking against injustice, and condemn tortuous imprisonment. Indeed, Wordsworth’s treatment of prisoners, vagrants, outlaws, soldiers, and criminals in poetry overtly confronts the people ‘that the Pitt administration targeted in the 1790s’ and the fear that pervaded government policy.[[688]](#footnote-688) His *Salisbury Plain* (1793-4) poetry is a very powerful account of what happens to war survivors, and the personal terrors they endure. Dorothy Wordsworth’s Tuesday 22nd, 1801 entry is one of many reports on their encounter with war beggars, and the awful conditions they were obliged to live in:

As we came up the White Moss, we met an old man, who I saw was a beggar by his two bags hanging over his shoulder; but, from half laziness, half indifference, and wanting to *try* him, if he would speak, I let him pass. He said nothing, and my heart smote me. I turned back, and said, "You are begging?" "Ay," says he. I gave him something. William, judging from his appearance, joined in, "I suppose you were a sailor?" "Ay," he replied, "I have been 57 years at sea, 12 of them on board a man-of-war under Sir Hugh Palmer." "Why have you not a pension?" "I have no pension, but I could have got into Greenwich hospital, but all my officers are dead.[[689]](#footnote-689)

In this entry, the beggar’s silence prompts Dorothy to address him when her heart felt smitten by the sound of silence. In his poetry of the 1790s, Wordsworth also openly addresses the unnecessary terror that situations of war and imprisonment always employed to regulate its inmates, which reflected the terror institutions in general were aiming to inspire, despite Enlightenment efforts to ameliorate ‘the terrified condition in which humanity found itself’[[690]](#footnote-690), from fear of God to fear of invasion. Wordsworth lived within this culture of fear that followed the storming of the Bastille and reflected personal and political anxieties in the way Gothic bodies interact in his poetry through the acoustics of fear.

On a personal level, fear has always pervaded Wordsworth’s life. Nurtured by the ‘impressive discipline of fear’ (*1799*, Book II, 433) during natural childhood experiences like the boat-stealing fright from the cliff rearing its awful head up west of Ullswater, the ‘Drowned Man’ episode in Esthwaite lake, or even his parents’ death, Wordsworth fostered a sense of sublime fear that awed him and helped him cope with personal anxieties. Seen in this light, Wordsworth’s is not an easy task, especially in lieu of the ‘fear and awe’ that may ‘fall upon us often when we look / Into our minds, into the mind of Man, / My haunt, and the main region of my song’ (987-90) in ‘Home at Grasmere’ (1889) and in *The Prelude*.[[691]](#footnote-691) However, at times, what Jerrold E. Hogle calls the ‘*frission*’, the Gothic symptom breaks in, like Frankenstein’s monster, and disturbs Romantic transcendence. Taking Wordsworth’s poem ‘The Thorn’ (*Lyrical Ballads* 1793) as an example, Hogle draws attention to the ‘conflicting ideological voices’ in poems like this, and the threshold they resist crossing between life and death. The Gothic abject, like the ‘poor infant’s blood’ that is said to tint the moss Martha Ray daily visits (222),[[692]](#footnote-692) reveals a ‘massive ideological irresolution in thought and culture that imaginative unities strive to overcome’, and which we ‘cannot actually bear to face’ even during periods of ‘violence and disruption’, like the trembling of the body politic.[[693]](#footnote-693) This is probably why, according to Hodgson, the ‘suppression or deemphasis of Wordsworth’s revolutionary experience […] was a feature of *The Prelude* from the very first’, the address to which did not take place prior to March 1804.[[694]](#footnote-694)

The burlesque festival scenery that Wordsworth sketches in Book VII abounds with psychophysical images of sound and fear, and subtly connects the monstrous clatter of the deadly metropolis with Wordsworth’s disturbing stroll around the ‘Carousel’ square in Book X, to which I will now turn. Indeed, the ‘hurdy-gurdy’ (674) of the London scene with the drums, the trumpets, the motley groups of people ‘with buffoons against buffoons / Grimacing, writhing, screaming’ (672-3), the ‘albinos, painted Indians, dwarfs’ (681), and ‘All freaks of Nature’ (689) that make up ‘This parliament of monsters’ (692), oddly anticipate James Gillray’s ‘Promis’d horrors of the French Invasion, -- or --: forcible reasons for negotiating a regicide peace’ (1796).



Fig. 17: James Gillray, *Promis’d horrors of the French invasion, -- or --: forcible reasons for negotiating a regicide peace* (1796) ©Bodleian Libraries, Curzon Collection, 2019

In his caricature, Gillray artfully satirises the chaotic atmosphere of a city in fear of French invasion by way of frenzied, fearful faces ironically placed among liberty signs and a bill of rights thrown as wastepaper.[[695]](#footnote-695) In the background and the foreground of what seems to be a freakish death parade, the human heads that loom around are something more than mere decoration. By the time the National Assembly declared war on England, Wordsworth had already caught glimpses of atrocities like the September massacres, which he carefully dismissed as things past, but which continued to haunt him, like the ‘ephemeral monsters’ discussed before:

To Paris I returned. Again I ranged,

More eagerly than I had done before,

Through the wide city, and in progress passed

The prison where the unhappy monarch lay,

Associate with his children and his wife

In bondage, and the palace, lately stormed

With roar of cannon and a numerous host.

I crossed – a black and empty area then –

The square of Carousel, few weeks back

Heaped up with dead and dying, upon these

And other sights looking as doth a man

Upon a volume whose contents he knows

Are memorable but from him locked up,

Being written in a tongue he cannot read. (*1805*, X, 39-52)

Letting aside the element of implicit sympathy and nostalgia inspired by the place where ‘the unhappy monarch lay’ with his family ‘In bondage’, the Carousel episode is important in discussions of the symptom in Wordsworth’s encounter with fear, because by the moment he passes by the spot, the pile of dead bodies is not there. All that remains is silence and his memory of these bodies, written in a language Wordsworth cannot decipher. The ‘black and empty area’ is now free from the actual dead bodies of the massacre, but the memory of them keeps the ‘roar’ of war as Gothic sound alive.

The effects of Wordsworth’s fear for the French Revolution, as well as the fear for himself and his own country, start to kick in as he contemplates the ‘black and empty area’ in the middle of the square where the bodies used to lie. The words ‘black’ and ‘empty’, of course, would primarily allude to the physical absence of the dead bodies that strikes the eye with a blank. However, it is strategically preceded by a reference to the ‘roar of cannon’ that resounded when the prison was stormed and followed by the analogy of the scene with ‘mute leaves’ which, come what may, shut the voice of communication irrevocably. In this way Wordsworth creates a sonic blankness that is caused by the removal of the bodies, the empty stigma left in the square that speaks louder than words and would later turn into the ‘substantial dread’ that would haunt him in the hotel room, just as the Gothic sounds of *The Vale of Esthwaite* turn the turrets into giants. Deeper down, this ‘fear’, as Roe correctly observes, may also be ‘the emotional charge which gave this moment its enduring power’ by betraying ‘a deeper sense of his own complicity in the killings as a patriot himself’. Even so, the way Wordsworth records the emptiness and silence of the scene illustrates how sound and fear are viable in conveying past feelings and memories.[[696]](#footnote-696) Thinking of the way terrorism has infiltrated the Revolution, Wordsworth sadly portends fearful times to come when he finally ‘on my bed I lay’ (55), and the visions of guilt and death are intensified by his too close experience of the silent dead bodies in the square. So intense is his painful recollection of the Paris massacres that once mere visions gradually appear ready to be ‘felt and touched’, now nothing less than a ‘substantial dread’ (66) that presses on him too closely to be able to escape.[[697]](#footnote-697)

The fantasy of revolutionary change, in Wordsworth’s case, is threatened because the realities of the Revolution are gradually more acknowledged and unmasked. Gothic sound again enters the narrative in the form of the Shakespearean ‘Sleep no more!’ that intrudes his reflections on the massacres and on the rhythmic progression of life, as ‘Day follows day’ and ‘the tide returns again’ (73-4). This voice that Wordsworth hears amidst the silence of his own room echo his state of mind, as words from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* are used to echo Macbeth’s anxiety and guilt. The words also materialise Gothic sound in the form of portentous voices. Blake, for example, materialises the Gothic sublime in his poetry by foregrounding exactly this multitude of voices. According to Clair Colebrook, in Blake, ‘sometimes a voice is a part of the self; sometimes it is the self’s double’, and so on.[[698]](#footnote-698) Blake employs the many voices to dissolve the central voice of reason and regularity and reflect the chaos of existence. In Wordsworth too, albeit in a more benign way, we can see the coexistence of voices that co-exist in their contradiction. This alone constitutes something more than an eighteenth-century Gothic novel device. The sound seems to come from both the inside and outside, thus upsetting what Archambault calls the ‘physical equilibrium’ the ear strives to achieve. Rather than securing ‘our stability and limit[ing] the range of our boundaries’, therefore, Gothic sound enters the ear and violates boundaries.[[699]](#footnote-699) As Žižek claims when he talks about the ‘notion of social fantasy’, ‘*fantasy is a means for an ideology to take its own failure into account in advance*’ (emphasis in original),[[700]](#footnote-700) and Wordsworth is in danger of unmasking the terrorism that lies behind the ideology of the French Revolution. ‘The fear gone by’, Wordsworth writes, ‘Pressed on me almost like a fear to come’ (62-3), and the silence of the dead bodies wiped out of the Carousel square testifies to the way Wordsworth tries to transfer into the future (‘fear to come’) the feeling of dread that the dead bodies have left on the spot. The phrase ‘Pressed on me’ suggests a kind of physical pressure that again intrudes the body and displays the intrusion of the Gothic sublime, just as Geraldine threatens to ‘absorb’ Christabel in Coleridge’s poem.[[701]](#footnote-701) Fear, in this case, acquires physical existence through its impact on the body. However, the next day comes in Wordsworth’s poem to dissipate fear, or at least suppress it. The spot in the square is still clear, but Wordsworth struggles to believe that, despite human atrocities, there is ‘One nature as there is one sun in heaven’ (141). The phrase ‘substantial dread’ is alarmingly absent from the 1850 version of The Prelude, and the feeling of meaninglessness is transcended one more time.[[702]](#footnote-702) A few years later, Wordsworth would tranquilly employ Gothic tropes for his play The Borderers (1796-7), which relies more on the ‘revolution in human imagination’.[[703]](#footnote-703) More importantly, in his Fenwick Notes Wordsworth explains that the play helps him ‘preserve in my distinct remembrance what I had observed of transition in character & the reflections I had been led to make during the time I was a witness of the changes through which the French Revolution passed’.[[704]](#footnote-704) At the end of The Prelude, the song predominates, and tells Wordsworth’s life-long story of the interaction between the poet and the ‘Vast prospect of the world’ (Book XIII, 379): ‘hence this song, which like a lark / I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens / Singing, and oft with more plaintive voice / Attempered to the sorrows of the earth’ (380-3). Music and sound facilitate this kind of connection, the ‘‘meeting soul’ in music’ that Coleridge saw producing ‘memory’ through ‘the nature of accord’ that ‘struck upon me’, as he felt on a ‘Thursday Night’ visit to opera in 1804. Coleridge’s use of words is highly interesting both because he brings together ‘cord’, ‘accord’, and ‘memory’, but also because he refers to the latter as ‘a phantom’ that emerges through harmonious sound.[[705]](#footnote-705) Throughout The Prelude, Wordsworth has interacted with the Gothic bodies of his memory and imagination through the power of instructive sound, and their proximity and threatening horror has led to Wordsworth’s confrontation with what haunts him, as well as a re-evaluation of his personal and poetic self.

**Conclusion**

**Representations of Fear: An Afterword**

This thesis is by no means exhaustive in its consideration of different kinds of fears and physical imagery in the poetries of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Robinson, Baillie and Bannerman. Rather, these writers are only a few examples of how authors during the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries responded to personal and political anxieties by expressing their conscious and unconscious fears through their writings. Nevertheless, these male and female writers were chosen carefully both because of their first-hand emotional response to a changing modern world and because of the wide varieties and degrees of fears that inhabit their work. The Gothic supplies the space for these explorations. As Punter argues, ‘whereas Blake finds in Gothic a mode of representing the fears of a society, Coleridge is in the end more concerned with finding correlatives for his personal psychological predicament’ by engaging in a more private encounter with personal (and deeply political in many senses) demons.[[706]](#footnote-706) Similarly, Wordsworth, Robinson, Baillie and Bannerman responded to fear in different ways, always in relation to fear’s impact on mind and body, as well as the proximity and nature of that which causes their reaction.

These writers shared an engagement with the Gothic, whether knowingly or not, as a space where they could address their anxieties and face their ghosts, always in the context of self-exploration that extended from the self to the workings of English society during and in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In its ability to change shape and host dark thoughts and anxieties, the Gothic was the perfect medium for expressing affect, as well as the perfect point of reference for this study of fears that change shape and enter the body in awful anticipation of a dreaded threat. Radcliffe’s essay on terror and horror further points to how affective fear is for the mind and the body, as well as how it is welcomed and repulsed by the self because fear is addressing our primal instincts:

The dark watch upon the remote platform, the dreary aspect of the night, the

very expression of the office on guard, ‘the air bites shrewdly; it is very cold;’,

the recollection of a star, an unknown world, are all circumstances which

excite forlorn, melancholy, and solemn feelings, and dispose us to welcome,

with trembling curiosity, the awful being that draws near; and to indulge in

that strange mixture of horror, pity and indignation, produced by the tale it

reveals.[[707]](#footnote-707)

Likewise, the writers discussed in this thesis welcome these mixed feelings at the same time as they feel scared and even repulsed by them. The ‘trembling curiosity’ that Radcliffe mentions echoes the idea of ‘sympathetic curiosity’ developed in Baillie’s *Discourse* but places a much greater stress on the role of ‘trembling’ in triggering the person who experiences fear. Trembling denotes an involuntary motion of the body that makes us feel uncomfortable and out of control as the body is in contact with sources of fear. The Gothic facilitates this interaction and relays its context and meaning through the literary text.

In addition, the Gothic offers a space for seeing the way different manifestations of fear reveal a lot about the writers’ different ways of perceiving and experiencing the world. As Eric Parisot observes, the ‘chief distinction’ between terror and horror lies ‘in the *perception* of a fearful object, rather than the object itself.’[[708]](#footnote-708) Shifting focus onto personal perception and fear, whether in forms of terror or horror, reveals the workings of the inner self and the different psychological conditions the writers under consideration in this thesis experienced. Therefore, the Gothic and the underlying fears that inhabit the Gothic force a psychological exploration that has a real impact on addressing past and present traumas that would otherwise remain unchartered.

The Gothic was used and engaged with in a more self-consciously objective fashion by later Romantics, who also responded to the devastating consequences of the French revolution, but who did not experience first-hand the unique reign of fear that prevailed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Being able to view socio-political changes through a more distanced perspective in relation to the French Revolution, writers like Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary Shelley, among others, conversed with the fears registered by early Romantics such as Coleridge, Baillie and Wordsworth, whose influence on poets like Byron and Mary Shelley is well documented. While Gothic fear in all its manifestations was an urgent and immediate reality for the writers under consideration in this thesis, it was steadily transforming to a dark force of history as the nineteenth century progressed.

Representations of fear in the Gothic transform into tokens of aesthetic influence in Shelley’s *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St. Irvyne* (1810), which point to Percy Bysshe Shelley’s early fascination with works by Charlotte Dacre, William Godwin, Matthew Lewis and Ann Radcliffe. Gothic expressions of this kind turn to objects of literary irony in Byron’s ‘Norman Abbey’ cantos of his *Don Juan* (1819-24) with its caustic commentary on the standard if not overused Gothic conventions that titillate the reader through exciting fear. Nevertheless, Byron lists Radcliffe among prominent writers who left their stamp on his young poetic mind. Speaking of Venice, the speaker in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812-8) says that she, ‘to me,’

Was as a fairy city of the heart,   
Rising like water columns from the sea,   
Of joy the sojourn, and of wealth the mart;   
And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art,   
Had stamped her image in me. (IV.154-60)

The fact that Radcliffe features among writers like Shakespeare (whose work is often quoted by Radcliffe herself) and, in turn, is acknowledged in Byron’s work creates a literary continuity that acknowledges how later writers read the Gothic works of their predecessors, finding in these works a space in which to learn more about past thoughts, emotions and anxieties.

Representing fears in the Gothic of the second-generation Romantics also turns into an even more psychological exploration of the self’s place in a post-revolutionary (or post-apocalyptic) world, a primary example of which is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) with its themes of physical horror and haunting. Byron’s ‘Darkness’ (1816) belongs in this trajectory, and, in many ways, the poem’s post-apocalyptic Gothic evokes an existential dread that is, again, different from the apocalyptic horror of Blake’s writings or the fears of Wordsworth’s postrevolutionary poetry. Exploring how fear manifests in the writings of second-generation Romantics justifies another study by itself and cannot be contained within the scope of this thesis. However, the research questions on fears addressed here offer suggestive parallels with their different manifestations in the writings of poets later in the nineteenth century by taking into consideration the different context in which these writers worked and lived.

In this and future research endeavours on fear and the Gothic, it is crucial to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of women writers like Mary Robinson, Joanna Baillie and Anne Bannerman, who interacted with male writers such as Matthew Lewis (for instance, Bannerman’s intellectual rapport with Lewis’s writings), Wordsworth and Coleridge, and whose work formed part of the reading lists by authors writing later in the century. For example, Robinson’s Gothic work was read by Mary Shelley, who also read Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith. Baillie’s work on pathology and the passions was read and admired by Byron, who, as William D. Brewer observes, had ‘a general distaste for literary women’.[[709]](#footnote-709) Even lesser-known writers like Bannerman nevertheless stirred critical response during their time, as evidenced by Ann Seward’s critique of Bannerman’s ‘palpable obscure,’ and makes a rightful addition to the long history of nineteenth-century women Gothic writers.[[710]](#footnote-710) Bannerman goes further to portray the interaction of horror bodies in a manner that is in many ways radical, therefore more critical attention to her work would reveal even more the intricate Gothic expressions of her poetry. It is surprising that there is only one edition of Bannerman’s *Tales* that goes as far back as its date of publication (1802), and I hope research on Bannerman will trigger a new edition and a greater emphasis on the role of affect in the writings of these female authors.

Further research on the role of affect in shaping the political ideology of the early nineteenth century will also open doors for examining the carefully orchestrated mechanism behind the reign of terror that gradually prevailed during the course of the French Revolution. The centrality of fear as an emotion is reflected in the way political ideologies were shaped and maintained through the power of affect, especially in relation to an external other that threatens the personal and political self. Hopefully, my research on how these writers responded to and used these very physical fears for socio-political commentary will trigger further questions on how manifestations of fear work for other writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and what they mean for subsequent generations of writers who lived and worked in different conditions, but who experienced the impact of the past and looked for ways to engage with their own demons.

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76. In the “Terror” section of the *Enquiry*, Burke emphatically claims that “NO passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as *fear*.” Fear, then, is for Burke a primal emotion, with visible effects on mind and body, which can altogether change states of mind, and speak to our primitive need to escape danger through a titillating mixture of fear and wonder. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
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90. Αs Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger claim, there is affinity in Blake’s art and poetry with terror, and their study of Blake’s poetics seeks to ‘recognise aspects of Blake’s art that do in fact productively intersect with the Gothic horror taking shape contemporaneously with Blake’s career’ (p. 1). Budock, Chris and Elizabeth Effinger, ‘Introduction’, in *William Blake’s* *Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror*, ed. by Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 1-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. On this note, I will particularly focus on *Jerusalem*’s physical expressions of the trembling bodies of Jerusalem, the division of bodies geographically placed and symbolic of the anarchic fragmentation of the self. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
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94. Anna Seward, ‘To C. Smith’, *Letters of Anna Seward*,6 vols (Edinburgh, 1811), vol. 3, pp. 389-90, p. 389. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. In a letter to Mary Robinson, written on the 27th of December 1802, Coleridge expresses his utmost wish not to have ‘my own name to be connected with those of Mr. Lewis, or Mr. Moore’ (p. 233): Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, ‘Letter to Miss Robinson’, *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs (London: Constable, 1932), vol. 1, pp. 233-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
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99. Brehrendt, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Baillie, ‘Introductory Discourse’, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
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104. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. See ‘The Chimney Sweeper’ in Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* (1789). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
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107. Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1891) [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
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109. William Blake, ‘To William Hayley (28 May 1804)’, in *The Letters of William Blake*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Carmen S. Kreiter, ‘Evolution and William Blake’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 4.2 (1965), 110-18 (p. 114) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25599637>> [accessed 20 November 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger refer to Blake as ‘a spectral, marginal figure’ (p. 1) in Gothic studies, which has just now started to recognise Blake’s affiliation with Gothic horror. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Edward Young, *Night-Thoughts* (London: Whittingham, 1798) [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Punter, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Interestingly, Blake also illustrated Thomas Gray’s ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ (1751). See Designs 105-115 in the ‘YCBA Collections Online’, *Yale Center for British Art* < <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:3589>> [accessed 1 March 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. According to Allan Cunningham, ‘Blake’s mode of engraving was as peculiar as his style of designing’, and ‘had little of that grace of execution about it which attracts customers’, therefore the job of engraving Blair’s poem was eventually given to the more ‘fashionable’ Schiavonetti (Allan Cunningham, *Lives of British Painters*, in *William Blake: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by G. E. Bentley Jnr (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 170-96 (pp. 182-3)). The difference of Blake’s ‘peculiarity’ of style and voice is what set him apart from more ‘conventional’ art like Schiavonetti’s. Blake’s own symbolic use of the coffin in ‘The Chimney Sweeper’ replaces the religious vision of Blair’s *The Grave* to create a new voice that uses the gloomy imagery of graveyard poetry to actively criticise the exploitations of the Church. This new visionary subjectivity is going to be developed in Blake’s later writings. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Rictor Norton, *Gothic Readings: The First Wave*, 1764-1840 (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Norton, p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Norton, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Barry Murnane, ‘The German ‘School’ of Horrors: A Pharmacology of the Gothic’, in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*, Vol.1, eds. Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 364-81 (pp. 374-5) [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Murnane, p. 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. D. J. Moores, *The Dark Enlightenment: Jung, Romanticism, and the Repressed Other* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Moores, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Maria Beville, *Gothic Postmodernism: Voicing the Terrors of Modernity* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. *The Courier*, 31 October 1818, quoted in Macdonald, David Lorne, *Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Review of Lewis’s *The Monk*’, in *Gothic Readings: The First Wave*, 1764-1840, ed. by Rictor Norton (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 295-8 (p. 297). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Eric Parisot, ‘The Aesthetics of Terror and Horror: A Genealogy’, in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*, Vol. 1, eds. by Angela Wright and Dale Townsend, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ in *New Monthly Magazine*, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Tristanne J. Connolly makes the same observation about Catherine Blake’s painting when he explores the possibility of a child miscarriage in the Blake household. In particular, he says that ‘Catherine may be preserving an otherwise unrecorded loss of her own through creating an image of a similar loss’. Tristanne J. Connolly, *William Blake and the Body* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Matthew Lewis, *The* *Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 316. See fig. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger, *William Blake’s Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror*, ed. by Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018) [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Erin M. Goss, ‘What is Called Corporeal: William Blake and the Question of the Body’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 51.4 (2010) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41468113> [accessed 10 February 2019], 413-30 (p. 415). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Frye, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. In his *Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson points to the need for historicizing narratives, and prioritizing ‘the political interpretation of literary texts’ (p. 17), in light of the necessary ‘recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical’ (p. 20). As Jameson says, the political emerges as ‘the absolute horizon of all meaning and all interpretation’, and not just ‘an optional auxiliary’ to interpretive trends like Lacanian psychoanalysis and literary formalism, among others. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1989) [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Aileen Ward, ‘William Blake and his Circle’, in *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 19-36 (p. 22). Ward places ‘Blake’s political baptism’ in ‘his involvement in the Gordon Riots of June 1780’, in which ‘he voluntarily joined the front ranks of the crowd that marched on Newgate at the climax of the Riots to free five of their leaders and ended by sacking and burning the hated prison itself’ (p. 22), in a move that certainly echoes the large-scale bursting of the Bastille during the French Revolution of the upcoming years. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Ward, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. After reading Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789) in 1826, William Wordsworth remarked that ‘[t]here is no doubt this poor man was mad, but there is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the Sanity of Lord Byron & Walter Scott’, a fact that betrays the luring quality of Blake’s imaginative universe.

     William Wordsworth, REF, cit. S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of Blake* (Hanover: University Press of0 New England, 1988), p. 451. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Letter to Thomas Butts (25 April 1803), in *Letters*, p. 66-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Farrell, *Blake and the Methodists*, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Lucy Cogan, ‘William Blake’s monstrous progeny: anatomy and the birth of horror in The [First] Book of Urizen’, in *William Blake’s Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror*, ed. by Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 129-49 (p. 129). [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Joyce Carol Oates, ‘The Aesthetics of Fear’, *Salmagundi* 120 (1998), pp. 176-85 (p. 182), [www.jstor.org/stable/40549062](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40549062) [accessed 18 June 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Beville, pp. 31-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Nick Groom, ‘Romanticism before 1789’, in *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*, ed. by David Duff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 13-29 (p. 26). In the form of the ballad, Groom says, Percy is ‘restating that ballads were part of the Gothic Whig culture of national progress in which the bardic poet enjoyed a central responsibility’ (p. 26). [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Michael Farrell, *Blake and the Methodists* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Farrell, p. 37-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. In ‘On Homer’s Poetry’, Blake places special stress on the particulars of a work of art, and the way ‘Unity’ resides in them as much as in the whole of the Work (p. 428). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Thora, Brylowe, ‘Of Gothic Architects and Grecian Rods: William Blake, Antiquarianism and the History of Art’, *Romanticism* 18.1 (2012), 89-104 (p. 90-2) https://doi: 10.3366/rom.2012.0066. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. William Richey, ‘The French Revolution: Blake’s Epic Dialogue with Edmund Burke’, *ELH* 59.4 (1992), 817-37 (p. 817) https://doi.org/10.2307/2873296. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. ‘The French Revolution (Composed 1791)’, *The William Blake Archive* <http://www.blakearchive.org/work/bb49> [accessed 5 February 2022]. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Aileen Ward, ‘William Blake and his Circle’, in *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Ward, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. ‘The French Revolution’, in *The William Blake Archive*. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by J. G. A. Pocock (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. A good parallel to Blake’s description of the Bastille’s inside is Helen Maria Williams’s *The Bastille: A Vision* (1790), written about the same time as Blake’s *The French Revolution*. In the poem, Williams recalls the psychology of incarceration through the horrid descriptions of a prisoner’s state of mind, ‘these haunted walls’ (25) echoing the ‘shriek of woe’ (34), and the tales that make ‘thy blood’ frozen (46). Helen Maria Williams, ‘The Bastille: A Vision’, in *Letters Written in France*, ed. by Neil Fraistat and Susan S. Lanser (Ontario: broadview, 2001), pp. 203-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Sarah Cohen Shabot, ‘The Grotesque Body: Fleshing Out the Subject’, in *The Shock of the Other: Situating Alterities*, ed. by Silke Horstkotte and Esther Peeren (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 57-68 (pp. 60-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund, *Grotesque* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. The portrayal of the nation as a body goes far back, and a prominent example of the body as political representation is Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651):

     For by art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State (in Latin, *Civitas*), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body. (p. 7)

     Hobbes even uses the term ‘body politic’ to make the reference. For more, see Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: or, the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (London, 1651) [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Kristeva, p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Kristeva, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. See figures 2, 3 and 4. Romney’s painting echoes Francisco Goya’s ‘Plague Hospital’ (1798-1800). [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Burke, *Reflections*, p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. by Robin Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Blake was commissioned by John Linnell to design in watercolor Dante’s writings, and was therefore much affected by Dante’s textual iconography. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Edwards and Graulund, *Grotesque*, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Review of Lewis’s *The Monk*’, in *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840*, ed. by Rictor Norton (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 295-8 (p. 297). [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies*, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Burke conveniently adorns Cromwell with noble qualities, even though the latter was a central revolutionary figure in the period of the English Revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Burke, *Reflections*, pp. 34, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Adam Smith, *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1838), p. 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Norton’s italics. Qtd. in Norton, *Gothic Readings*, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Burke, *Reflections*, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. This is news that ‘was reported in the *London Journal* for 11 March 1732 as a horror story from ‘Heyducken’, Hungary’ (Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, p. 37). Nick Groom, *The Vampire: A New History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Groom, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Groom, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Groom, pp. 85-7. See, for example, Voltaire’s commentary on vampires in his *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, where he analyses this as a contemporary belief that particularly flourishes during the Enlightenment. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Groom, p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Stephen Saphiro, ‘Transvaal, Transylvania Dracula’s World-system and Gothic Periodicity’ *Gothic Studies* 10.1 (2008), 29-47 (p. 30) doi:10.7227/GS.10.1.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Saphiro, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Peter Day, ‘Introduction’, in *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. by Peter Day (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. ix-xiv (p. x). [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Sibylle Erle, ‘From Vampire to Apollo: William Blake’s Ghosts of the Flea, c. 1819-1820’, in *Beastly Blake*, ed. by Helen P. Bruder and Tristanne Connolly (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 225-52 (pp. 237-8). [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. *The Ghost of a Flea* is part of ‘Visionary Heads’ (1820), a commission by John Varley for the latter’s *Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy* (1828). See fig. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Erle, p. 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Shabot, p. 60, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Erle, p. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Quoted in G. E. Bentley, *The Stranger From Paradise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 377-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. See figures 6 and 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Erle, p. 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Marie Mulvey-Roberts, ‘The vampire of war’, in [*Dangerous bodies: Historicising the Gothic corporeal*](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt18pkdzg?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=the&searchText=vampire&searchText=of&searchText=war&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3Fgroup%3Dnone%26amp%3Bfc%3Doff%26amp%3BQuery%3Dthe%2Bvampire%2Bof%2Bwar%26amp%3Bacc%3Don%26amp%3Bwc%3Don&refreqid=search%3Ab7f92ecee272741c4e813f3c33085a04)(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 179-220 (p. 180). [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. George H. Gilpin, ‘William Blake and the World’s Body of Science’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 43.1 (2004), 35-56 (p. 42), DOI:10.2307/25601658. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Kristeva, p. 3. Interestingly, Kristeva connects the word ‘cadaver’ with the meaning ‘to fall’, which, as we shall see, is particularly pertinent in Blake’s cosmology. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. See fig. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Kristeva, p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Fraistat, Neil, Lanser, Susan Sniader, et. al., ‘Introduction’, in *Letters Written in France, in the Summer 1790, to a Friend in England: Containing Various Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), pp. 9-50 (p. 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Such a reaction from the radical side would include Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man* (1791) and Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), which, Richey contends, were associated with the ‘London publisher Joseph Johnson’, a leftist with whom Blake was, ‘for years’, ‘affiliated with’, and who also ‘planned to print Blake’s poem at some point during 1791, but for unknown reasons failed to do so’ (833). [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Burke, *Reflections*, p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Burke, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Burke, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Edmund Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace: Letters I. And II*. (London: G. Bell, 1893), pp. 70-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Burke, *Reflections*, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Richey sees several affinities between Blake’s *The French Revolution* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and the sublimity with which Satan’s actions are presented, even for a conservative like Burke (p. 825). John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *John Milton: The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 355-618. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Richey, p. 822. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Mark Neocleous, ‘The Monstrous Multitude: Edmund Burke's Political Teratology’, *M. Contemp Polit Theory* 3.1 (2004), 70-88 (p. 75) https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cpt.9300110. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Claire Colebrook, ‘The Gothic Sublime’, in in *William Blake’s Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror*, ed. by Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 85-106 (p. 86). [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Colebrook, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Richey, p. 828. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Letter to Thomas Butts (25 April 1803), in *Letters*, p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Letter to Thomas Butts (10 January 1802), in *Letters*, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Robert Hunt, ‘An Unfortunate Lunatic’, in *Critics on Blake*, *Readings in Literary Criticism*, ed. by Judith O’Neill (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1970), p. 12-3. Original: Hunt, Robert, ‘Mr. Blake’s Exhibition’, an anonymous article in *The Examiner*, no. 90, September 17th, 1809, pp. 605-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Henry Crabb Robinson, in *Critics on Blake*, p. 13. Original: Robinson, Henry Crabb, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. by Thomas Sadler, 3 vols., London, 1869, vol. 1, p. 338. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. The ongoing pressure that such reception and counter-argument exacted took a toll on Blake, as it would do with Keats to a degree far greater than acknowledged; in his 1802 letter to Thomas Butts, Blake referred to his ‘unhappiness’, attributed greatly to the numbing effect of artistic confinement: ‘I find on all hands great objections to my doing any thing but the meer drudgery of business, & intimations that if I do not confine myself to this, I shall not live’ (*Letters* p. 55). [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Letter to James Blake (30 January 1803), in *Letters*, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. See fig. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. As Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant contend, ‘[t]he woman Tirzah is mentioned in Numbers 27:1-11, 36:3, Joshua 17:3-4, and Songs of Solomon 6:4; the city Tirzah was the capital of the Hebrew Northern Kingdom, as opposed to Jerusalem in the South. In *The Four Zoas* VIII, *Milton* 17:11, and *Jerusalem* 67, 68, Tirzah and her cohort Rahab engage in sexual tortures of the male’ (p. 58). Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant, eds, *Blake’s Poetry and Designs* (New York: Norton & Company, 1979) [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Ruth Bienstock Anolik, ‘The Missing Mother: The Meanings of Maternal Absence in the Gothic Mode’, *Modern Language Studies* 33.1/2 (2003) 24-43 (pp. 25-6) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3195306> [Accessed 13 January 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Blake’s ambivalent stance to women has received extensive critical commentary; Betsy Bolton, for example, sees Blake’s potential to ‘unsettle assumptions of female responsibility for humanity’s fall’ in his *Milton*, but she also claims that his view of women’s role in the apocalypse seems to be ‘subordination and self-annihilation’: Betsy Bolton, ‘"A Garment Dipped in Blood": Ololon and Problems of Gender in Blake's "Milton"’, *Studies in Romanticism* 36.1 (1997) 61-101 (p. 82) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25601212> [Accessed 15 February 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. At the beginning of *Jerusalem*, the reader is informed of the centrality of the Spectre as a figure in Blake’s cosmology:

     Each Man is in his  
     Spectre's power  
     Untill the arrival of that hour  
     When his  
     Humanity awake  
     And cast his  
     Spectre into the Lake. (p. 1) [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Connolly, *William Blake and the Body*, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. The same political feeding off the citizen’s body was explored in the previous section in Blake’s *The French Revolution*. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Letter to John Flaxman (21 September 1800), in *Letters*, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. ‘Natural History of the Vampyre Bat’, in *Fictitious History of the Vampyre, The Imperial Magazine* (British Periodicals, 1819), pp. 235-240 (p. 240). The bat is associated with the figure of the vampire, which devours their victims ‘as to cause the blood to flow from all the passages of their bodies, and even from the very pores of their skin’, something that places the creature within the space of monstrosity (p. 237). See fig. 10 for Plate 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, p. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia; or, the Laws of Organic Life* (London: J. Johnson, 1794), p. 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. It is interesting to mention that Blake received a commission to engrave for Darwin’s *Botanical Garden* (1791), and Darwin’s animal and plant imagery was likely a valuable potential source for Blake’s body imagery. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. ‘Burnet’s Word to the Members of the Mechanics Institution’, in *The London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences. etc.* (Los Angeles: The Library of the University of California, 1826), pp. 612-14 (p. 613). [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. See fig. 11. The silk-worm and the ‘underground insect worms’ belong in a similar category and are briefly approached in Darwin’s *Zoonomia* and fully postulated in his subsequent *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms, with Observations on their Habits* (1881). In the former, Darwin observes the transformative powers of the worm, which ‘can reproduce a head, or a tail, when either of them has been cut away’ (p. 490), as well as their hermaphrodite nature (p. 479, 506). [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Connolly, *William Blake and the Body*, p. xii. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Germer, ‘Pleasurable Fear’, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Connolly, *William Blake and the Body*, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Connolly, pp. 34-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Connolly, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Darwin, *Zoonomia*, p. 488. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Darwin, p. 489. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Hisao Ishizuka, ‘Enlightening the Fibre-Woven Body: William Blake and Eighteenth-Century Fibre Medicine’, *Literature and Medicine* 25.1 (2006) 72-92 (p. 72) https://[doi:10.1353/lm.2006.0020](http://doi.org/10.1353/lm.2006.0020). [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. David G. Riede, ‘The Symbolism of the Loins in Blake’s Jerusalem’, *Studies in Literature, 1500-1900*, 21.4 (1981), 547-563 (pp. 550, 553), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/450226> [Accessed 15 January 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. For detailed analyses on reading Blake through the lens of gender studies see Susan Fox’s ‘The Female as Metaphor in William Blake’s poetry’ (1970). Kevin Hutchings also wrote an essay titled ‘Gender, Environment, and Imperialism in William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*’ (2001) which bears relevance to Blake gender and ecology studies. Susan Fox, ‘The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry’, *Critical Inquiry* 3, 3 (1977): 507-19 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1342937> [accessed 17 February 2019].

     Kevin Hutchings, ‘Gender, Environment, and Imperialism in William Blake’s *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*’, *Romanticism and Ecology*, *Romantic Circles* (2001) <https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/ecology/hutchings/hutchings.html> [accessed 19 February 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Dennis M. Welch, ‘Blake and the Web of Interest and Sensibility’, *South Atlantic Review* 71.3 (2006) 29-56(p. 33-4) https://www.jstor.org/stable/20064752 [accessed 19 February 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Welch, pp. 35-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. As Welch notes, ‘in 1776 Smith declared that “Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to only so far as it can be necessary for promoting that of the consumer” (Wealth 2:179)’ (p. 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Welch, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Saree Makdisi, *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Welch, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. For more on fibre discourse, see Charles Bonnet’s *The Contemplation of Nature* (1766) and Albrecht von Haller’s *First Lines of Physiology* (1786). [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Ishizuka, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Darwin, *Zoonomia*, p. 493. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Kristeva drew extensively on Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger* (1966) for her own *Powers of Horror*, and her theory of abjection. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. According to Douglas, ‘Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body’ (p. 121). [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Ishizuka, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Blake also claims that he sees ‘in Wordsworth the Natural Man rising against the Spiritual Man Continually, & then he is No Poet but a Heathen Philosopher’ fighting against true inspiration (*Marginalia* p. 446). [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Connolly, *William Blake and the Body*, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. See Matthew J. A. Green’s *Visionary Materialism in the Early Works of William Blake: The Intersection of Enthusiasm and Empiricism* (2005) for a more comprehensive analysis on William Blake, David Hartley and Joseph Priestley. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. See *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind on the Principle of the Association of Ideas* (1775) in light of the importance of natural objects for Priestley. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty; and his Expectations: Part the Second* (London: J. Johnson, 1801), p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Richard C. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Hartley, *Observations* (part 2), p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. See p. 130 and 316 of Hartley’s *Observations* (part 2). [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Hartley, p. 383. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty; and his Expectations: Part the First* (London: J. Johnson, 1801), p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Hartley, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Hartley, p. 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Connolly, *William Blake and the Body*, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Connolly, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Makdisi, p. 2-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Makdisi, p. 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Tom Boland, Romantic subjectivities: Blake, Wordsworth and the trace of the ‘other’, *Textual Practice*, 23:4 (2009) 559-580 (p. 565) https://doi: 10.1080/09502360903000505. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Darwin, *Zoonomia*, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Blake, William, ‘Annotations to Lavater’s Aphorisms on Man’, p. 592. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Ishizuka, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. For a more detailed analysis of Blake’s conception to the Divine Body see Anne K. Mellor, *Blake’s Human Form Divine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. See Ishizuka, pp. 85-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Bolton, ‘"A Garment Dipped in Blood": Ololon and Problems of Gender in Blake's "Milton"’, p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Concept of History’, in *Selected Writings Volume 4: 1938-1940*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 389-400 (p. 395). [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Davy’s fascination of the body was coupled by his views on the body’s inevitable perishing. Of the ‘wealth and prosperity of the country’ he says that they are only the *comeliness* of the body, the fullness of the flesh and fat; but the spirit is independent of them’ (p. 150). [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Humphry Davy, ‘Memoirs of the Life of Sir Humphry Davy’, in *The Collected Works of Sir Humphry Davy,* ed. by John Davy (London: Smith Elder and Co. Cornhill, 1839), p. 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Boland, p. 575. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Letter to John Flaxman (19 October 1801), in *Letters*, p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. For more on the way Jerusalem is re-born by Christ’s renting of the veil, see Riede, ‘The Symbolism of the Loins in Blake’s *Jerusalem*’, p. 547. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Joanna Baillie, *The Dream (1798 (Volume One), 1802 (Volume Two), 1812 (Volume Three))*, (London: ProQuest, 1997)*.* n. p. <https://search-proquest com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/docview/2138579026?accountid=13828> [accessed 12 March 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. An analysis of Baillie’s Gothic poems like ‘The Storm-Beat Maid’ will necessarily be coupled with a discussion of her poem ‘To Fear’ (1790) and her ‘An Address to the Night: A Fearful Mind’ (1790), all incidentally absent from her revised *Fugitive Verses* (1840), which contain the poems of a lifetime. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Adriana Craciun’s entry on Anne Bannerman in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is one of the very few sources of biographical information we have on the poet and will be used to support any biographical references to Bannerman’s life in this chapter. See Adriana Craciun, ‘Bannerman, Anne (1765–1829), poet., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, September 23, 2004) <https://www-oxforddnb com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1312> [Accessed 15 April 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Ghosts and phantoms of the mind more or less abound in Romantic poetry, and include Robinson’s ‘The Haunted Beach’ (1806), Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) and *The Pains of Sleep* (1803), and even Wordsworth’s ‘The Haunted Tree’ (1820), which features a troubled ghost that haunts the tree’s soil with its ghastly story. Blake’s poetry is replete with spectres, and his illustrations for John Varley’s *Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy* (1828) include records of Blake’s encounter with ghosts like *The Ghost of a Flea* (1819). [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Derrida, p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Peter Buse and Andrew Scott, ‘Introduction: A Future for Haunting’, in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Scott (London: Palgrave, 1999), pp. 1-21 (p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Buse and Scott, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Henry Giddons, *The Sicilian Romance: or, the Apparition of the Cliffs* (Dublin: P. Wogan et al, 1794) [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. S. B., ‘The Complaint of a Ghost’, in *The Lady's Monthly Museum, or Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction: Being an Assemblage of Whatever Can Tend to Please the Fancy, Interest the Mind, or Exalt the Character of the British Fair. / By a Society of Ladies., 1798-1828*, 4 (1800): 365-70 (p. 368). <https://search-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/docview/4450576?rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprimo&imgSeq=1> [accessed 20 April 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. For more, see Douglass H. Thomson, ‘The Gothic Ballad’, in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter, 1 edn. (London: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 77-90 (p. 87). Taken from Coleridge’s *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), this statement (p. 214) prefaces the ‘Three Graves’, a ballad started by Wordsworth and finished by Coleridge where a curse is visited on the heads of the protagonists by the bride’s evil mother. Coleridge’s emphasis on moving beyond such subjects is evidenced by the strategic reference to being ‘less averse’ rather than ‘fond of’ subjects like these. ‘The Three Graves’ is therefore being glossed over, much like Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* and Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Three Graves: A Fragment of a Sexton’s Tale’, in *The Complete Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by William Keach (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 206-8 (p. 207). [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. I am making this distinction between readers and spectators because not all of Baillie’s plays were performed on stage. According to biographer Judith Bailey Slagle in *Joanna Baillie: A Literary Life* (2002), while plays like *De Monfort* were successfully performed by actors-giants like Sarah Siddons and John Philip Kemble in 1800 (p. 92), followed by performances of plays like Baillie’s *Family Legend* (1805), dedicated to her friend Sir Walter Scott and performed with his help in the Edinburgh Theatre ‘to a packed house’ in 1810 (pp. 132-3), other plays by Baillie never saw the light of the stage. These include her particularly Gothic play *Witchcraft* (1827) (p. 267), despite its potentially phantasmagoric setting. Judith Bailey Slagle, *Joanna Baillie: A Literary Life* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002). Baillie’s struggles with theatrical representation had to do with a variety of reasons, not least of which was her coming forward as the woman writer of *De Monfort* after its first anonymous production. Most indicative is Lord Byron’s difficulty ‘in getting Baillie revived at Drury Lane in 1815’ (Slagle, p. 94). Being a woman and a playwright that primarily explored the deepest recesses of an impassioned mind, Baillie was also often branded as a writer of ‘closet’ plays, like the plays of many of the Romantics like Coleridge and Byron. In a letter to William Sotheby (1804), Baillie writes: ‘Don’t you … find fault with me, or encrease [sic] the number of those who are for quietly setting me aside as a closet writer. I will still go on, having my drums & my trumpets, & my striking situations, & my side scenes & my back scenes, & all the rest of it in my mind, whilst I write, notwithstanding all that you can say to the contrary’ (p. 180). For more, see Baillie, Joanna, ‘To William Sotheby, Hampstead, Dec. 12th [1804]’, in *The Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie*, ed. by Judith Bailey Slagle, 1 vols (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp. 179-180. From now on, all quotes from Baillie’s letters will be taken from this edition, henceforth indicated as *Letters*. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Breen, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Breen, pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Douglass H. Thomson and Diane Long Hoeveler, ‘Shorter Gothic Fictions: Ballads and Chapbooks, Tales and Fragments’, in *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 147-166 (p. 151). [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Thomson and Hoeveler, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. The term ‘hauntological’ is derived from Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* (1993), where he discusses haunting and the modern self. I will be expanding on how Derrida unravels the concept of hauntology, and how it can be used to approach Baillie’s ghost poems. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Joanna Baillie, ‘Introductory Discourse’, in *A Series of Plays: In Which It Is Attempted to Delineate the Stronger Passions of the Mind. Each Passion Being the Subject of a Tragedy and a Comedy*, in Plays on the Passions, ed. by Peter Duthie(London: T. Cadell, 1798), pp. 67-114 (p. 69). [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Baillie, ‘Introductory Discourse’, p. 69. As Baillie writes,

     […] the generality of people appear to us more trifling than they are: and I may venture to say that, but for this *sympathetick curiosity* towards others of our kind, which is so strongly implanted within us, the attention we pay to the dress and the manners of men would dwindle into an employment as insipid, as examining the varieties of plants and minerals, is to one who understands not natural history. (my emphasis, p. 69)

     From now on, all quotes from Baillie’s ‘Introductory Discourse’ will be taken from this edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Michael Gamer, ‘National Supernaturalism: Joanna Baillie, Germany and the Gothic Drama’, *Theatre Survey*, 38.2 (1997), 49-88 (p. 59-60), DOI: 10.1017/S0040557400002076. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), Book First, 306. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (London: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1979), pp. 1-483. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Nathan Elliott, ‘’’Unball’s Sockets’’ and ‘’The Mockery of Speech’’: Diagnostic Anxiety and the Theater of Joanna Baillie’, *European Romantic Review*, 18.1 (2007), 83-103 (p. 86), DOI: 10.1080/10509580601179316. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. ### Even an inclusive collection of critical essays on Baillie like the one edited by Thomas C. Crochunis titled *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist: Critical Essays* (2004) contains little to no analysis of Baillie’s poetry and appeared to be focused on her career as a dramatist. However, essays by Burwick and Richardson included in the collection are helpful in understanding Baillie’s uniqueness of approach as a dramatist, and a writer in general. For more information, see Frederick Burwick, ‘Joanna Baillie, Matthew Baillie, and the pathology of the passions’, in *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist: Critical Essays*, ed. by Thomas C. Crochunis(London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 48-68, and Alan Richardson, ‘A neural theatre: Joanna Baillie’s “Plays on the Passions”’, in *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist: Critical Essays*, ed. by Thomas C. Crochunis(London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 130-45. Also, see Angela Monsam, ‘[A Vivisecting Dramatist: The Anatomy of Theater in Joanna Baillie's "Introductory Discourse" and *De Monfort*](https://find.shef.ac.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=TN_informaworld_s10_1080_10509585_2017_1388798&context=PC&vid=44SFD_VU2&lang=en_US&search_scope=SCOP_EVERYTHING&adaptor=primo_central_multiple_fe&tab=everything&query=any,contains,Joanna%20Baillie%20and%20the%20passions&offset=0)’, *European Romantic Review*, 28.6 (2017), 751-772, DOI: 10.1080/10509585.2017.1388798.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. For more, see Julie A. Carlson, ‘Baillie’s *Orra*: Shrinking in Fear’, in *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist: Critical Essays* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 206-20. For an earlier, but very inclusive account of the way Baillie reconfigures closet drama and the role of performativity when it comes to making the private public, and vice versa, see Catherine B. Burrough’s *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Burwick, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Slagle, *Joanna Baillie: A Literary Life*, p. 55. In a letter to Professor Andrews Norton, written after many years, Baillie comments on her uncles:

     I have heard my Brother say that he [William] told a humorous story better than any man he ever knew, and it was thought by his friends that had he been differently circumstanced in the world, he might have been at the very head of the profession as a Comedian. I never saw him which I regret. My Uncle John Hunter I knew well and loved him very heartily, (for that was the kind of love that belonged to him) not tenderly (*Letters*, vol. 2, p. 923). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Slagle, p. 56, and Burwick, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Elliott, pp. 85-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Slagle, *Joanna Baillie: A Literary Life*, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Slagle, p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. John Abernethy, *Physiological Lectures, Exhibiting a General View of Mr. Hunter’s Physiology* (London: Longman et al., 1817), pp. 229, 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. Sharon Ruston, *Shelley and Vitality* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Slagle, p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. For more, see Judith Bailey Slagle, ‘Opposing the Medical World: The Poetry of Anne Home Hunter’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 39.3 (2008), 102-7 (p. 102), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24045758> [accessed 10 March 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. All subsequent references from Baillie’s poetry will be taken from: Joanna Baillie, *The selected poems of Joanna Baillie: 1762-1851*, ed. by Jennifer Breen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Gamer, ‘National Supernaturalism’, p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Daniel Bergen, ‘Reimagining the Romantic Imagination: Embodied, Proto-Cognitive Psychologies in Joanna Baillie’s ‘Introductory Discourse’ and *Orra*’, *Literature Compass*, 11.3 (2014), 190-205 (p. 199), DOI: 10.1111/lic3.12118. Bergen connects this to Baillie’s idea of connecting mind and body through emotion: ‘The imagining mind provokes the emotional body and demands that we remember’ (p. 203). [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Roy Porter, *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain*, 1650-1900 (London: Reaktion Books, 2020), pp. 35, 42. Porter traces the history of the body as signifier in early modern Britain, and argues that, ‘standing for vulgarity, the body is the hideous abode of unruly and irrational passions, nasty and disgusting urges’ (p. 42). [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 93-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Thomson, ‘The Gothic Ballad’, p. 79. Thomson contends that the ‘earliest evidence of this’ is John Aikin’s ‘Arthur and Matilda’ (*Poems*,1791). As Thomson says, ‘Aikin met Taylor when he attended the Palgrave Academy run by Aikin’s sister, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and her husband Rochement; in addition to their literary interests, Taylor and Aikin, both staunch dissenters, shared many radical religious and political commitments’ (p. 79). Interestingly, Barbauld’s part in disseminating an interest in old Gothic tales like these recounted in Gothic ballads is significant, since many members of the Edinburgh Literary Society ‘were “electrified” by Barbauld’s reading of “Lenora”’ (p. 88), something that ‘aroused the young Walter Scott’s interest in writing ballads in the German way’ (p. 80). Interestingly, Bürger’s ‘Lenora’ was inspired ‘by the old English ballad “Sweet William’s Ghost”’ (*The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, p. 97). For more on ‘Lenore’, see ‘Bürger, Gottfried’, in *Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, 2 vols (London: Blackwell, 2016), pp. 97-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Thomson, p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Ruppert, ‘Romantic Vision and Gothic Balladry’, p. 794. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. On ‘The Old Woman of Berkeley’, Southey writes in a letter to William Taylor:

     Mine is the ballad of a ballad-maker, believing the whole superstition, and thereby making even the grotesque terrible; yours that of a poet, decorating a known fable, laughing behind a masque of fear. Mine has no invention, not an atom, yet wants none, it is the legend in verse; yours a story of your own. (p. 112)

     In this passage, Southey defends his use of the old ballad style against any degraded use of ballad mixed with the irony Lewis’s ballads were also famous for. For more, see Southey, Robert, ‘Correspondence with R. Southey’, in *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor of Norwich*, ed. by J. W. Robberds, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1843), pp. 108-113 (p. 112). On Lewis’s use of irony in his Gothic ballads, see Thomson, ‘Mingled Measures’. As Thomson argues, Lewis is ‘exploiting the innately comic potential of his horror materials in order to appease his always vigilant critics’, and, by extension, subvert his own writing. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Thomson, ‘The Gothic Ballad’, p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. ‘Fugitive Verses. By Joanna Baillie’, in *The Quarterly Review*, ed. by John Gibson Lockhart and others, 67 vols (London: John Murray, 1841), pp. 437-52 (p. 449). [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Baillie, p. 449. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Gamer, ‘National Supernaturalism’, pp. 53 and 64. Gamer mentions *The Monthly Review* entry on the ‘Castle Spectre’; works like these, the reviewer warns, turn the stage into a ‘Land of Apparitions’ (p. 53). The reviewer continues to note that ‘Mr. Lewis, we have no doubt, will draw after him a train of imitators: but it is to be hoped that he himself will retire from the regions of the marvellous’ (p. 96), as if to prevent further contamination to the public. For more, see ‘Art. 36. The Castle Spectre’, in *The Monthly Review*, ed. by Ralph Griffiths (Pall Mall: T. Becket, 1798), p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Gamer, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Baillie, ‘Introductory Discourse’, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Aileen Forbes, ‘"Sympathetic Curiosity" In Joanna Baillie's Theater Of The Passions’, *European Romantic Review*, 14.1 (2003), 31-48, DOI: 10.1080/10509580303673. It can be said that plays like Wordsworth’s *The Borderers* (1795-7), never to be staged, belong to this category of ‘psychological theater’, as do Baillie’s plays, albeit in a different way. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Charles Lamb, ‘On the Tragedies of Shakespeare’, in *The Complete Works of Charles Lamb, Containing his Letters, Essays, Poems, Etc.* (Philadelphia: William T. Amies, 1879), p. 532. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Lamb, p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Joanna Baillie, *The Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie*, ed. by Judith Bailey Slagle, 1 vols (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp. 3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Joanna Baillie, *Orra* (Cambridge: ProQuest, 1994), n.p. <https://www-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/books/orra-1851/docview/2138579041/se-2?accountid=13828> [accessed 12 March 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. *The Monthly Review*, ed. by Ralph Griffiths et al., 69 vols (London: Becket and Porter, 1812), p. 386. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. Diane Long Hoeveler, ‘Joanna Baillie and the Gothic Body Reading Extremities in *Orra* and *De Monfort*’, *Gothic Studies*, 3.2 (2001), 117-33 (p. 118), DOI: 10.7227/GS.3.2.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Baillie, ‘Introductory Discourse’, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Christine A. Colón, ‘Joanna Baillie and the Christian Gothic: Reforming Society through the Sublime’, in *Through a Glass Darkly: Suffering, the Sacred, and the Sublime in Literature and Theory*, ed. by Holly Faith Nelson et al. (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), pp. 129-142 (p. 129). [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. xx. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. In a letter to Sir George Howland Beaumont (1820), Baillie writes: ‘I am busy preparing a small volume for the press, containing what I call Metrical Legends or memorials of exalted characters, but added to these are a few ballads and among them I have put the Elden Tree which I formerly wrote from your hint, founded on a story which you was so good as to tell […] it is founded on a true or at least a traditional story. (pp. 1165-6). For more, see Baillie, Joanna, ‘Coleorton MA 1581/1 (Address: Sir George Beaumont Bart…)’, in *The Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie*, ed. by Judith Bailey Slagle, 2 vols (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp. 1165-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Joanna Baillie, ‘The Elden Tree’, in *Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters*, 2 edn. (London: Longman, 1821), pp. 307-18. Line numbers are not available. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. William Wordsworth, ‘The Haunted Tree’, in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols, ed. by E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 1940-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Feldman, Paula R., *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era: An Anthology* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 22. For more on Jonathan Wordsworth’s allusion to Baillie’s influence on Wordsworth, see Wordsworth, Jonathan, ‘Introduction’, in *Joanna, Baillie,* *Poems,* *1790*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1994) [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. See Cox, Jeffrey N., ‘Staging Baillie’, in Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist, ed. by Thomas C. Crochunis (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 146-67 (p. 148).

     Yudin, Mary F, ‘Joanna Baillie’s Introductory Discourse as a Precursor to Wordsworth’s Preface to Lyrical Ballads, *Compar(a)ison: An International Journal of Comparative Literature*, 1 (1994), 101-12.

     Behrendt, Stephen C., *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Behrendt, p. 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. Richard Cronin, *1798: The Year of the Lyrical Ballads* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 1998), p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Sigmund Freud, ‘Repression’, in *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology; Theories on paranoia, masochism, repression, the unconscious, the libido, and other aspects of the human psyche*, ed. by Philip Rieff (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), pp. 95-108 (pp. 97-105). Freud’s essay was published the same year as his seminal essay ‘The Unconscious’ (1915). [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. See Makala Melissa Edmundson, *Women’s Ghost Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Taken from: Joanna Baillie, ‘Night-Scenes’, in *Fugitive Verses* (London: Edward Moxon, 1840), pp. 32-52. No line numbers are available. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Edmundson, p. 23. Edmundson also refers to E. J. Clery’s argument in *Women’s Gothic* (2004) that we should move past dualities (standard representations of women in the male and female Gothic) and recognise the complexities in women’s writing:

     the dualism of male and female traditions involves a simplification of the reality and fails to account for many aspects of women’s writing in the period. It has notably distorted our understanding of women’s achievements in Gothic writing. (p. 2)

     E. J. Clery, *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*, 2 edn. (Northcote: British Council, 2018)

     As I show in my analysis, this assumption is challenged in the writings of both Baillie and Bannerman, albeit in different ways. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Jerrold E. Hogle, ‘The Ghost of the Counterfeit – and the Closet – in *The Monk*’, *Romanticism on the Net*, *érudit*, 8 (1997), n.p. https://doi.org/10.7202/005770ar. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Derrida, pp. 125, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Angela Monsam, ‘A Vivisecting Dramatist’, p. 752. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Bergen, p. 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Notable critics that have delved into Bannerman’s poetry in the context of the Gothic are Adriana Craciun, Timothy Ruppert, and Diane Long Hoeveler, whose studies I reference in my chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Timothy Ruppert, ‘Romantic Vision and Gothic Balladry: Anne Bannerman’s Tales of Superstition and Chivalry’, *Literature Compass*, 10.10 (2013), 783-96 (p. 783), DOI: 10.1111/lic3.12104. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. Craciun, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. Craciun. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. Craciun. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Craciun. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. Diane Long Hoeveler, ‘Gendering the Scottish Ballad: The Case of Anne Bannerman’s “Tales of Superstition and Chivalry”’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 32.1 (2000), 97-101 (p. 101), <[www.jstor.org/stable/24044185](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24044185)> [accessed 12 April 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. Craciun, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Sir Walter Scott, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border: Imitations of the Ancient Ballad*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1807), p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. See fig. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. Lyndsey Brown, *Anne Bannerman*, <georgiasouthern.edu/the-first-gothics-individual-authors/individual-authors/gothic-ballad-writers/bannerman> [Accessed 20 April 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. Brown, n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 195. In fact, in his article on parodying the Gothic, Douglass H. Thompson makes references to Gamer’s research on Scott and Matthew Lewis and remarks how ‘Scott distanced himself from his early Gothic inclinations inspired by his apprenticeship with Lewis’. For more, see Douglass H. Thompson, ‘Mingled Measures: Gothic Parody in *Tales of Wonder* and *Tales of Terror*’, Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net, ѐrudit, (50), <https://doi.org/10.7202/018143ar>. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. Hoeveler, ‘Gendering the Scottish Ballad’, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. All references to Bannerman’s *Poems* will be taken from: Anne Bannerman, *Poems* (Edinburgh: Mundell, Doig and Stevenson, 1807). No line numbers are available. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. A detailed analysis of haunting by female ghosts will be unravelled in the next part of this chapter and will include these poems by Bannerman. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. It is interesting to see how Byron renders the way this merge reflects on the identity of the prisoner, who gradually turns into an uncanny version of himself:

     Our voices took a dreary tone,

     An echo of the dungeon stone,

     A grating sound, not full and free,

     As they of yore were wont to be:

     It might be fancy—but to me

     They never sounded like our own. (*The Prisoner of Chillon*,63-8) [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Sigmund Freud’s italics, p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. Patrick Bridgwater, *De Quincey’s Gothic Masquerade* (New York: Rodopi, 2004), p. 23.

     Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie’ and ‘The Ballad of the Dark Ladie: A Fragment’, in *The Poetical Works of Samuel T. Coleridge* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, 1882), pp. 102-5 (p. 103). Line numbers are not available. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. Instead, Coleridge turns the expectation from the title on its head and presents a tale of love and profession of marriage between the lady and her beloved Henry, where the lady is promised to be taken away. The Gothic element in the poem more strongly manifests with the repetition of the word ‘dark’ to mark the time the two lovers will go away together:

     |  |  |
     | --- | --- |
     | The dark? the dark? No! not the dark? |  |
     | The twinkling stars? How, Henry? How? |  |
     | O God! ’twas in the eye of noon |  |
     | He pledged his sacred vow! |  |

     Coleridge then swifts focus on the hopes of marriage and merriment that the lady dreams of, thus carefully concealing the import of the word ‘dark’ within the narrative. Bannerman explores the darkness of the lady as an empowered femme fatale. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. According to Craciun, Bannerman ‘first published “The Dark Ladie” in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, with a footnote directing readers to Coleridge’s “Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie”, published in the same journal one month earlier’ (*Fatal Women of Romanticism*,p. 165). [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. Thomas De Quincey, *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. by Grevel Lindop and Barry Symonds, 1 vols (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2000), n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. The entry in De Quincey’s journal goes as follows:

     […] certainly, I should feel no scruple at placing Lewis above half the scribblers of the day; but I know men so much superior to him in that point […] I forgot to mention that I had before said that I could see through Lewis […] but that the author of the “Tales of Superstition and Chivalry” was shrouded in a certain *dark mystery*. (my italics) [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism*, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. All references from Bannerman’s *Tales* will be taken from: Anne Bannerman, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernon and Hood, 1802). No line numbers are available. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. Lewis, Matthew G., *The Monk*, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. Sir Walter Scott, ‘Glenfinlas’, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* (New York: Robert Cadell, 1848), pp. 369-79 (p. 375). [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism*, p. 165. Hoeveler, ‘Gendering the Scottish Ballad’, p. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. Edmundson, *Women’s Ghost Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. For Derrida, the spectre represents a longing for ‘redemption’, a resolution that the spectre incarnates in the moment of the return as a ghost:

     The specter is not only the carnal apparition of the spirit, its phenomenal body, its fallen and guilty body, it is also the impatient and nostalgic waiting for a redemption, namely, once again, for a Spirit. … The ghost would be the deferred spirit, the promise or calculation of an expiation. … A transition between the two moments of spirit, the ghost is just passing through. (*Specters of Marx*, pp. 170-1)

     The word ‘fallen’ and ‘guilty’ suggest representations of mortality and the physical (albeit in a ‘phenomenal’ way) nature of the spectre’s body. The spirit, on the other hand, is for Derrida something for the spectre to aspire to, a kind of ‘redemption’ that would implicitly ‘free’ the spectre of its ‘fallen’, ghostly body. Of course, as I will claim, encounters with ghosts and discourses around ghosts have to do with fears and anxieties around identity and the body, especially ‘the fate of the body after death’, as Terry Castle argues. Terry Catle, *Female Thermometer: 18th-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. Elliott, ‘“Unball’d Sockets”: Diagnostic Anxiety and the Theater of Joanna Baillie’, p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism*, p. 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. Rupert, ‘Romantic Vision and Gothic Balladry’, p. 789. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. Rupert, p. 789. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. William Hazlitt, ‘Why Distant Objects Please’, in *Table Talk; or, Original Essays on Men and Manners*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1824), pp. 217-238 (p. 220). [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. Wordsworth, *Preface*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. Wordsworth’s take on the masculine poetic voice is also reflected in his feminised representations of nature. As Craciun affirms, poets like Robinson, Bannerman and Coleridge ‘distrusted the feminized and maternalized nature often visible in William Wordsworth’s “spousal verse”. Adriana Craciun, ‘Romantic Poetry, Sexuality, Gender’, in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry*, ed by James Chandler and Maureen N. McLane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For a detailed account on William Wordsworth and the feminization/gendering of nature, see also Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993) [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. Coleridge, ‘Review of the Monk’, p. 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. Terry, *Female Thermometer*, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. Clery quotes Addison’s essay on ‘The Spectator’, where Addison talks about the popular taste for ghosts on stage. Indeed, Addison’s satire is directed to the use of the supernatural and its contemporary abuse on stage:

     ‘There is nothing which delights and terrifies our English theatre so much as a ghost, especially when he appears in a bloody shirt. A spectre has very often saved a play, though he has done nothing but stalked across the stage, or rose through a cleft of it, and sunk again without speaking one word’ (p. 77).

     Joseph Addison, ‘Entry for Friday, April 20, 1711, in *The Spectator*’, in *The Works of Joseph Addison*, 1 vols (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845), pp. 77-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. Catherine Crowe, *The Night-Side of Nature*, 2 vols (London: T. C. Newby, 1848), p. 365. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Pains of Sleep*, in *The Complete Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. By William Keach (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 328-9. From now on, all quotes from Coleridge’s poems in this chapter will be taken from this edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. Daniel Robinson, ‘Coleridge, Mary Robinson, and the Prosody of Dreams’, *Dreaming*, 7.2 (1997) 119-40 *(*p. 120) <00012188-199707020-00003>. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. Frederick Burwick, *A History of Romantic Literature* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2019), p. 339. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. By Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 2 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1895), pp. 673-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 1 vols (London: Houghton and Mifflin, 1895), p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. Carol Margaret Davison, ‘‘Houses of Voluntary Bondage’: Theorizing the Nineteenth-Century Gothic Pharmography’, *Gothic Studies*, 12.1 (2016), 68-85 (p. 69) <DOI: 10.7227/GS.12.1.6>. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. Jason Althofer and Brian Musgrove, ‘’A ghost in daylight’: drugs and the horror of modernity’, Palgrave Communications, 4.1 (2018), 1-11 (p. 2) <DOI: 10.1057/s41599-018-0162-0>. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. Althofer and Musgrove, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. Jones seeks to dispel certain preconceived notions about the effects of opium on the organism, and in his lengthy analysis interestingly compares the effects of the drug to sleep:

     The *Truth* is, that it *stops Fluxes* (as Sleep doth) by taking away the sense of the *Irritation* of *Humours,* which solicite the Parts to con∣tract, and so to extrude and squeese them out; it *promotes Perspiration* by relaxing the *Pores* (as *Sleep* doth;) it also seems to thicken *Rheum,* (as *Sleep* doth) because it causing *Sleep,* or (at least) taking away a sense of the Irritation of the *Rheum,* is thereby suffered to stay till it thickens by the *Heat* of the Body. (p. 54).

     John Jones, *The Mysteries of Opium Revealed* (London: R. Smith, 1701), p. 54.

     George Young, *A Treatise on Opium: Founded Upon Practical Observations* (London: A. Millar, 1753)

     Young’s treatise on opium also attempts to correct some of the contemporary misconceptions around the use of the drug and refers to the often-conflicted views as to the frequency and the appropriateness of its use, as well as its unquestioned ability to alleviate pain. For Young, in the case of ‘immoderate’ pain, the drug can cause ‘disturbed slumbers’ and ‘pain’ more intense than the original disease (see pp. 8-10). [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. Hunter, John, *A Treatise on the Venereal Disease* (London, 1787), p. 373. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. Thomas Beddoes, *A Collection of Testimonies or the Venereal Disease by Nitrous Acid* (London: Johnson, 1799), p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. Beddoes, pp. 142-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. Paul Youngquist, ‘Rehabilitating Coleridge: Poetry, Philosophy, Excess’, *ELH*, 66.4 (1999), 885-909 (p. 888) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30032101>> [accessed 21 January 2020]. For more, see John Brown, *Elements of Medicine* (London: J. Johnson, 1795). [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. Davison, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. Davison, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. Shelley, Mary, ‘On Ghosts’, in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Emma J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 280-4 (p. 282). From *London Magazine*, vol. 9 (March 1824), pp. 253-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. John Ferriar, *An Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1813), p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. Ferriar, p. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. Ferriar, p. 124-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. Althofer and Musgrove, ‘“A ghost in daylight”: drugs and the horror of Modernity’, p. 3. Althofer and Musgrove place drug use in the context of a potent horror for modernity.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Leslie Earl Griggs and Seymour Teulon Porter, ‘Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Opium’, Huntington Library Quarterly, 17.4 (1954), 357-378 (p. 357) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3816502>. Griggs’s article is one of the oldest and most comprehensive takes on Coleridge’s opium use and the opium’s effect on the writer’s life. More importantly, Griggs wants to clarify throughout her study that ‘Coleridge is more to be pitied than condemned’, if one takes to account all available sources and materials. One verifiable proof of that would be the first-time published documentation of Seymour Teulon Porter (1888), apprenticed to Dr. Henry Dunn, a chemist at Highgate whom Coleridge used to visit (in secret) for his weekly doses of opium, Porter’s account refers to the general esteem and sympathy towards Coleridge, as no one had any word, ‘either jocose or grave’, to say to ‘the dishonour of the august & venerable sage’ (qtd. in Griggs, p. 368). This in no way agrees with more condemnatory portrayals of Coleridge’s addiction, like Charles Lloyd’s *Edmund Oliver* (1798). For more, see Charles Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver* (UK: Bulgin and Rosser, 1798). [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. # In her biography of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Molly Lefebure argues that opium was an ‘essential part’ of Coleridge’s life and identity (p. 68). More specifically, Lefebure says that Coleridge seems to have been a regular opium user by the summer of 1797 as well as later in the year when ‘financial anxieties and fears for the future’, as well as fluctuating health issues, prompted his opium use, something that, according to Lefebure, ‘conforms to the classical portraiture of the narcotics addict’ (p. 252). For more, see Molly Lefebure, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium* (London: Quartet Books, 1974). In his brief biography of Coleridge, Seamus Perry also states that, from 1800, illness and opium use became ‘a recurring theme’ in Coleridge’s notebooks. Indeed, according to Perry, many of Coleridge’s physical ailments were caused by ‘opium addiction’ (pp. 64-5). For more, see Seamus Perry, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, The British Library: Writers’ Lives (2003). This term reappears in Richard Holmes’s biography of Coleridge, where he mentions ‘opium addiction’ (Preface, p. 1) as a theme that invites an entire book in relation to Coleridge (Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (London: William Collins, 2005)). The term ‘addiction’ is a contemporary one, but many critics use it to describe heavy opium use from Romantic poets like Coleridge and John Keats. In a biography of John Keats, Nicholas Roe describes Keats as an opium addict and ascribes parts of the poet’s odes to his experience of opium reveries (for more details, see Amelia Hill, ‘John Keats was an opium addict, claims a new biography of the poet’, *The Guardian*, 12 September 2012 < <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/sep/21/john-keats-opium-addict>> [accessed 3 February 2023]. Although I will not be describing Coleridge’s condition as addiction in this chapter, it is worth noting that many critics have found evidence that points to Coleridge’s lifelong opium dependence.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘To John Thelwall’, in *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 1 vols, 1785-1800 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 276-86.

     Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘To George Coleridge’, in *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 1 vols, 1785-1800 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 394-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Kathleen Coburn, 2 vols (New York: Routledge, 1961), p. 2092. From now on, all notebook entries included in this chapter will be taken from Coburn’s edited volumes, and indicated as *CN*, including volume and page number. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Edmund Burke*, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: J. Dodsley, 1767), p. 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. Burke, p. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. Burke, pp. 100-101. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. Ann Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, pp. 315-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. Radcliffe, p. 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. Daniel Robinson, p. 135. Mary Robinson’s opium-related poetic expressions will be approached later in the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. Rei Terada, ‘Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction in Coleridge’s ‘Notebooks’’, *Studies in Romanticism* 43.2 (2004), 257-81 (p. 259) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25601674>> [accessed 8 October 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. ‘phenomenon’, in The Oxford English Dictionary [online],<www.oed.com/view/Entry/142352> [accessed 15 October 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. For more information, see Lydia Wagner, ‘Coleridge’s Use of Laudanum and Opium’, *Psychoanalytic Review*, 15.3 (1938), 309-34, Elisabeth Schneider, *Coleridge Opium and ‘Kubla Khan’* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), as well as Marshall Suther, *Visions of Xanadu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965). [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. The term ‘esemplastic’ is used by Coleridge in Chapter 13 of his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) to introduce Coleridge’s extensive theory of creative imagination. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. by George Watson (London: Everyman’s Library, 1975), p. 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. Hayter, p. 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. Thomas de Quincey, *Suspiria De Profundis* (New York: Dover, 2019), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. De Quincey, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. *CN*,Vol. 2, p. 2387. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Kathleen Coburn, 4 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 4605-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. Rei Terada, *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. *CN*, Vol. 2, p. 1900. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. Jones’s *The Mysteries of Opium Reveal*ed refers to the palliative effects of opium for the stomach:

     It causes a most agreeable, pleasant, and charming Sensation about the Region of the Stomach, which if one lies, or sits still, diffuses itself in a kind of indefinite manner, seizing one not unlike the gentle, sweet Deliquium that we find upon our entrance into a most agreeable Slumber, which, upon yiel∣ding [sic] to it, generally ends in Sleep. (p. 21) [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
455. Jennifer Ford, ‘Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Pains of Sleep’, *History Workshop Journal*, 48 (1999), 169-86 (p. 185) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4289640> [accessed 18 October 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. Stephen Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies*, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. Hayter, p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. Hayter, p. 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. Hayter, p. 885. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. Included in Lynda Pratt, ‘The ‘Sad Habits’ of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Unpublished Letters from Joseph Cottle to Robert Southey, 1813-1817’, *The Review of English Studies*, 55.18 (2004), 75-90 (p. 82) < https://www-jstor-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/stable/3661391> [accessed 25 November 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. Pratt, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. Tim Fulford, ‘Slavery and Superstition in the Supernatural Poems’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 45-58 (p. 57). [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. Benjamin Woodford, ‘Narrating the Gothic Sublime in Coleridge’s *Christabel*’, *Literary Imagination*, 18.2 (2016), 101-114 (p. 102) <DOI: 10.1093/litimag/imw012>. In ‘Narrating the Gothic Sublime in Coleridge’s *Christabel*’, Benjamin Woodford places particular emphasis on the fragmentary nature of Coleridge’s *Christabel*, and add this observation in the discussion of how the poem evinces the Gothic sublime, and how Coleridge sees the sublime considering Burke’s theorisations. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
464. Coleridge often recorded the affecting sensation of touch in his Notebooks, often in relation to his Gothic nightmares. On the 4th of Match 1804, he writes about

     a completed Night-Mair, as it gave the sensation of actual grasp or touch contrary to my will, Sc in apparent consequence of the malignant will of the external Form, actually appearing or (as sometimes happens) believed to exist/in which case tho' I have two or three times felt a horrid touch of grasp, or a weight, of Hate and Horror abstracted from all (Conscious) form or supposal of Form/an abstract touch/ an abstract grasp?an weight! (*CN*, 2468)

     In 1811, he writes again of a monstrous hand holding him and terrifying him to excess:

     Last night before awaking or rather delivery from the nightmair, which a claw-like talon-nailed Hand grasped hold of me, 20 interposed between the curtains, I haved just before with my foot felt something seeming to move against it (?for in my foot it commenced)?I detected it, I say, by my excessive Terror, and dreadful Trembling of whole body, Trunk & Limbs?& by my piercing outcries. (*CN*, 4046)

     The register of psychophysical symptoms of fear in the above passages echo through the shivering that Christabel will come to feel in the presence of Geraldine when agency is contested again in the phrase ‘contrary to my will’. The ‘claw-like talon-nailed Hand’ that is described in the second entry provides another proof of the abject and paralysing Gothic body that threatens Coleridge’s sense of security, just as the Geraldine’s touch and drinking from Christabel’s body causes nightmarish visions of terror. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
465. 1804, *CN*, Vol 2, 2399. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
466. See James Mulvihill, ‘‘Like a Lady of a Far Countrѐe’: Coleridge’s ‘Christabel’ and Fear of Invasion’, *Papers on Language and Literature*. 44.3 (2008), 250-75 <<https://search-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/docview/198449930?accountid=13828>> [accessed 28 February 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
467. De Quincey, *Suspiria*, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
468. Althofer and Musgrove, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
469. Mulvihill, pp. 160-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
470. Nicholas Roe, ‘Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the French Invasion Scare’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 17.3 (1986), 142-48 (p. 146) https://www.jstor.org/stable/24040728. [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
471. Hayter, p. 19 and p. 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
472. Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1823), p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
473. Thomas De Quincey, ‘The English Mail-Coach, Or the Glory of Motion’ (Czechia: Good Press, 2020), n.p. < <https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_English_Mail_Coach_or_The_Glory_of_M/PFoOEAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0>> [accessed 7 February 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
474. Kristeva, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
475. Anya Taylor, ‘Coleridge's ‘Christabel’ and the Phantom Soul’, *Studies in English Literature*, *1500-1900*,42.4 (2002), 707-30 (p. 717) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1556293>> [accessed 11 February 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
476. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
477. Ahmed, p. 717. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
478. In his discussion of Coleridge’s Christabel and the Gothic sublime, Woodford highlights that there is ‘a degree of uncertainty’ in the poem that is in line with Burke’s sublime and the concept of obscurity. We have also seen this in Wordsworth’s acoustics of fear in the previous chapter, where obscurity nevertheless invites the intrusion of Gothic sound. In *Christabel*, obscurity works to create ‘suspense and wonder’ and ‘stimulate’ the passions. For more, see Woodford, pp. 107-9. James Mulvihill also detects a level of obscurity in the poem when he extensively discusses a lack of clear-cut lines between good and evil in the poem, and comments on Coleridge’s refusal to explicitly mark the Gothic body of horror and invasion. As he correctly observes, ‘the means by which’ Geraldine ‘effects’ her purposes ‘is even less clear, if only because it is so insidious, depending on the implicit cooperation of her putative victims’ (p. 260). [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
479. # Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Review of Lewis’s *The Monk*’, p. 297.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
480. Jennifer Ford, ‘Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Pains of Sleep’, p. 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
481. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*,p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
482. It is relevant to note that Shelley describes the dream as a ‘Pale’ body that speaks and addresses the lady in the poem. For more, see Percy Bysshe Shelley, ‘Marianne’s Dream’, in *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: E. Moxon, Son & Co, 1871), pp. 379-382. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
483. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (London: continuum, 1981), p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
484. G. F. Matthew, *European Magazine: November 1816, 434-7*, in *Coleridge: The Critical Heritage, 1794-1834*, ed. by J. R. de J. Jackson, 1 vols (London: Routledge, 1968), pp. 236-44 (p. 241). [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
485. Jerrold E. Hogle, ‘‘Christabel’ as Gothic: The Abjection of Instability’, *Gothic Studies*, 7.1 (2005), 18-28 (p. 20) <DOI: 10.7227/GS.7.1.3>. Hogle further argues that Coleridge’s ‘doubling’ reminds us of what happens in *The Monk*, when ‘Agnes effectively turns into the lustful and murderous Bleeding Nun herself before Raymond’s eyes’, or when ‘the monk Ambrosio’s amorous gaze at the picture of the Virgin Mary in his cell’ matches ‘the much later revelation by Lucifer that he deceptively remolded the succubus called Matilda to be the physical ‘original’’ (p. 20). [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
486. Claire B. May, ‘‘Christabel’ and Abjection: Coleridge's Narrative in Process/on Trial’,

     *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37.4 (1997), 699-721 (p. 700) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/451067> [accessed 19 February 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
487. Daniel Robinson, ‘The Prosody of Dreams’, p. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
488. Anne K. Mellor studies Mary Robinson’s multifarious representations in the media of the time. Representations of Mary Robinson also included more romantic portrayals of her nature and of herself as Perdita, who has mostly stood unfortunate in the face of unfulfilled love (see pp. 289-91). In the eyes of the public, she was either a faithless or unlucky but very successful female actress, who was also perceived in media of the time as the ‘British Sappho’ (See Angelica Kauffmann’s engraving, included in Mellor, *Making an Exhibition of Herself*, p. 293), artistic yet dangerous, maternal yet fiercely professional. For a more detailed account, please see Anne K. Mellor, ‘Making an Exhibition of Herself: Mary “Perdita” Robinson and Nineteenth-Century Scripts of Female Sexuality’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 22.3 (2000), 271-304 <DOI: 10.1080/08905490008583514>. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
489. All quotes from Robinson’s poetry are taken from: Mary Robinson, *Mary Robinson:* *Selected Poems*, ed. by Judith Pascoe (Canada: broadview literary texts: 2000), unless stated otherwise. [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
490. According to Amy Garnai, Robinson published the poem ‘under the pseudonym […] “Laura Maria”’, and her poem ‘appropriates the Della Cruscan concern with writing and literary production in order to articulate a political narrative’ (p. 73). Robinson’s participation in the Della Cruscan debate testifies to Robinson’s active participation in the debate over the French Revolution, and it is certainly not a coincidence that her daughter Maria Elizabeth ‘tries to distance her mother from Merry and the Della Cruscan school’ in the 1806 edition of the poem by ‘omitting Robinson’s lengthy prefatory dedication to him, as well as several passages in praise of his works, and adding the disclaimer “Written at the beginning of the French Revolution” at the poem’s start’ (‘Note on the Text’ by Paul Youngquist and Orrin N. C. Wang in *Romantic Circles*, 1998, <https://romantic-circles.org/editions/robinson/mrainsi90frst.htm>l). For more on Robinson’s poem, please see Amy Garnai, *Revolutionary Imaginings in the 1790s: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Inchbald* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
491. See Robert Merry, *The Laurel of Liberty: A Poem* (UK: John Bell, 1790) [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
492. Daniel Robinson, *The Poetry of Mary Robinson: Form and Fame*, Nineteenth-Century Major Lives and Letters (New York: Palgrave, 2011), p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
493. Mary Elizabeth Robinson, *Memoirs of Mary Robinson ‘Perdita’*, ed. by J. Fitzgerard Molloy (London: Gibbings and Company, 1894), p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
494. Robinson’s *Memoirs*. In a letter to Jane Porter written in 27 August 1800, Robinson writes: ‘I work too hard, and too incessantly, at my pen, to recover rapidly: and, to say truly, I very little value life, therefore, perhaps, am neglectful of those attentions which are calculated to prolong it’ (p. 372). Mary Robinson, ‘To Jane Porter’, in *Mary Robinson: Selected Poems*, ed. by Judith Pascoe (Canada: broadview literary texts: 2000), pp. 370-2 (p. 372). [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
495. Frederick Burwick*, Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1996), pp. 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
496. In the first chapter, I explored the way William Blake responds to Hartley’s theory of nerves and fibres in the human organism to create his imaginative vision of the reconstructed Divine body. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
497. John S. Haller, ‘Opium Usage in Nineteenth-Century Therapeutics’, *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*,65.5 (1989): 591-607 (p. 591) < <https://www-ncbi-nlm-nih-gov.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/pmc/articles/PMC1807799>> [accessed 12 March 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
498. William Cullen, *A Treatise of the Materia Medica*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Charles Elliot, 1789), p. 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
499. Cullen, p. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
500. Cullen, p. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
501. Mary Robinson, ‘Ode to the Muse’, in *Poems* (London: J. Bell, 1791), pp. 1-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
502. *Confessions*, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
503. Mike Jay argues that ‘persistent use’ of opium makes one ‘uncomfortable’ in their ‘own skin’, and ‘sleep is interrupted by clammy nightmares’ (p. 53). Mike Jay, *Emperors of Dreams: Drugs in the Nineteenth Century* (UK: Dedalus, 2000) [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
504. Coleridge’s genuine concern about Mary Robinson is evident in the letter: ‘Have you seen Mrs. Robinson lately? How is she? – Remember me in the kindest & most respectful phrases to her – I wish, I knew the particulars of her complaint’ (*STCL*, p. 589). It is no secret that Robinson was one of the women Coleridge admired, both for her poetic mien and her personality. [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
505. Sharon Ruston, ‘“High” Romanticism: Literature and Drugs’, in *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*, ed. by David Duff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 341-58 (p. 344). [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
506. For drugs and the sublime in Beddoes, see Ruston, p. 348. According to Ruston, Davy’s notebook entries and poetry equate the experience of the drug-induced reverie to a re-evaluation of the self as a transcendent being:

     Davy clearly thinks the drug offers access to the sublime, and after breathing it on 26 December 1799 records in a notebook that taking it makes him feel like he has become a ‘sublime being’ himself. In another notebook he records these sublime experiences in a poem titled ‘On breathing the Nitrous Oxide’: ‘Yet are my limbs with inward transports thrill’d | And clad with new born mightiness round.’ (p. 347) [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
507. ## Humphry Davy, ‘[RI MS HD/14/i, p. \_14i\_031](http://humphrydavy.org.uk/notebooks/note/ri-ms-hd-14-i-p-_14i_031/)’, *Sir Humphry Davy Notebooks* < <http://humphrydavy.org.uk/notebooks/?s=divine>> [accessed 9 February 2021].

     [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
508. Corinna Wagner, *Pathological Bodies: Medicine and Political Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), p. 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
509. Lisa Vargo, ‘The Claims of “real life and manners”: Coleridge and Mary Robinson’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 26.3 (1995), 134-7 (p. 134), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24044550> [accessed 4 November 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
510. Coleridge, *Letters*, p. 562. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
511. For more, see Vargo, p. 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
512. Stuart Curran, ‘Mary Robinson’s *Lyrical Tales* in Context’, in *Re-visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 17-35 (p. 32). Ashley J. Cross suggests that ‘we should probably be reading Wordsworth and Coleridge through Robinson as much as the other way around’ (p. 579). For more, see Ashley J. Cross, ‘From “Lyrical Ballads” to “Lyrical Tales”: Mary Robinson’s Reputation and the Problem of Literary Debt’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 40.4 (2001), 571-605, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25601532> [accessed 13 December 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
513. Curran, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
514. Hogle, pp. 376-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
515. Jerrold E. Hogle, ‘Mary Robinson and the Gothic’, *Elements in the Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) <DOI:10.1017/9781009160889> [accessed 29 March 2023]. p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
516. Hogle, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-516)
517. In a review of Robinson’s *Lyrical Tales* in the *Monthly Review*, the writer observes that Robinson often ‘relapses into the dark and fearful region of tragic invention’, exposing the idea that ‘human life is indeed a vale of tears’ (p. 386). I would argue that one of the most powerful elements of Robinson’s poetry is the way she puts forward life as full of fears and anxieties. ‘Review of *Lyrical Tales* (1800) in the *Monthly Review* 36 (Sept. 1801): 26-30’, in *Mary Robinson: Selected Poems*, ed. by Judith Pascoe (Canada: broadview literary texts: 2000), pp. 386-7 (p. 386). All references to Mary Robinson’s *Lyrical Tales* poems are taken from this edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-517)
518. Mary Elizabeth Robinson, *Memoirs*,p. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-518)
519. Mellor, p. 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-519)
520. In his discussion of the prosody of dreams in the poetry of Coleridge and Robinson, Daniel Robinson argues that the stanzaic pattern of poems like ‘The Maniac’, ‘a highly original form’ which is ‘defined by an unprecedented six-line stanza’ containing ‘six lines of roughly iambic feet of varying length – two tetrameter couplets, the second enveloped by a pentameter in line 3 and a closing hexameter line (a4 a4 b5 c4 c4 b6)’, is far too intricate to have been ‘composed extemporaneously under the influence of opium’. However, Robinson adds that one very important aspect of the poem’s value is the way the maniac resembles ‘the poet in an opium trance’ (p. 123). [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
521. Anna Seward, ‘To the Poppy’, in *The Complete Poems of Anna Seward*, ed. by Lisa L. Moore, 1 vols (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
522. Daniel Robinson, ‘The Prosody of Dreams’, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
523. On being acted on by external things, Coleridge speaks of feeling ‘thinged’ (*N* 3587) by the same things that act upon him. For more, see Coleridge’s *Notebooks*. [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
524. Karen Swann, ‘“Christabel”: The Wandering Mother and the Enigma of Form’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 23.4 (1984), 533-53 (p. 546) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25600515>> [accessed 14 January 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
525. See Charles Darwin, *The Expressions of Emotion in Man and Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 292, and Alexander Bain, *The Emotion and the Will* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
526. There is also the portrait of the lady the Baron pursues, whose fear is presented through its effects of her body:

     And now the wicket open flew,

     As though a whirlwind fell’d it;

     And now a ghastly figure stood

     Before the Maiden – while her blood

     Congeal’d, as she beheld it! (137-141) [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
527. Sir Charles Bell, *Essays on the Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*, 2 edn (London: John Murray, 1824). For more, see Janet Browne, ‘Darwin and the Face of Madness’, in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, ed. by William F. Bynum et al (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 151-65 (pp. 151-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
528. William Godwin, *Mandeville*, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
529. Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2006), n.p. <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/134/134-h/134-h.htm>l> [accessed 4 May 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
530. Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 156,161. [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
531. Baillie, ‘Introductory Discourse’, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
532. Baillie, p. 22. On the power of affect, also see p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
533. David Punter, *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, the Body and the Law* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
534. # Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘The Soul and its Organs of Sense’, in *Omniana, Or Horæ Otiosiores*, Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1812), pp. 9-20 (pp. 14-5).

     [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
535. Coleridge, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
536. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
537. Charlotte Smith, ‘LXX. On being cautioned against walking on an headland overlooking the sea, because it was frequented by a lunatic’, *Elegiac Sonnets*,in *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
538. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 61, 65. Punter also talks about the threat of the ‘psychopathic’, which is ‘left over’ because it exists outside the law, a ‘category before which the law bows its head and it forced, in extremis, to call in, or call on, a further expertise, a further tranche of professionalism, although not for purposes of therapy, rather for purposes of further and indefinable incarceration’ (*Gothic Pathologies*,p. 212), and madness falls within such category of extreme restriction measures. [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
539. Foucault, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
540. In Foucault’s words,

     During the classical period, madness was shown, but on the other side of bars; if present, it was at a distance, under the eyes of a reason that no longer felt any relation to it and that would not compromise itself by too close a resemblance. Madness had become a thing to look at: no longer a monster inside oneself, but an animal with strange mechanisms, a bestiality from which man had long since been suppressed. (p. 70)

     In externalising the monstrous inside, reason and the law sought to suppress it and objectify it so that control can be maintained. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
541. Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
542. Foucault, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
543. The word ‘freeze’ again invokes feelings of horror caused by the maniac’s gaze. [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
544. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
545. Daniel Robinson, ‘The Prosody of Dreams’, p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
546. E. J. Clery, *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (Devon: Northcote House and the British Council, 2004), p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
547. Anne Milne, ‘At the Precipice of Community: Feral Openness and the Work of Mary Robinson’, *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts*, *ProQuest*, 1640-1830, 2.1 (2012), 1-14 (pp. 1, 8, 10), <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/2062944445?accountid=13828>> [accessed 12 March 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-547)
548. Milne, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
549. Lenora Hanson, ‘“Ludicrous Anachronisms”: Dreams, Enclosures, and Mary Robinson’s “The Maniac”’, *Comparative Literature*, 72.2 (2020), 159-79 (p. 166) < DOI: 10.1215/00104124-8127449>. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
550. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
551. Aikin, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-551)
552. 1) Mary Robinson, ‘To Health’, in *The Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Robinson* (London: Jones & Company, 1824), pp. 36-7. In the poem, Robinson writes:

     There I'll press from herbs and flow'rs  
     Juices bless'd with opiate pow'rs,

     Whose magic potency can heal

     The throb of agonizing pain,

     And thro' the purple swelling vein

     With subtle influence steal. (21-6)

     2) Mary Robinson, ‘Invocation to Oberon’, in *The Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Robinson* (London: Jones & Company, 1824), pp. 151-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
553. In *Perdita: The Life of Mary Robinson*, Paula Byrne also notes the presence of opium in Robinson’s novels:

     Mary’s novels as well as her poems reveal the influence of opium. In *Angelina*, published in 1796, the heroine is prescribed opium to help her sleep and calm her feverish imagination. There is a reference to ‘the use of opiates, to tranquilize her irritated nerves, and, if possible, to deaden the powers of reflection’ and, some pages later, ‘again the powers of laudanum were called to our assistance; – by midnight they so far benumbed her faculties that she ceased to rave’. (p. 174)

     Paula Byrne, *Perdita: The Life of Mary Robinson* (Harper Press, 2004)

     Indeed, in *Hubert*, Monsieur de Sevrac comments on the pleasurable but at the same time destructive addiction to the riches and extravagance of courtly life:

     ‘The splendours of the court, the honours daily heaped upon me after my father’s death, like destructive opiates, deadened the present sense of anguish, only to enflame the fever of remorse’ (p. 240). [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
554. Mary Robinson, ‘To Apathy’, in *The Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Robinson* (London: Jones & Company, 1824), pp. 58-9. Robinson’s ‘Ode to Apathy’ echoes the Della Cruscan poet Bertie Greatheed’s ‘Ode to Apathy’ (1785), published 1in *The Florence Miscellany*, and provides another point of reference for Robinson’s influence by the liberal Della Cruscan poets. [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
555. Mellor, ‘Making an Exhibition of her Self: Mary Robinson and Nineteenth-Century Scripts of Female Sexuality’, p. 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
556. Ray Porter, ‘Reason, Madness, and the French Revolution’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, *Project Muse*, 20 (1991), 55-79 (p. 73), <DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/sec.2010.0299>. [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
557. Mellor, p. 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
558. Anna Close, ‘Notorious: Mary Robinson and the Gothic’, *Gothic Studies*, 6.2 (2004), 172-91 (p. 184),

     <DOI: 10.7227/GS.6.2.2>. [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
559. Hannah Cowles, ‘Opium Use and Romantic Women’s Poetry’, *South Central Review*, 29.1 (2012), 1-20 (p. 7), <<https://search-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/docview/1024292816?accountid=13828>> [accessed 12 February 2020]. For women’s poetry and opium, see poems like Maria Logan’s ‘To Opium’, Anna Seward’s ‘To the Poppy’, and Sara Coleridge’s ‘Poppies’. For the way male opium eaters represent the oriental as the other, see the way De Quincey depicts the Malay in his *Confessions*:

     […] a more striking picture there could not be imagined than the beautiful English face of the girl, and its exquisite fairness, together with her erect and independent attitude, contrasted with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enamelled or veneered with mahogany by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures and adorations. (p. 40) [↑](#footnote-ref-559)
560. Mary Robinson, *Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination*, in *Romantic Circles*, <<https://romantic-circles.org/editions/robinson/mrletterfrst.htm>l> [accessed 12 February 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
561. Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
562. Wordsworth, William, *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (London: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1979), pp. 1-483. From now on, all references to *The Prelude* will be drawn from this edition (different versions of the poem will be indicated in parenthesis). [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
563. Susan J. Wolfson, ‘Sounding Romantic: The Sound of Sound’, < <https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/soundings/wolfson/wolfson.html>> [accessed 8 August 2022] [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
564. Kristie Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-564)
565. See pp. 77-8 in Blair’s *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* on Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s contribution to studies of rhythm. [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
566. Murray R. Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1977), p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
567. Angela Leighton, *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
568. Jonathan Ashmore, ‘Hearing’, in *Sound*, eds. Patricia Kruth and Henry Stobart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 65-88)(p. 65). [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
569. Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, 2nd edn (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
570. In his recent study of the Gothic soundworld, Matt Foley approaches the ways the voice takes on a physical, othered presence in both classic and contemporary Gothic texts (whether novels, films or podcasts). For more, see Matt Foley, ‘The Vococentric Soundworld of Gothic Writing,’ *Elements in the Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) <DOI:10.1017/9781009162579> [accessed 28 March 2023]. [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
571. While many studies on the sublime have concentrated mainly on the aesthetics, politics and effects of sublime feeling, from Edmund Burke’s *Enquiry* to modern literary criticism like Peter de Bolla’s *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics and the Subject* (1989) and Philip Shaw’s *The Sublime* (2006), an extensive study of sublime sound seems non-existent. A very important contribution to phenomenology and music is Simon Jarvis’s *Wordsworth’s Philosophic Song* (2007), where he displaces the idea of ‘philosophic’ from philosophy itself to the ‘song’, which in itself engenders a process of thinking (pp. 3-4).

     Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (London: Routledge, 2006)

     Peter de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics and the Subject* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1989)

     Simon Jarvis, *Wordsworth’s Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
572. # Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757)

     [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
573. Henri Lefèbvre, *Rythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. by Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 22-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
574. Lefèbvre, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
575. Wordsworth, ‘Preface’, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
576. Lefèbvre, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-576)
577. This poem comes from an early manuscript for *The Prelude* (1805). You can find it here: William Wordsworth, ‘There Was a Boy’, *University of Toronto Libraries* <https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/there-was-boy> [25 January 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-577)
578. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, ‘10 December 1798’, in *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Christopher Wordsworth, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1851), p. 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-578)
579. William Wordsworth, ‘Upon Epitaphs’, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, Vol. II*, ed. by William Knight (London: Macmillan & Co, Ltd., 1896), pp. 123-90 (p. 128). [↑](#footnote-ref-579)
580. Wordsworth, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
581. James Castell, ‘Wordsworth, Silence and the Nonhuman’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 45.1 (2014), 58-61 (p. 61), DOI: 10.1086/TWC24044360. [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
582. Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
583. From a note to Wordsworth’s *Thoughts Suggested the Day Following on the Banks of Nith, Near the Poet’s Grave* (1835). William Wordsworth, *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Jared Curtis (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), p. 170. [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/literature-and-arts/german-literature-biographies/johann-wolfgang-von-goethe) and E. T. A. Hoffmann were major influences for the rise of the Gothic novel in England. [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
584. Wordsworth, p. 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
585. William Wordsworth, ‘Preface’, in *Lyrical Ballads 1805*, ed. by Derek Rope (Plymouth, Northcote House, 1968), pp. 18-48, (p. 25). [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
586. Gamer, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
587. Gamer, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
588. Emma Mason, *The Cambridge Introduction to William Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
589. # Mark R. Blackwell traces Radcliffe’s influence on Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, like in Book 6 of the ‘Simplon Pass episode, in which “Effort, and expectation, and desire / And something ever more about to be” (541-2) compensate for a mountain-climbing experience that fails to live up to Wordsworth’s imaginings’ (p. 159). Mark, R. Blackwell, ‘The Gothic: Moving in the World of Novels’, in *A Concise Companion to the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Cynthia Wall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 144-161.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
590. According to Duncan Wu, in *the Vale of Esthwaite* we perceive Walpole’s influence in the episode of the Baron that is ‘surrounded by ancient portraits’ (p. 143). *The Vale of Esthwaite* also echoes Collins’s poetry (for more, see Wu p. 33). As far as his other Gothic readings are concerned, Wordsworth read *The Minstrel* in 1791-2, and was really ‘fond of it’ (Wu, p. 12). Wordsworth also read *The Robbers* by 1797 (we can find influences in *The Borderers*) (p. 121), and *The Monk* by 1800 (p. 86).

     Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth’s Reading: 1770-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
591. According to Gamer, the ‘ambivalence toward gothic in romantic writing (…) inscribes itself into romanticism’s experiments with poetic form and genre, its assumptions about gender, and its confrontations with received notions of literary class and of the Poet’s identity’ (p. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
592. Angela M. Archambault, ‘The Function of Sound in the Gothic Novels of Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and Charles Maturin’, *Noise and Sound in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Études Épistémè 29 (2016), n.p. DOI: 10.4000/episteme.965. [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
593. ### Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, in University of Oxford Text Archive, <http://ota.ox.ac.uk/text/3368.html> [accessed 20 April 2020], p. 40.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
594. Blair, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
595. Burke, *Enquiry*, pp. 65-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
596. Baillie, *A series of plays: in which it is attempted to delineate the stronger passions of the mind. Each passion being the subject of a tragedy and a comedy*, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
597. *Preface*, p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
598. Archambault, *Noise and Sound in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, n.p.Wordsworth defined poetry in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* as ‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’ (p. 42), and poetry’s true language as stemming from ‘ordinary things’, and ‘rustic life’, while the language should be one that is ‘really used by men’ (p. 21). In Chapter XVIII of his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge partly contests Wordsworth’s experiment by arguing that the actual quality of a poetic composition lies in the productive imagination, and metre and elaboration are not necessary to determine this (p. 221). [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
599. *Preface*, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
600. *Preface*, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
601. John Aikin, ‘Observations on Objects of Terror’ in *The Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany* (March 1799), *ProQuest: British Periodicals*, pp. 191-4 (p. 192). [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
602. Aikin, p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
603. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2008), p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
604. Wordsworth, ‘Preface’, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
605. John Worthen, *Life of William Wordsworth: A Critical Biography*, Wiley Blackwell Critical Biographies (ProQuest Ebook Central: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2014), pp. 23-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-605)
606. *The Fenwick Notes of Willi am Wordsworth*, p. 61. Wordsworth would precede this comment with the observation that ‘[n]othing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being’ (p. 61). [↑](#footnote-ref-606)
607. Worthen, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-607)
608. Worthen, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-608)
609. Worthen, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-609)
610. Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies*, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-610)
611. Book XI, *The Prelude* (1805). [↑](#footnote-ref-611)
612. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-612)
613. Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 80-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
614. ‘MS. Drafts and Fragments 1798-1804’, in *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, pp. 485-406 (pp. 495-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
615. All quotations from ‘The Vale of Esthwaite’ are taken from: Wordsworth, William, ‘The Vale of Esthwaite’, in *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797*, ed. by Carol Landon and Jared R. Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
616. In his discussion of ‘The Vale of Esthwaite’, Worthen notes that ‘there are references to “The Minstrel” by the poet and philosopher James Beattie (1735–1803) – to which Bowman had probably introduced him (p. 26). [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
617. The way Wordsworth seems affected by the Graveyard poetry of the eighteenth century is evident in the preoccupation with darkness and death found in his early Gothic texts like ‘The Vale of Esthwaite’: particularly interesting is the evocation of the grave as home that we also find in Blair and other graveyard poets: ‘may my weary body sleep / In peace beneath a green grass heap / In Churchyard, such at death of day / As heard the pensive sighs of Gray’ (315-17). [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
618. Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho, A Romance*, ed. by Jacqueline Howard (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
619. Joanna Baillie, *De Monfort* (Cambridge: ProQuest, 1994), n.p. < <https://www-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/books/de-monfort-1851/docview/2138579245/se-2?accountid=13828>> [accessed 12 March 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
620. *Early Poems and Fragments*, p. 518. See John Aikin, ‘Sir Bertrand, a Fragment’, in *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840*, ed. by Rictor Norton (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 7-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
621. I will see how Aikin’s ‘Sir Bertrand’ infiltrates Wordsworth’s early Gothic texts. [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
622. The Gothic sound of the bell tolling will also be further analysed in relation to Coleridge and Mary Robinson in the next chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
623. Aikin, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
624. *Early Poems and Fragments*, p. 518. [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
625. See the extract from *The Vale of Esthwaite*: ‘a form unseen I found / Twist round my hand an icy chain / And drag me to the spot again’ (56-8). Landon and Curtis also draw a parallel with Helen Maria Williams’s *Irregular Fragment*, which refers to the ‘icy hand’ of Death (p. 524, 9-10). [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
626. Lefèbvre, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
627. Lefèbvre, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
628. Zizek refers to ‘transference’ when he discusses the construction of the fantasy of social reality around us and our place in it; therefore, he refers to the case of the ‘canned laughter’ in television, which conditions our reaction to certain events (p. 33). Transference is a very pertinent, symbolically complex case of externalising internal feelings and emotions. [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
629. Jack Vespa, ‘Veiled Movements in “The Vale of Esthwaite”’, *The Wordsworth Circle* 45.1 (2014), pp. 62-5 (p. 62) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24044362> [accessed 18 March 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
630. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press), p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
631. Nancy, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
632. Nancy, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
633. Mishra, ‘The Gothic Sublime’, p. 294. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sheffield/detail.action?docID=843409. [↑](#footnote-ref-633)
634. Mishra, p. 293-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-634)
635. Mishra, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-635)
636. William Wordsworth, ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’, in *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Andrew J. George (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1932), pp. 353-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-636)
637. William Wordsworth, ‘Resolution and Independence’, in *William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 160-264. [↑](#footnote-ref-637)
638. p. 30. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Zizek approaches the Marxian notion of the symptom in the process of ideological construction through the lens of Hegelian dialectics, in which the subject acquires an active, responsible role in perceiving and placing its own self in the world (pp. 247-8). [↑](#footnote-ref-638)
639. Mishra, p. 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-639)
640. Mishra, p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-640)
641. Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies*, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-641)
642. Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-642)
643. Ali Hicham Belleili, ‘Ear Perception as a Poetic Device: The Aesthetics of Sound in William Wordsworth’s Poetry’, *Linguæ & - Rivista di lingue e culture moderne*, 19.1 (2020), 35-49 (p. 42) DOI:10.7358/ling-2020-001-bell. [↑](#footnote-ref-643)
644. William Wordsworth, ‘Death a Dirge’, in *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797*, ed. by Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 563-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-644)
645. James H. Averill, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering* (Ithaca: Cornell UP,

     1980), pp. 47-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-645)
646. See the following passage from *The Mysteries of Udopho*:

     She watched to a late hour, when, no sound having renewed her fears, she at length sank to repose. But this was of short continuance, for she was disturbed by a loud and unusual noise, that seemed to come from the gallery, into which her chamber opened. Groans were distinctly heard, and, immediately after, a dead weight fell against the door, with a violence, that threatened to burst it open. She called loudly to know who was there, but received no answer, though, at intervals, she still thought she heard something like a low moaning. Fear deprived her of the power to move. (p. 542) [↑](#footnote-ref-646)
647. Archambault, n.p. Archambault very fittingly mentions ‘an anecdote concerning Francis Bacon, who apparently could not tolerate the sound of sharpening knives. Like Emily, Bacon stated that he felt the full effects of “a screeching noise which makes a shivering or horror in the body”’. Quoted in: Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England 1600-1770* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-647)
648. As Jonathan Wordsworth, Stephen Gill, and M.H. Abrams observe in a footnote to their Norton Edition of Book Ninth of *The Prelude* (1805, 1850), Wordsworth ‘had probably come to France chiefly to avoid family discussion of his career, centring at the time on a ‘paltry curacy’ in Harwich (*EY*, P. 59). The scheme to perfect his French, and so qualify as a gentleman’s traveling companion or tutor, is mentioned by Dorothy, *EY*, p. 66’ (p. 314). [↑](#footnote-ref-648)
649. For a more detailed account of Wordsworth and Annette, see Bromwich, pp. 10-11. The question of how Wordsworth was able to mix the personal and the political entails, according to Bromwich, the time he spent with Annette, and ‘the time he spent discoursing with republicans in Orléans and at the heart of the revolution in Paris. He returned to the capital on October 29, 1792, the day of Louvet’s denunciation of Robespierre, and the success of the reply by the master-demagogue would have been a warning to take care’ (p. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-649)
650. Bromwich, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-650)
651. Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart*, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-651)
652. Blair, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-652)
653. Dart, p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-653)
654. Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-654)
655. William Wordsworth, ‘XXIII: William Wordsworth to William Matthews, Blois, May 17th, 1792’, in *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, ed. by William Knight, 1 vols (New York: Haskell House, 1969), pp. 42-5 (pp. 44-5). [↑](#footnote-ref-655)
656. However, these moments of aversion to the horrors of an excited revolutionary mob were but glimpses on the cracks of what Wordsworth viewed as an otherwise honourable cause. As John Williams argues, ‘Wordsworth’s poetry and prose of the late 1790s through to the latter years of the war against Napoleon suggests that earlier experiences (the Lowther debt included) established a cynicism with regard [sic] to the Government that lodged deep in his mind’ (pp. 142-3) and pushed him further into the revolutionary cause. Works like his *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* (1793) stemmed from Wordsworth intense desire to contribute more actively to the amelioration of injustice and the dissemination of republicanism, especially by responding to reactions against the execution of Louis in January 1793. John Williams, *Wordsworth: romantic poetry and revolution politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989) [↑](#footnote-ref-656)
657. Aurélie Thiria-Meulemans, ‘To the Revolution and back: Wordsworth’s painful crossings’, *Polysèmes: Revue d’études intertextuelles et intermédiales* 16 (2016), pp. 1-12 (p. 3) http:// polysemes.revues.org/1499 [↑](#footnote-ref-657)
658. Thiria-Meulemans, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-658)
659. Thiria-Meulemans, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-659)
660. Edmund Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, in *Selected Works of Edmund Burke*, ed. by Edward John Payne, 3 vols (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), p. 119. For a fascinating caricature of Edmund Burke see James Sayers’s ‘Thoughts on a regicide peace’ (1796), and the way his thoughts are pictured during the French Revolution (fig. 12, Appendix). [↑](#footnote-ref-660)
661. For more, see Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years*, pp. 55-69. According to Roe, there is a possibility that Wordsworth met Beaupuy, a republican army soldier whom he came to venerate as an honourable patriot, through *Le Amis de la Constitution* in Blois, where Beaupuy was garrisoned in 1791-2. Henri Grégoire was elected ‘president of the society’ in 1791 (p. 50). [↑](#footnote-ref-661)
662. For more, see Marco Pinfari, *Terrorists as Monsters: The Unmanageable Other from the French Revolution to the Islamic State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Also, see Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) and Paul Youngquist, *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) [↑](#footnote-ref-662)
663. See fig. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-663)
664. See fig. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-664)
665. See fig. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-665)
666. See fig. 16. Cruikshank’s caricature wittily satirises Edmund Burke’s portrayal of the modern Leviathan in his *Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796). [↑](#footnote-ref-666)
667. Ildiko Csengei, ‘The Literature of Fear in Britain: Coleridge’s *Fears in Solitude* and the French Invasion of Fishguard in 1797’, *English Literature* 5 (2018), 183-205 (p. 184) DOI 10.30687/EL/2420-823X/2018/05/011 [↑](#footnote-ref-667)
668. Quoted in Csengei out of an 1803 ‘patriotic broadside’ (pp. 188-9). For more on fear mongering in Britain during that time, see Csengei. [↑](#footnote-ref-668)
669. *Female Heroism; as evinced during the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution*, *The Weekly entertainer: or, Agreeable and instructive repository* (1810), *ProQuest: British Periodicals*, pp. 965-969. It is followed by an article on the effects of fear (p. 969). [↑](#footnote-ref-669)
670. Philo-Nauticus, ‘On his Majesty’s Ship Britannia’, in *The Anti-Gallican: or Standard of British loyalty, religion and liberty* (1804), *ProQuest: British Periodicals*, p. 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-670)
671. Thomas Christie, *Letters on the Revolution in France* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-671)
672. See Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth’s Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-672)
673. The *Two –Part Prelude* of 1799 is the first time Wordsworth refers to the ‘spots of time’ that inform ‘our existence’ (288) and by which ‘our minds - / Especially the imaginative power - / Are nourished and invisibly repaired’ (292-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-673)
674. John A. Hodgson, ‘Revolution in “The Prelude”’, *Studies in Romanticism* 31.1 (1992), 45-70 (p. 46) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25600937> [accessed 18 April 2019].

     Hodgson backs him claim by referring to Coleridge’s characterisation of *The* *Prelude* as a ‘Poem on the growth and revolutions of an individual mind’ (p. 46). Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. by Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969) 2: 258, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-674)
675. As Jon. Wordsworth, Abrams, and Gill note in their Norton Critical Edition of *The Prelude*, ‘[p]ublic executions continued in England until 1868’ (p. 262). [↑](#footnote-ref-675)
676. Wordsworth’s tendency to sublimation continued in London, especially in his encounter with the beggar’s ghastly body (619), where, as C. R. Stokes contends, ‘abjection has been transcendentalised into sublimity. Real medical blindness is metamorphosed into the poeticized blindness of the seer’ (p. 216). Stokes, C. R., ‘Sign, Sensation and the Body in Wordsworth’s ‘“Residence in London”’, *European Romantic Review* 23.2 (2012), 203-223, DOI: 10.1080/10509585.2012.653281. However, there is another interesting example; on his journey to Cambridge in October 1787, Wordsworth seems to have encountered a woman, whose voice had uttered ‘blasphemy’, and was completely abandoned on the road to vice (VII, 418-420). Wordsworth’s shuddering at the sight of this is even more symbolic of human fear, because of the ‘barrier’ that at this point Wordsworth threw to separate humanity from human form (424-6), an ameliorating act for painful experiences to come. [↑](#footnote-ref-676)
677. Lefèbvre, *Rhythmanalysis*,p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-677)
678. Lefèbvre, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-678)
679. See also the portrayal of the palace as prison in William Blake’s *The French Revolution* (1791). William Wordsworth, ‘The Convict’, in *Lyrical Ballads: With a Few Other Poems, 1798* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 197-200 (p. 198). In his ‘The Dungeon’, Coleridge similarly calls the prison a place where man’s energies turn into ‘poison’ and creep back upon him ‘like a loathsome plague-spot’ (p. 139). Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘The Dungeon’, in *Lyrical Ballads: With a Few Other Poems, 1798* (New York: Columbia University Press),pp. 139-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-679)
680. Quentin Bailey, ‘Introduction’, in *Wordsworth’s Vagrants: Police, Prisons and Poetry in the 1790s* (USA: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 1-12 (p. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-680)
681. Bailey, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-681)
682. Ronald Schechter, ‘Conceptions of Terror in the European Enlightenment’, in *Facing Fear: The History of an Emotion in Global Perspective*, ed. by Michael Laffan and Max Weiss (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), n.p. According to Shechter, however, Voltaire, like many other Enlightenment thinkers, believed that maintaining fear and terror is necessary; what needed to change was that ‘one must know what produces these emotions.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-682)
683. Helen Maria Williams, *Letter I*., in *Letters Written in France*, ed. By Neil Fraistat and Susan S. Lanser (Peterborough, Ontario: broadview literary texts, 2001), p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-683)
684. Wordsworth was Helen Maria Williams’s admirer, and Worthen observes that he ‘had with him a letter of introduction’ to Williams from Charlotte Smith, whom he also highly esteemed. Characteristically, Wordsworth traveled ‘the eighty miles down’ in Orleans where Williams sometimes stayed, only to be disappointed because she was not there (p. 69) [↑](#footnote-ref-684)
685. *The Critical Review*, (January 1791): 117-18, in *Letters Written in France*, ed. by Neil Fraistat and Susan S. Lanser (Peterborough, Ontario: broadview literary texts, 2001) [↑](#footnote-ref-685)
686. Anna Seward, ‘Letter to Miss Williams, Colton, Dec. 12, 1790’, in *Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1807. In Six Volumes* (Edinburgh: George Ramsay & Co., 1811), pp. 44-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-686)
687. *Letter VII*, p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-687)
688. Bailey, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-688)
689. Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. by William Knight, 1 vols (London: Macmillan & Co, 1897). Project Gutenberg. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/42856> [Accessed 2 April 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-689)
690. Schechter, n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-690)
691. William Wordsworth, ‘Home at Grasmere’, in *William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 174-199. [↑](#footnote-ref-691)
692. William Wordsworth, ‘The Thorn’, in *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 59-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-692)
693. Jerrold E. Hogle, ‘The Gothic-Romantic Nexus: Wordsworth, Coleridge, “Splice” and “The Ring”’ *The Wordsworth Circle* 43.3 (2012) 159-165 (p. 161) <https://www>.jstor.org/stable/24043986 [↑](#footnote-ref-693)
694. Hodgson, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-694)
695. See fig. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-695)
696. Roe, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-696)
697. According to Worthen, it is typical of *The Prelude* to be turning back at moments like these ‘to the period of early youth, to the way he had, as a boy, yielded to Nature’ (p. 319). Wordsworth’s constant search for coping mechanisms can be readily seen in these lines: ‘Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought / Of opposition and of remedies’ (X, 129-30). [↑](#footnote-ref-697)
698. Colebrook, ‘Gothic Sublime’, p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-698)
699. Archambault, n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-699)
700. Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-700)
701. Benjamin Woodford, ‘Narrating the Gothic Sublime in Coleridge’s *Christabel*’, *Literary Imagination*, 18.2 (2016), 101-114 (p. 111) DOI: 10.1093/litimag/imw012. I will expand on this threat of intrusion in *Christabel* in Chapter Three. [↑](#footnote-ref-701)
702. In *The Prelude* of 1850, the line reads: ‘Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up / From tragic fiction or true story’ (75-6) [↑](#footnote-ref-702)
703. Marjean D. Purinton, ‘Wordsworth’s “The Borderers” and the Ideology of Revolution’, *The Wordsworth Circle* 23.2 (1992), 97-108 (p. 106) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24042426> [Accessed 25 April 2019]. [↑](#footnote-ref-703)
704. *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-704)
705. Coleridge’s Notebook Entry (347), September 27th, 1804. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge’s Notebooks: A Selection*, ed. by Seamus Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-705)
706. Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 1 vols, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-706)
707. Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, p. 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-707)
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