

1992

Hogg, Wordsworth, and Gothic Autobiography

Rebecca A. Pope

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pope, Rebecca A. (1992) "Hogg, Wordsworth, and Gothic Autobiography," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 27: Iss. 1.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol27/iss1/18>

This Article is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in Scottish Literature* by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

Rebecca A. Pope

Hogg, Wordsworth, and Gothic Autobiography

James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, readers will remember, tells virtually the same story—the tale of Robert Wringham, his radical, elitist, and antinomian Calvinism and his crimes—twice: once in the editor's narrative and again in Robert's own "Memoirs and Confessions," which are embedded in the editor's framing text. A tale about psychic/demonic doubles is told through a double narrative. Moreover, the interaction between these two narrative doubles constitutes an extensive, and at times parodic, critique of referential discursive modes in general, and realism and autobiography in particular.

The editor's frame depends on realist assumptions and aspires to the status of objective reportage. It trusts that a rational and empirical inquiry applying common-sense evaluative procedures to documentary and perceptual evidence can provide access to a knowable and incontrovertible real that can be accurately copied by a language which always remains secondary to it. But Hogg's novel is not a realist text; it is a gothic one which, despite its deployment of realist conventions, works by a gothic logic of ironic reversal.¹

¹A number of good critics see the novel's supernatural elements as less an exercise in gothic terror than an attempt to harken back to an older, pre-Enlightenment world view. Given that the gothic also rejects the rational and empirical values of the Enlightenment, I'm not sure that these two approaches to Hogg's novel are mutually exclusive. One of the secondary agendas of this essay is to show how Hogg's novel frequently takes up strategies and themes from the gothic tradition.

The editor embeds Robert's religious/fantastic narrative within his own in the hope that we will read it through the filter of his realist and common-sense assumptions. But this attempt to insure realist credibility ultimately undermines the realist illusion. A frame narrative always invites us to think in terms of interpretive and epistemological frameworks, but realism, to maintain its illusion as a mirror held up to nature, must efface its status as interpretive frame, as set of conventions and assumptions. Every frame, Susan Stewart observes, is on one level about the process of framing, about establishing an inside and an outside.² By highlighting the editor's realist assumptions in a frame and by contrasting them to Robert's narrative and its very different values and assumptions, Hogg's text shows that realism is not innocent but interested, not a mirror but one interpretive frame among many. Fiction, it appears, inhabits what purports to be fact.

By attending to what the editor's narrative values, assumes, and represses, we can see this process of privileging and excluding at work. His reductive explanation of the Brocken Spectre—that the apparition George sees is solely an effect of light and mist—shows how his realist code must either neutralize the unusual through a common-sense (or scientific) explanation that reasserts the normative and the lawful, or repress it, cast it out into one of those categories supposedly outside the frame—the mad, the nonsensical, or the illegitimate—which help to constitute that framework by accepting what it rejects or represses. The editor's reading of Robert's text employs both strategies:

Were the relation at all consistent with reason, it corresponds so minutely with traditionary facts that it could scarcely have missed to have been received as authentic; but in this day, . . . it will not go down that a man should be daily tempted by the devil, in the semblance of a fellow-creature; and at length lured to self-destruction in hopes that this same fiend and tormentor was to suffer and fall along with him.³

The editor tries to reassert the common and normative (although in the process he admits, without recognizing the ironic consequences for his own project, that the normal and common are relative) and to cast out Robert's tale into the realm of the unauthentic, illegitimate, and unreal here, and elsewhere, into the realm of the pathological. But the editor violates the values and assumptions of his own realist code in the very process of maintain-

²Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore, 1978), p. 87.

³James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (New York, 1970), p. 229. Further references are to this edition and will be bracketed in the text.

ing it. He strives for a kind of objective reportage, but to achieve it must reject documentary evidence, Robert's narrative, and ignore the eye-witness accounts of those who claim to have seen Gil-Martin which have been handed down through the oral tradition.

This undermining of the editor's realism occurs most strikingly in the embedding of Robert's narrative as an uncanny presence inside the editor's. This structural "burial" of Robert's text is appropriate because it epitomizes what the editor's narrative must repress. Robert refuses to limit the realm of the real to the realm of the perceived, and his text does not conform to the rationalist/empiricist tradition to which the editor's aspires. For example, Robert's journal contains a series of endings, what Magdalene Redekop calls a "parody of strong closing,"⁴ that reminds us, by contrast, of realism's heavy dependence on the appearance of strong closure to achieve its illusion of univocity, and by extension, truth. The dense intertextuality of Robert's narrative throws into relief the univocal aspirations of realism as well. Moreover, not only are the discursive voices of Robert's text multiple, but so, too, are the writing and represented subjects in his narrative. Realism, as many commentators have observed, is inseparable from the traditional notion of the subject as unified, conscious, present to itself, and capable of using language (conceived by this tradition as outside and secondary to the subject and corresponding in some way to its referent) as a vehicle of expression. The self-divisions which Robert's narrative recounts and enacts constitute a sustained assault on this tenet of the realist faith. Thus by placing Robert's narrative *within* rather than next to the editor's, Hogg's text suggests that the categories and strategies on which the editor's framing realism depends are not pure, that they are, like Robert himself, inhabited by otherness. Here, as on so many levels of this text, boundaries between interior and exterior, in good gothic fashion, leak and break down.

In a smart and sophisticated stroke, Hogg's text undermines the conventions realism uses to achieve its illusion of "truth to life" by embedding an autobiography, a genre which, more than most others, we have traditionally assumed, reflects and depends upon "real life." The rest of this essay will examine, with glances at Wordsworth's autobiography and Hogg's own, the novel's critique of autobiographical writing. By presenting autobiography not as a mirror reflecting a conscious, self-present subject, but as a tombstone epitaph marking an absence, Hogg's novel begins its sustained dismantling of the assumptions upon which autobiography and realism have traditionally depended: that the subject is unified, that "fact" and "fiction" are separate categories, that the reportorial has nothing to do with the literary,

⁴Magdalene Redekop, "Beyond Closure: Buried Alive in Hogg's *Justified Sinner*," *ELH*, 52 (1985), 172.

and, of course, that discourses correspond to their referents and that language is subordinate and exterior to the subject who uses it. In other words, Hogg's text exploits our tendency to think of autobiography as more "real" than realism, and by making this genre strange, unreal, and problematic *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* suggests that realism is equally so.⁵

The movement from frame to framed discourse often involves a shift in genre.⁶ This shift draws attention to genre as a framework of conventions and assumptions and invites comparison of the two genres' strategies, values, and conventions. The editor and Robert would probably deny that their two texts have much in common, but the editor's reportorial realism and Robert's autobiographical writing share a pretension to referentiality. Thus the editor, writing after Robert, must labor to deny Robert's narrative referential status by positing other genres for it, such as parable, allegory, or mad monologue. To protect both the mimetic status of his own text and the assumptions which underwrite it, the editor must reframe Robert's narrative as something other than a straightforward account of a real state of affairs.

Since Robert sees his narrative as an accurate record of his lived experience and the editor wants us to see it as anything but, the reader must look at how Hogg's text—as opposed to Robert's or the editor's—situates and defines Robert's autobiography. To do so requires attending less to Robert's text and the editor's commentary on it, than to the exhumation scene recounted in the editor's narrative which provides a purported source for Robert's autobiography. Here the editor relates how he and some companions broke open Robert's grave and found in it his text and his miraculously preserved corpse. Robert's text appears to be responsible for the extraordinary preservation—speaking of the freshness of the corpse one of the men speculates that "it has been for the preservation o' that little book" (p. 228). The scene splendidly exemplifies the gothic's habit of literalizing the metaphorical and, on another level, figures autobiographical writing as embalming. Further, Robert's pamphlet tells what the apparently uninscribed stones which mark out his grave fail to tell. Autobiography, then, is epi-

⁵My sense of autobiography in this essay is indebted to Elizabeth Bruss's *Autobiographical Acts* (Baltimore, 1976) and "Eye for I: Making and Unmaking Autobiography in Film," *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, 1980), pp. 296-320; Paul De Man's "Autobiography as De-Facement," *ELH*, 94 (1979), 919-30; Michael Ryan's "Narcissus Autobiographer: *Marius the Epicurean*," *ELH*, 43 (1976), 168-208 and "Self-Deconstruction," *Diacritics*, 6 (1976), 34-41; and Louis Renza's "The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography," *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, pp. 268-95.

⁶Mary Ann Caws, *Reading Frames in Modern Literature* (Princeton, 1985), p. 7.

taphic and memorializing, and reading it, this scene implies, is an act of grave-robbing, relic-hunting, a violation.

Critics have read this narrative of text-brought-up-from-the-grave as a parody of the Christian resurrection story, a fitting move given the novel's parodic inversion of most things Christian. The scene also recalls the many scenes of live burial in the more classically "gothic" texts in the tradition. But this displacing of body for text and the figuring of writing as embalming are also important strategies of Wordsworth, and it is important to see that Hogg's scene is every bit as Wordsworthian, parodically so at times, as it is parodically Christian.

If parody is a form of flattery, and if Hogg felt as slighted and insulted by Wordsworth as his account of the triumphal arch incident in his *Memoir of the Author's Life* suggests, then it is possible to say that Hogg, like so many other Romantic writers, both revered and resented Wordsworth.⁷ "I admire Wordsworth; as who does not, whatever they may pretend?" he grudgingly admits in his *Memoir* (p. 70). He then proceeds to note:

I have only a single remark to make on the poetry of Wordsworth and I do it because I never saw the remark made before. It relates to the richness of his work for quotations. For these they are a mine that is altogether inexhaustible. There is nothing in nature that you might not get a quotation out of Wordsworth to suit, and a quotation too that breathes the very soul of poetry. There are only three books in the world that are worth opening in search of mottos and quotations, and all of them are alike rich. These are the Old Testament, Shakspear [sic], and the poetical works of Wordsworth, and, strange to say, the "Excursion" abounds most in them (p. 71).

The simultaneous exaltation and deflation here place Hogg in a long line of Romantic "sons" who try to come to terms with a literary father. Hogg's usual strategy for making manageable the father or other figure of authority who will not be marginalized is parody; his comic undermining of the editor, for example, might well be directed at Scott. Indeed, we see this strategy at work before *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, in the funny and cunning par-

⁷During a visit to Rydal, Hogg accompanied a party that included De Quincey and the Wordsworths on a walk. They saw an arch of light across the horizon, and, according to his *Memoir*, Hogg commented that it was a "treeumphant airch, raised in honour of the meeting of the poets." According to Hogg, De Quincey relayed to him Wordsworth's response, a response Hogg himself did not hear: "Poets? Poets?—what does the fellow mean? Where are they?" Hogg, who across the span of his career wrote much more poetry than fiction, took Wordsworth's response as a personal insult. He notes in his *Memoir* that after the incident he felt a "lingering ill will" toward Wordsworth (p. 70). All quotations from James Hogg, *Memoir of the Author's Life and Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh, 1978). Further citations from this edition are bracketed in the text.

odies of Wordsworthian themes, motifs, and rhetoric in Hogg's collection of parodies, *The Poetic Mirror* (first published 1816).⁸

Many of the Wordsworthian themes and devices that Hogg parodies in the exhumation scene appear years earlier in *The Poetic Mirror*. Landscapes filled with graves, rustics who tell stories, and the skeleton of a drowned man all recall Wordsworth. "The Flying Tailor" begins with a description of a memorial tablet and then proceeds to recount the tale of the departed, a strategy Wordsworth uses most memorably in "Matthew." Thus Hogg's parodies repeatedly return to Wordsworth's habit of linking writing with corpses and poetry with mortality—links best exemplified by the poet's notion of the tombstone inscription as poetic archetype. Wordsworth develops this model most prominently in the three *Essays Upon Epitaphs*, the first of which, if Hogg had not read it upon its first appearance in an 1810 number of *The Friend*, he most certainly would have known through *The Excursion*, where it was republished as a note to the poem in 1814. The exhumation scene in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* draws similarly explicit links between writing and mortality and does so in a Wordsworthian setting and situation. The grave is, after all, in the countryside and marked with stones, Wordsworthian landscape features that silently wait for a local rustic to tell their stories to a passing stranger. While looking for the grave, the editor seeks guidance from some of the local inhabitants, all of whom speak the language of real Scotsmen, but not all of these locals are of the helpful and talkative Wordsworthian variety. Indeed, the most unhelpful of all, the figure who most pointedly refuses to play the role of idealized Wordsworthian rustic, is "Hogg." Unlike the leech-gatherer, who patiently puts aside his work to answer a fatuous gentleman's questions, this surly shepherd wants only to be left undisturbed so that he can get on with selling his stock.

After Robert's printed pamphlet, "The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Sinner: Written By Himself," is recovered from the spleuchan found on the corpse, one of the men exclaims: "I have often wondered how it is that this man's corpse has been miraculously preserved frae decay, a hunder times langer than any other body's, or even a tanner's. But now I could wager a guinea it has been for the preservation o' that little book" (p. 228). The speaker implies that the body stayed lifelike in order to preserve the book, but the sentence can also be read as claiming that the book's power of preservation had an embalming effect on the corpse. From the vantage point of the second reading, especially when we place the scene in relation to "Tintern Abbey" and *The Prelude*, the exhumation scene becomes a comic dramatization of the Wordsworthian faith in writing, especially writing about

⁸James Hogg, *The Poetic Mirror, or The Living Bards of Britain* (London, 1817). All quotations in this essay are from this edition.

the self, as a kind of embalming practice that aims to save the self for future restoration.

The miraculously preserved corpse thus becomes an emblem for the metaphoric notion of writing-as-embalming that subtends so much of Wordsworth's work in particular and the practice of autobiographical writing in general. Significantly, the embalming effects of the book are limited. By the time of the second exhumation, the one organized by the editor, the flesh that had been uncovered during the first "was merely the appearance of flesh without the substance" (p. 225). During this exhumation, the lower half of Robert's body, left undisturbed the first time, is exposed and examined. The editor reports that "all the limbs, from the loins to the toes, seemed perfect and entire, but they could not bear the handling. Before we got them returned again into the grave they were all shaken to pieces, except the thighs, which continued to retain a kind of flabby form" (p. 277). The still shapely thighs remind us that repressed desire refuses to die, a major theme in this text. But what interests me in the present context is the way the miraculous preservation is not sustained, the way the form represents Robert but on probing disintegrates. To use the terms the novel often employs to describe Robert's relations to Gil-Martin, we have here a case of shadow and substance—the form appears to be Robert, represents itself as Robert, but cannot survive intact attempts to bring it out of the hiddenness of the grave and into the world of the everyday. Significantly, the pamphlet takes on the opposite characteristics. At first glance it appears decayed, "so damp, rotten, and yellow that it seemed one solid piece" (p. 277). No Wordsworthian "poor earthly casket" vulnerable to destruction this, however. The pamphlet, the editor notes, survives its damp burial well: "With very little trouble, save that of a thorough drying, I unrolled it all with ease, and found the very tract which I have ventured to lay before the public" (p. 228).

The emphasis on the materiality of the pamphlet and the ultimate immateriality of Robert's form suggests that Robert's text is displacing (bodily) substance rather than truly preserving it and insuring its continued presence. Hogg's text uses the Wordsworthian model but, in the terms of the *Essays Upon Epitaphs*, strips it of Wordsworth's hope that language is incarnational and his fear that it is nothing but a garment, empty of substance and presence. Hogg takes up Wordsworth's analogy between text and woven cloth in his novel—for example, when Robert becomes caught in the weavers' loom he images the entanglements of his autobiographical project—but it is important to note that Hogg uses it earlier in one of his parodies. "The Flying Tailor" is a Wordsworthian tailor to whose "philosophic eye" a pair of breeches was "not what unto other folks they seem,/Mere simple breeches, but in them he saw/The symbol of the soul—mysterious, high/Hieroglyphics!" (p. 168).

Nor did his ready fingers shape the cut
Of villager's uncouth habiliments
With greater readiness, than did his mind
Frame corresponding images of those
Whose corporeal measurement the neat-marked paper
In many a mystic notch for aye retained (p. 168).

Hogg parodically deflates Wordsworth's longing for a language that is incarnational and a writing that mystically corresponds to living forms. Later, Robert Wringham embraces the incarnational model of language rejected here and uses it to underwrite his use of a writing metaphor—inscription in the Lamb's Book—for spiritual election. That Robert's scriptive salvation is really his fall is part of Hogg's critique of logocentrism. Moreover, as with language and writing, so too with books. In the Arab's dream passage in book V of *The Prelude*, titled "Books," Wordsworth laments the ephemerality of books, asking why the mind must "lodge in shrines so frail" (1805, V. 48). He closes his account of the semi-Quixote's attempt to save the stone and shell "books" from impending and unavoidable annihilation still lamenting, noting that he shares the Arab's "anxiousness" to preserve books, those "Poor earthly casket[s]" (ll. 160-64). Hogg, as *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* makes clear, has no such worries. Robert's text proves as durable as the cloth of his burial suit, and both are much more durable than his life or his corpse. Texts may be caskets for Hogg as well as Wordsworth, but they are anything but frail.

Both writers link the funerary with the textual, but it is important to note that Robert's grave is marked by stones, not by an inscribed tombstone. His buried memoir compensates for a missing tombstone inscription and thus becomes a first-person obituary or epitaph. The text's modelling of autobiography as discourse-from-the-grave illustrates the figure which Paul De Man in "Autobiography as De-Facement" isolates as the trope of autobiography, prosopopeia. For De Man, the trope figures the fiction of a voice from the grave, a voice which aspires to make the name inscribed on the headstone as intelligible as the face of the departed.⁹ The posthumous first-person focalization Robert sometimes employs—the rhetoric of his addresses to the reader often suggests that he sees his text as a voice from the grave preaching to those who survive him—is, then, not simply a reflection of his having begun his narrative while fleeing from apprehension and toward death nor solely an indication of his sense that, as Peter Brooks observes, a life is truly

⁹Paul De Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," *MLN*, 94 (1979), 926-8.

narratable only when it is over.¹⁰ This posthumous focalization suggests as well that given the self-loss that defines autobiography, the discursive stance of all autobiography must always be, as De Man suggests, in some sense posthumous. Significantly, De Man arrives at his notion of autobiography as voice-from-the-grave through a reading of Wordsworth, in particular the first of the *Essays Upon Epitaphs*; thus much of the critical exhumation De Man performs on Wordsworth's texts is already foreshadowed in Hogg's parodic revision of Wordsworth in the exhumation scene.

According to *The Arte of English Poesie*, prosopopoeia is any "counterfeit in personation,"¹¹ and as such this trope is the very figure of fiction as well as autobiography. The within-without structure of frames and the ensuing leakage between the realms constituted by the framing process—a structure and a logic put in motion by so many gothic texts on so many different levels—operate in autobiography as well. De Man speculates:

[Autobiography] seems to belong to a simpler mode of referentiality, of representation, and of diegesis. . . . But are we so certain that autobiography depends on reference, as a photograph depends on its subject or a (realistic) picture on its model? We assume that life *produces* the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer *does* is . . . determined . . . by the resources of his medium? (p. 920)

Manifesting a gothic logic, autobiography suffers the fate of any attempt to represent being: the without—fiction, textuality—comes to inhabit the within—fact, unmediated reference. Here again Hogg's text prefigures De Man's for as a relic found during an exhumation that amounts to an archeological dig, Robert's autobiography is preeminently an art(i)fact.

Hogg was as aware of the "artfulness" of autobiography as his contemporaries Wordsworth and De Quincey were. Like them, he wrote and rewrote his autobiography throughout his life; different versions of his *Memoir of the Author's Life* were published in 1807, 1821, and 1832. It is, Hogg claims, "an autobiography, *containing much more of a romance than mere fancy could have suggested*" (p. 3, my italics). The "romance" is the tale of how an unschooled shepherd became a famous writer, a writer who, in

¹⁰Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York, 1984), p. 280.

¹¹George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie of 1589* (Cambridge, 1936; rpt. 1970), p. 239.

saintly fashion, stays true to his calling despite repeated persecution by the literary establishment:

For my own part, I know that I have always been looked on by the learned part of the community as an intruder in the paths of literature, and every opprobrium has been thrown on me from that quarter. The truth is, that I am so. The walks of learning are occupied by a powerful aristocracy, who deem that province their own particular right; else, what would avail their dear-bought collegiate honours and degrees? No wonder that they should view an intruder from the humble and despised ranks of the community, with a jealous and indignant eye, and impede his progress by every means in their power (p. 46).

Hogg and his Robert have in common a taste for stylized rhetoric and use it to build their artful self-constructions, as Hogg does here when he casts himself as the persecuted victim and committed usurper of oppressive literary and class hierarchies. In this way Hogg's text demonstrates how autobiography always and artfully transforms lifeline into plotline.¹²

The *Memoir* is also the story of how Hogg became the "Etrick Shepherd," of how his own representations of himself and the representations of him made by others, particularly the "Shepherd" figure of the "Noctes Ambrosianae" series in *Blackwood's*, shaped both his own and the public's view of him as an untutored genius on the one hand and a bragging, ill-mannered lout on the other. The various versions of the autobiography seek not only to redress and revise unflattering representations of him, but also to participate in the construction of "Hogg" as a figure in the world of letters. Much of this enterprise entails promoting the legend of Hogg as the unschooled poet who had inherited the mantle of Robert Burns. In all the versions of the *Memoir*, for example, Hogg is fairly candid about the influence of the Scottish oral tradition on his work, but in later versions he deletes references to his wide reading. A writing shepherd who knows Dryden's Virgil can hardly be called a natural, uncultivated genius.

Thus as we have seen, and as the long controversy over the "truthfulness" of the *Memoir* suggests, Hogg's autobiography has thematic and rhetorical investments that are beyond, and at times in conflict with, simple referentiality. Not surprisingly, the text of Hogg's fictional autobiographer displays similar characteristics. Many critics have noted the novel's use of Biblical rhetoric, allusion, and typology, especially in Robert's nar-

¹²For an interesting account of the parallels between Robert's life and Hogg's own, see Barbara Bloede, "James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*: The Genesis of the Double," *Etudes Anglaises*, 26 (1973), 174-86.

rative.¹³ Robert's attempts to graft his lifeline onto those of others—Paul, David, Job, Jesus—are also attempts to read and write his life through other texts; in so doing, he inadvertently and ironically makes his life into a demonic translation of sacred narratives. Constructing parallels between the writer's life and those of figures in scripture is, of course, a strategy common to many religious autobiographies, and here, as elsewhere, Robert's narrative incorporates the conventions of the saint's life and the Puritan spiritual autobiography. Robert's casting of his discourse as an address to an absent audience, for example, is a strategy borrowed from Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, and one which Bunyan finds in the Pauline epistles. On the whole, Robert's text follows the traditional narrative pattern of religious lives which Elizabeth Bruss describes in *Autobiographical Acts*: "most sectarian autobiographers concern themselves with a threefold pattern of development: 'conviction of sin,' followed by positive evidence of election or an 'effectual call,' and a final culmination in 'justification,' in which faith triumphs over the world, flesh, and the devil to receive the undisputed righteousness of Christ" (p. 35).

The scene in which Robert is convinced of his sinfulness follows this model, but gothicizes it. In *Grace Abounding* the Lord works on Bunyan through texts, and in similar fashion Robert comes to his conviction of sin after hearing Wringham senior preach a sermon "to the purport that every unrepented sin was productive of a new sin with each breath that a man drew; and every one of these new sins added to the catalogue in the same manner" (p. 98). Hearing this, Robert becomes convinced that he can never save himself by his own actions or merits:

I was sensible that there were a great number of sins of which I had never been able to repent, and these momentary ones, by moderate calculation, had, I saw, long ago amounted to a hundred and fifty thousand in a minute, and I saw no end to the repentance to which I had subjected myself. A life-time was nothing to enable me to accomplish the sum. . . (p. 98).

Robert uses one of the defining features of the gothic—images and structures that threaten infinite division and duplication—to characterize life divorced from the divine origin. The uncontrollable multiplication of sins here recalls the horrible proliferation of narratives in Maturin's *Melmoth* and the threat of ceaseless self-division and duplication that preoccupies De Quincey in his highly gothic autobiographies, *The Confessions of an English*

¹³See especially the chapter on Hogg in Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge, 1972); John Bligh, "The Doctrinal Premises of Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 19 (1984), 148-64; and Ian Campbell, "Hogg's *Confessions* and the *Heart of Darkness*," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 15 (1980), 187-201.

Opium-Eater and *Suspiria de Profundis*. Indeed, the logic of Robert's experience inscribes on the level of theme the logic of the narrative structure of Hogg's text as a whole because, as the many commentators on the *mise-en-abyme* have pointed out, the embedding of a narrative which reflects in a significant way the narrative into which it is placed always opens the possibility, the threat, of an infinity of such narrative duplications.

The treatment of Robert's effectual calls is more openly parodic of scripture and spiritual autobiography. Parody is a favorite strategy of the gothic,¹⁴ and that gothic writing tends to the parodic should not be too surprising. As a reconfiguration of elements appropriated from another genre, parody is an apt strategy for a genre, and here an individual text, so concerned with themes of patricide, lost origins, repetition, and doubling, and so relentless in presenting language as always detached from what it signifies and detachable from its original context. Hogg's parody of the conventions of spiritual autobiography begins with a comic doubling. Robert undergoes effectual call, a supposedly once-in-a-lifetime event, twice: first, when Wringham senior, solely on the evidence of his own private colloquies with God, announces that Robert is one of the elect; and second, shortly before Robert sets out on his murderous progress with Gil-Martin. Because Robert himself experiences no evidence of election in the first instance, we might say that this is indeed an example of "ineffectual call," a concept his mother accuses him of inventing during one of their theological arguments. In the second election scene, however, Robert does experience "evidence," albeit evidence provided, ironically, by Gil-Martin and not by God. Shortly after Robert tells Gil-Martin that he is loathe to kill the preacher Blanchard, Robert has a vision which he interprets as a sign from God that he is chosen to do His work:

I turned round hesitatingly, and looked up to Heaven for direction; but there was a dimness came over my eyes that I could not see. The appearance was as if there had been a veil over me, so nigh that I put my hand to feel it. . . .

I looked again up into the cloudy veil that covered us and thought I beheld golden weapons of every description let down in it, but all with their points toward me (p. 125).

Thus begins Robert's demonic progress.¹⁵

¹⁴William Patrick Day, *In the Circles of Fear and Desire* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 59-62.

¹⁵The scene is erotic as well as parodic, of course. For a compelling account of the sexual issues in the novel which takes this scene into account, see the chapter on Hogg in

Novels that employ an embedded narrative structure demand a reading strategy which is sensitive to figure/ground relations between narratives, and these relations often extend beyond the narratives which comprise a given text. Read against the ground of the conversion narratives of Paul in Acts and Bunyan in *Grace Abounding*, Robert's vision of the golden weapons becomes a calling/election scene. The blinding light of God's revelation to Paul is here transformed into a darkness that suggests the eclipse of God and morality as Robert sets out in his murderous way. The vision of the golden weapons is also a demonic and parodic duplication of the vision of golden seals that assures Bunyan of his election. These seals recall the seals God places on the foreheads of His chosen ones to protect them from destruction in Revelations 7, an important text for any theology of election. The golden weapons call up and displace the Biblical seals. They serve as an emblem of Robert's murderous aggression, an aggression he dedicates to God and first directs at others and then at himself.

That this evidence is provided not by God but by Gil-Martin, figure of transgressions demonic or psychic, is an important irony upon which the text's parodic enterprise builds. This tainted evidence provides Robert with the opportunity, and he is eager to have it, to convince himself that he is justified by God, absolved of guilt and punishment. This leads, of course, to the central irony of the text, so aptly encapsulated in the "Justified Sinner" of the title. In the terms of the traditional narrative pattern of religious lives, his justification is in effect a conviction of sin.

Robert's narrative, then, consistently engages in a dialogue, at times parodic, with other texts. Like Hogg's own *Memoir*, it casts itself as a "life story" by organizing lifeline along traditional plotline, by imposing meaning and clarifying telos on the randomness of life through a process of selection and organization grounded in a textual tradition. In so doing, Robert's narrative exhibits the unavoidable artfulness of all autobiographies and thus the fictiveness that inhabits their "true-to-life" claims. I am not the first critic to note the artfulness of Robert's text, of course. In *The Romantic Novel in England*, for example, Robert Kiely observes that "Robert's Memoir is so artful that life, especially that of the speaker, can hardly survive it" (p. 225), but his analysis depends on the same epistemological notions that the parodic treatment of the editor's realist assumptions in the embedding narrative has already served to call into question. Kiely's sense of Robert's linguistic troubles returns us, once again, to the traditional and common-sense notions about language and the subject that inform many readings of autobiography as a genre and underpin realist and referential discursive modes in general, notions that contemporary theorists have worked to dismantle and which

Hogg's novel calls into question before them: the autobiographer is an autonomous subject capable of substantial and significant, if not complete, self-knowledge; the subject uses language to express itself and its knowledge to others; this language is transparent, neutral, and always separate from and in a relation of belated secondariness to the transcendent being of the subject. Robert's difficulties in writing out his life do much of the work of dismantling these assumptions.

Near the beginning of his text, Robert introduces his account of Wringham senior's proclamation of Robert's election with a paragraph that markedly interrupts the flow of his narrative:

I come now to the most important period of my existence—the period that has modelled my character, and influenced every action of my life—without which, this detail of my actions would have been as a tale that hath been told—a monotonous *farrago*—an uninteresting harangue—in short, a thing of nothing. Whereas, lo! it must now be a relation of great and terrible actions, done in the might, and by the commission of heaven. *Amen* (p. 104, Hogg's italics).

Like any diligent narrator, Robert consciously provides his readers with instructions for reading and evaluating his text. He also does unconsciously just what he fears Gil-Martin sets him up to do, subvert and condemn himself out of his own mouth. Like any discourse, Robert's always says more, or less, or other than he intends. It does here when he denies that his narrative is a harangue "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" and in so doing evokes the guilt of another murdering Scottish usurper.

As an account of his election and ensuing career that he assumes will be read in the future and thus will keep his influence "alive" after his death, Robert's narrative knots together two schemes of salvation, in the Word and in words. He reasons that his election places him above the fall and makes him exempt from its consequences, that both he and his narrative are endowed with significance, authority, and a privileged autonomy free of the division, slippage, and belatedness that mark the fall. For example, he assumes that the privileged relationship with the divine origin that he claims for himself exempts him from the cycle of human generation—he becomes adopted of God—and gives him license to do away with his brother and his parents—chronic reminders of his secondary, non-original status. He tries to become what so many gothic sons aspire to be, his own origin, and makes, in turn, similar claims for his narrative. His privileged relationship with the divine origin, he asserts, endows his language with authority and his tale with original status: it is not "a tale that hath been told."

Robert repeatedly links writing and election as modes of salvation. He uses a writing metaphor for his election and at key moments in the text employs a vocabulary of inscribing and decreeing to describe his salvation:

That I was now a justified person, adopted among the numbers of God's children—my name written in the Lamb's book of life, and that no past-transgression nor any future act of my own, or of other men, could be instrumental in altering the decree (p. 105).

As autobiography "saves" through an embalming inscription, so election saves through inscription in the Lamb's Book. As we have seen, however, autobiography is like a tombstone; it traces an absence. Robert's election, in similar fashion, merely assures the loss of his immortal soul. The promises of permanence and self-presence which underwrite traditional notions of autobiography and the transcendent prelapsarian purity and unity promised by Robert's theology of election are both, the text implies, tantalizing and unrealizable phantoms. The textualizing of the transcendent here suggests, then, that in Hogg's novel there is no escape from the consequences of the fall: difference, division, death.

By bringing together writing and election, the text highlights them as two modes of self-division and self-loss which duplicate the difference and division that, Hogg's novel implies, are inherent in being. Robert begins his narrative by proclaiming his difference—"I was born an outcast in the world" (p. 80)—and the psychological imperative behind his conviction of his election seems a need less to elide the division between himself and the wider community than to revise its terms. Election sets him apart: no longer the powerless second son rejected by his biological father, he is a chosen son of God empowered to wreak His vengeance. The agent, or vehicle, of this recasting is, of course, Gil-Martin, who serves as the locus for the novel's preoccupation with issues of difference and division.

This is not the place for a long rehearsal of the critical controversy over Gil-Martin. For some readers he is the weak and ambitious Robert's double, a sort of psychic left-hand man, the potent "potentate" who makes Robert's thoughts omnipotent. For others, he is a devil, a figure real and exterior to Robert who tempts him to transgression and works to insure his damnation. Choosing between the two readings, I think diminishes the novel's power and Hogg's skill. To claim that the double-devil debate is undecidable, however, is not to require that every reading treat both threads with equal attention or to prohibit the uncovering of new strands, new ways of looking at Gil-Martin. Indeed, at times the double appears to become triple: Robert confesses that he feels as though he has lost himself as a subject altogether and is instead distributed between Gil-Martin and his brother George. This image of repeated "doubling" and dispersal would seem to be an invitation from the text to multiply, in good gothic fashion, rather than choose readings. The Wringham circle is devoted to wringing from a text as many non-heretical interpretations as possible, but they do so in the hopes of finding the single

"true" meaning. What I have in mind here is more in line with Gil-Martin's equivocal prayer which, Robert is appalled to realize, can be understood in two very different, but equally convincing, ways.

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner is, as we have seen, a novel preoccupied with doubling, writing, language, death, and their intersections by a writer who knew his Wordsworth. These features combine to allow us to read Gil-Martin as both Robert's psychic double and his "discursive double" or "textual other," a figure in the text that represents and dramatizes the workings and logic of Robert's autobiographical enterprise. Gil-Martin's two distinguishing features are, after all, his extraordinary eloquence and his ability to mimic and impersonate. Much of his power derives from his capacity for manipulating language, and it is he, of course, who supervises the printing of Robert's manuscript. Finally, as psychic double he is a phantom who enacts Robert's fantasies, and as demon he serves the Father of Lies; thus as both double and devil Gil-Martin is a figure for fictions and as such an apt emblem for autobiography as Hogg's text presents it.

Gil-Martin appears to Robert on the very day that Wringham announces Robert's election. The timing of this appearance suggests that Robert's salvation is ultimately his damnation. More specifically, Gil-Martin appears immediately after the saving inscription, as if he were the product or effect of this saving writing. Indeed, when Robert returns home after meeting Gil-Martin, Wringham notes that the young man has been "transformed, since the morning," and upon seeing him his mother exclaims that "he is either dying or translated" (p. 110). As Robert's contact with Gil-Martin increases, so do his feelings of self-estrangement, and this progressive self-alienation is a symptom of both his psychological condition and his autobiographical project. As psychic double, Gil-Martin reminds us that the subject is never completely present to him/herself and is always inhabited by a constituting otherness. The long periods during which Robert, without consciousness of doing so and apparently with the aid of Gil-Martin, acts out the desires he usually represses are ample illustration of the text's sense of the self as divided and its knowledge of itself as illusory. But Hogg's novel pushes this insight further. Like Wordsworth, Hogg knows that the process of writing out the self both illustrates and exacerbates the subject's fundamental estrangement from itself.

For example, in "Tintern Abbey" and *The Prelude* Wordsworth is concerned with how the self represents itself and its past to itself in autobiography, and in *The Prelude* his discussion of these issues often turns on the same themes we have seen in Hogg's critique of autobiography: doubling, spectrality, gaps, illusion, and death. In Book II, for instance, the past and present Wordsworths seem so different, Wordsworth's act of self-reflection and recording opens such a "vacancy" between them, that he experiences himself

as double: "sometimes when I think of them I seem/Two consciences—conscious of myself,/And some other being" (1805, II, ll. 31-3). The doublings, gaps, and self-estrangement here reappear in the well-known passage in Book IV in which Wordsworth likens his project to finding, and then losing, one's reflection in water. "Perplexed," and unable to "part/The shadow from the substance," the gazer finds the surface of the water "crossed by the gleam/Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,/And motions that are sent he knows not whence,/Impediments. . . ." (1805, IV, ll. 254-5, ll. 258-61). The reflection in the water, of course, is an ideal self-image that mirrors back the wholeness, coherence and self-presence which the subject seeks but never finds. The passage supplies, as well, an emblem for why this ideal image will always remain an ideal, a fiction, for the subject. Like the appearance of Gil-Martin in Hogg's novel, the traversings of otherness across the gazer's image—sunbeams, motions, impediments—imply that the subject is always traversed by otherness, that there is a constituting difference within the subject.

From "Tintern Abbey" on, Wordsworth's autobiographical writing seeks to cover over the vacancies he intuits, to elide the differences and gaps between past and present, real and textual Wordsworths, in an effort to present to himself and his readers a "unified Wordsworth," at one with himself, his past, and his text. At times, however, the very strategies he uses to present this total "Wordsworth" ironically undercut his aspiration and remind us of how impossible the task he has set for himself is. For example, the spectral double figures that populate *The Prelude*—the Winander Boy, the old soldier, and others—serve to represent lost, rejected, or feared aspects of Wordsworth himself. The blind beggar of Book VII is especially important for our purposes because this double, "Wearing a written paper to explain/The story of the man, and who he was," figures the poet's anxieties over his own autobiographical project (1805, VII, ll. 614-15). The paper, Wordsworth calls it a mere "label," is a *mise-en-abyme* of Wordsworth's autobiographical project, a single sheet—emblem of all that we can know, or write, of ourselves—that stands in stark contrast to the ever-expanding *Prelude* and defeats its totalizing aspirations. Moreover, in its brief identification of man and story on a single sheet, the label takes on the aspect of a tombstone epitaph. Despite the visionary potential of the beggar's blindness, he is, like most of Wordsworth's border figures, remarkably corpse-like: unmoving, fixed, sightless.

Like Hogg's exhumation scene, the passage links writing, especially autobiographical writing, and death. Autobiography aspires to embalm the self and keep it safe from inevitable annihilation, and such, clearly, is the dream of both Wordsworth and Hogg's Robert. But, as *The Prelude*'s moments of doubt and perplexity and Robert's difficulties living and writing as one in-

scribed in the Book suggest, to construct a text that fully and truly presents a transcendent and unified being is impossible. As Robert's experience with Gil-Martin implies, not only is such a text an illusion, but the very process of trying to produce it is as much an exercise in self-loss and self-division as it is self-preservation. What Wordsworth worries over Hogg exploits: all self-representations—whether the representations the subject makes of itself to itself or those the subject makes of itself to others—are, thanks to the nature of the subject and of signs, ghostly, spectral, counterfeit. All autobiographies are, in a sense, ghost stories.

From this vantage point we can see that autobiography and psychological doubling follow the same death-dealing logic. In his essay on the uncanny, Freud cites Otto Rank's claim that the double "was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death.'"¹⁶ After the stage of primary narcissism, however, the double takes on a contrary and threatening aspect: "From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes an uncanny harbinger of death" (XVII, 235). Autobiography as text-from-the-grave depends on a similar logic. As the subject's attempt to insure itself against extinction, it ultimately marks out and effects the subject's absence. In the tradition of gothic reversals, attempts to preserve the ego from dissolution insure its annihilation. Roland Barthes suggests this death-defying and death-dealing logic when he observes that "to write oneself may be a pretentious idea; but it is also a simple idea: simple as the idea of suicide."¹⁷

For Rank, doubling's logic is simple: the thanatophobia that produces the double in order to preserve the self ultimately leads to suicide. Hogg's model for autobiography implies this logic and literalizes Barthes' metaphor: the text-from-the-grave here is from a suicide's grave. When we read Gil-Martin as both psychic and textual double and see his relations to Robert as an extended metaphor for the relations between a writer and his autobiography, further parallels between his writing and his living appear. For example, as Robert's involvement with his double grows, so too does his desire for extinction: "My soul longed rather to be inclosed in the deeps of the sea or involved once more in utter oblivion," he exclaims in a rhetoric that recalls Faustus's closing speech in Marlowe's play (p. 174). Near the end of his demonic progress, Robert confesses that "a thousand times I wished my-

¹⁶Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London, 1953-54), XVII, 235. Further references, bracketed in the text, are from this edition.

¹⁷Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (London, 1977), p. 56.

self nonexistent" (p. 211). Thus when Robert's mother notes that her son, after having met Gil-Martin, looks as if he is "either dying or translated," she has made an apt and valuable observation. Hogg's novel implies that dying and translating may not be mutually exclusive. The self-annihilation Robert so desires is, in a sense, achieved through writing the very text he hopes will preserve him, and, as the emblem for this writing project it is entirely appropriate that the uncanny Gil-Martin tempts, and probably helps, Robert to commit suicide.

The editor rejects reading this suicide's autobiography as an allegory, but we can read Robert's relations with Gil-Martin as an extended metaphor for the doubling-of-being-by-sign that constitutes the autobiographical enterprise. As product of an "inscription" that doubled the writer textually and psychologically, Gil-Martin stands as a reminder that the inscribed "I" always has a ghostly and spectral relation to the inscribing "I." The fictionality inherent in the genre is in part a function of the gap between language and being. Significantly, some of Robert's perplexities over who Gil-Martin really is suggest this gap. The gaps opened by the doublings—the differences within the subject and between the subject and various externalized others—often raise linguistic issues for Robert. After confessing that he feels "as one beside myself" (p. 126) and observing that he "generally conceived [him]self to be two people" (p. 139), Robert marvels:

It mattered not how many or how few were present: this my second self was sure to be present in his place, and this occasioned a confusion in all my words and ideas that utterly astounded my friends, who declared that . . . they had never heard my conversation manifest so much energy or sublimity of conception. . . . The most perverse part of it was that I rarely conceived *myself* to be one of the two persons. I thought for the most part that my companion was one of them, and my brother the other; and I found that, to be obliged to speak and answer in the character of another man, was a most awkward business at the long run (pp. 139-40, Hogg's italics).

Like Wordsworth's watery ideal image that disappears when traversed by otherness, Robert feels himself disappear as a subject, rendered less a person than a point of intersection, a locus for conflicting forces—the social and the solipsistic, the sensual and the ascetically intellectual, the heterosexual and the homosexual—conveniently denominated "George" and "Gil-Martin."

This much any reading of Gil-Martin as psychic double or metaphor for a de-centered subject would point out. What further interests me is that Robert feels "obliged to speak and answer in the character of another man," that when his "second self" is present he feels like an imposter, a counterfeit, the vehicle for another's language. Because Robert's conversation at these times is unprecedentedly energetic and sublime, and because, according to

Robert, it is Gil-Martin who among all the characters in the novel speaks with the most sublimity, we can suppose that Robert feels himself rhetorically displaced by Gil-Martin. This supposition gains force when we move from the level of Robert's language to that of his narrative. Here, too, he feels displaced by his double. Looking back on his past and his text, Robert complains that the narrative intended to record his own life has, against his will, become the story of Gil-Martin: "It will be observed that, since I fell in with this extraordinary person, I have written about him only, and must do so to the end of this memoir, as I have performed no great or interesting action in which he had not a principal share" (p. 124). Robert's relations to his text become as attenuated as his relations to his family and community are; he feels cast out, marginalized, dispossessed of his own autobiography by (an)other.

Robert needs to see his relation to his life-story as a non-relation in order to relieve himself of culpability, of course. Significantly, working with this psychological and moral imperative and, indeed, enabling Robert to succeed as well as he does in estranging himself from himself, is the alienating effect of language. From this perspective Kiely's sense that Robert becomes "lost" in his language takes on a new, different, force. For Kiely, Robert's language is so formal, conventional, and stylized that it fails to express Robert's unique, subjective, and pre-textual being. But Hogg's text, aware of the gap, always a place of alienation and self-estrangement, between language and being and, further, skeptical of notions of subjectivity which assume a transcendent selfhood wholly unified and present to itself, suggests that Robert's "loss" in language is unavoidable.

For example, the displacement of Robert by Gil-Martin in Robert's confessions follows the same logic as the transformation of "I" into "he/she" that occurs in all autobiographical writing. Louis Renza has argued that the gap between the writing self and the "discursive 'I' passing seriatim through any piece of sustained writing" presents the autobiographer with a "unique pronominal crux: how can he keep using the first-person pronoun . . . without it becoming in the course of writing something other than strictly his own self-referential sign—a de facto third person?"¹⁸ The gap that the first-person pronoun opens between language and being (past or present) serves as an especially marked illustration of the estranging and alienating effects of language. From this vantage point, when Robert acknowledges that his language and his text seem to belong to someone else, he seems less mad or possessed than acutely aware of the consequences of his discursive project.

¹⁸Louis Renza, "The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography," *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, 1980), pp. 278-9.

By displacing Robert, Gil-Martin serves as an emblem of the way an autobiographer's textual double is always in some sense other, detached from its reference and a mark of its absence. Indeed, the way "he" masquerades as "I" here returns us to autobiography as voice-from-the-grave that as such is also a counterfeit impersonation. Significantly, counterfeit impersonation is one of Gil-Martin's most striking talents.

Moreover, this process of self-estrangement through self-representation begins even before Robert's narrative does, on its title page. Robert writes the narrative and Gil-Martin makes sure that it is printed, but the text refuses to tell who is responsible for the title page. We do not need to know who wrote it, however, to find it revealing. It says: "The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Sinner: Written by Himself." The appearance of the third-person pronoun and the absence of Robert's name are striking, as if the title page enacts the consequences of the autobiographical act which we have been isolating here. Like a signature, a writer's name on a title page traditionally serves to authorize the discourse, to give it origin, reference, and signifying intention. Indeed, Robert's narrative reminds us of these conventional associations and expectations in the scene in which he is confronted with documents which he does not recall signing but which without doubt bear his signature and for which he must thus take responsibility. By substituting the anonymous and alienated third-person for the proper name, the title page prefigures the text's presentation of autobiographical writing as self-estrangement and its dismantling of the traditional notion of a transcendental subject, the author, as origin and referent of the autobiographical text.

Michael Sprinker has observed that "Autobiography and the concept of the author as sovereign subject over a discourse are products of the same *episteme*,"¹⁹ and Hogg's text suggests as much through its sophisticated subversion of them both. Autobiography, according to this novel, marks an absence and as such can present only a counterfeit, fictionalized, and spectral double of a writing subject never fully present to itself in the first place. The writing subject, Robert's narrative makes clear, never has sovereignty over self or text. Here again issues of writing and representation parallel conventional gothic themes. The gothic world is always a Faustian one where aspirations to sovereignty lead inevitably to reversal and fall, and both Robert's writing and his religious life repeat this pattern. Robert's story is, in one sense, the tale of author unauthorized.

The conventional faith in the author as sovereign authority over his/her text is unsettled again in the closing section of the novel, the second half of the editor's frame. As Robert has his textual double, so too does Hogg, the

¹⁹Michael Sprinker, "Fictions of the Self: The End of Autobiography," *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, 1980), pp. 325.

surly shepherd who appears at the close. The proto-Borgesian scene is in the tradition of what the novel's editor calls the "ingenious fancies" and hoaxes perpetrated in print by the *Blackwood's* group, led by John Lockhart and John Wilson ("Christopher North"), with which Hogg had a loose and uneasy association (p. 222). The editor recounts his attempts to track down the grave of the purportedly miraculously preserved corpse, noting that he learned of the grave from a letter in *Blackwood's* signed "James Hogg" (and which was actually published in *Blackwood's* the year before Hogg's novel came out). Undeterred by his companion's warning that "Hogg has imposed as ingenious lies on the public ere now" (p. 222), the editor goes in search of the grave and comes across the shepherd "Hogg." This Hogg refuses to guide them to the grave, never claims to have authored the letter, and does not appear to be the sort to write such a letter in the first place. The editor finally does locate a grave and finds in it Robert's half-preserved corpse and his printed pamphlet and hand-written diary. There are discrepancies, however, between this grave and the grave described in the letter (which the editor has been kind enough to embed within his own narrative for our perusal). After reading the letter and comparing the grave described there with the grave described by the editor, the reader is left wondering if the author of the letter has lied, or gotten things wrong through incompetence, or even further, whether these accounts are descriptions of two different graves.

We can, of course, see this textual "Hogg" as simply a counterfeit self-parody and the appearance of this unhelpful, perhaps lying, perhaps incompetent, figure as an elaborate ruse employed by an anonymously published text to keep the identity of its author a secret. Indeed, for many years after Hogg was revealed as the author critics continued to contend that the novel must have been written by someone else. Through anonymous publication and the insertion of a "Hogg" character who may be lying and who certainly does not appear to be interested in writing, the novel seems to un-authorize itself.

We might impose interpretive closure here by claiming that directing this apparent attempt to free the novel from Hogg as origin and author is the real and autonomous Hogg who Thackeray-like pulls the strings from outside the textual frame. But when we turn to the "real author," issues of textual doubling, anonymity, impersonation, and counterfeit signatures reassert themselves. Two years before Hogg's novel was published, *Blackwood's* began running a popular series of imaginary conversations called the "Noctes Ambrosianae." Many writers contributed to the series, including Hogg and Lockhart, but the majority of the "Noctes" were written by Wilson as "Christopher North." The conversations regularly featured a caricature of Hogg as the "Ettrick Shepherd," a caricature so influential that a chagrined Hogg found that people he met expected him to have the same traits and per-

sonality—not all flattering—as his counterfeit textual double. In his *Memoir* he complains,

I soon found out that the coterie of my literary associates made it up to act on O'Dogherty's principle, never deny a thing that they had *not* written, and never to acknowledge one that they had. On which I determined that, in future, I would sign my name or designation to everything that I had published, thus I might be answerable only for my own offences. But as soon as the rascals perceived this, they signed my name as fast as I did. They then contrived the incomparable "Noctes Ambrosianae," for the sole purpose of putting all the sentiments into the Shepherd's mouth which they durst not avowedly say themselves, and those too often applying to my best friends (p. 77, Hogg's italics).

"That magazine," writes Hogg of *Blackwood's*, "has often put words and sentiments into my mouth of which I have been greatly ashamed . . . and many of those after a solemn written promise that such freedoms should never be repeated" (*Memoir*, p. 59). Hogg's attempt to make sure that his signature and his name remain guarantors of authenticity and authority fails amid a proliferation of counterfeit signatures and counterfeit Hogg's. The authoring of him by others, he finds, un-authorizes and de-authorizes him in return, and his signature loses all value, as if it too were counterfeit.

In a letter to William Blackwood, Hogg observes that publishing *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* anonymously provided "Delightful scope and freedom" (reprinted in *Memoir*, p. 55) and, strikingly, he takes up the same theme of freedom eight years later in a letter to Lockhart. In it Hogg advises Lockhart to write his proposed biography of his father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott, under Hogg's name. This strategy, Hogg assures him, "will give you ten times more freedom of expression" (*Memoir*, p. xi). By 1832 Hogg acknowledges what his novel earlier intuits: sovereigns can always be counterfeited; to write as Hogg and to write anonymously may be the same thing. To write autobiographically, we have seen, might well be to write anonymously, too. By embedding in a realist frame a genre more "real" than realism and then making it so unreal and unnatural in its uncanny and spectral doublings, its ironic reversals, and in its querying and subversion of all varieties of authority, Hogg's text makes realism and autobiography unfamiliar. The strategy prompts us to wonder whether these two discursive modes might be the most gothic kinds of writing of all.