

James Hogg's Ambiguously Justified Sinner

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
In  
English

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David Radcliffe

April 26, 2016  
Blacksburg, Virginia

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores Hogg's interpretation of indeterminacy both throughout his career and in *Justified Sinner*, especially in the character Gil-Martin. Hogg seems to reject the tradition of choosing one side over another in such a dichotomy, and instead chooses to look at both extremes as equally co-present. Hogg wrote *Justified Sinner* within the framework of the literary Gothic tradition and used Gothic tropes to create ambiguity throughout his novel, as is the case throughout his body of works. Many of the ambiguities in *Justified Sinner* center on the character Gil-Martin. My interpretation of Gil-Martin's ambiguity complicates the traditional scholarship on *Justified Sinner*.

## DEDICATION

Para mi dulcita, mi princesa, y mi novia, Carolina. You are the best part of me.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis committee: Dr. Graham, Dr. Metz, and Dr. Radcliffe. Thank you for the hours spent combing over my drafts for errors, for the wonderful advice, and for helping me through the challenge of this thesis. All three of you have been professors that I could rely on to help me through this process called grad school. And, all three of you will be the professors that I reflect upon in the years to come as I establish my own teaching and mentoring methods.

Thank you to my colleagues, the Virginia Tech English Department GTA's, for allowing me the chance to gripe and for the constant support as I wrote.

Lastly, I need to acknowledge my wonderful wife who came to me in the middle of this writing process. Thank you for tolerating all the sleepless nights, the bursts of frustration, and the seemingly endless piles of books scattered around the house. I could never have completed this without you.

Josh Dobbs

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## Introduction

*“By all means, Hogg. I insist on it. Something of the phenomena of nature, I beseech you. You should look less at lambs and rams, and he-goats, Hogg, and more at the grand phenomena of nature.” – James Hogg “A Scots Mummy”*

The preceding epigraph contains the very first words that James Hogg used to describe his Gothic masterpiece *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, first published in 1824: “The grand phenomena of nature.”<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, however, the preceding epigraphic quote does not come from *Justified Sinner* itself. Rather, it comes from an article that Hogg had written for *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* almost ten months before *Justified Sinner* was published. Although most of that article was reprinted in Hogg’s novel as an integral plot point, its introduction, which includes this epigraphic quote, was dropped. Of course, those who have read *Justified Sinner* will laugh upon reading this quote, for there is certainly not much that’s natural about the events that transpire within the pages of Hogg’s novel. What resides within the pages of *Justified Sinner* instead is a series of grisly murders, several supernatural storms, ethereal manifestations in the mist, and a shape-shifting doppelgänger.

Hogg frames *Justified Sinner* with a narrative concerning the investigation of a local legend, one that involves an unnaturally well-preserved corpse within a suicide’s grave. Hogg’s narrator, the fictitious editor of the novel, exhumes the grave and there finds both the remarkably well-preserved corpse and the “damp, rotten, and yellow”<sup>2</sup> remains of a manuscript. The first half of the novel proper entails the story that the editor is able to piece together from “history,

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<sup>1</sup> James Hogg, “A Scots Mummy,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 14.79 (1823): 188.

<sup>2</sup> James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. John Carey, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 252.

justiciary records, and tradition”<sup>3</sup> concerning the events within the manuscript that he finds. This part primarily deals with the childhood of young George Colwan, heir to the Dalcastle estate, and the legal issues that arise between him and his younger brother, Robert Wringhim. George is eventually murdered, and it is only through the efforts of his surrogate mother, Mrs. Logan, that Robert is revealed to be the murderer. This half of the novel ends abruptly with Robert’s disappearance. The second half of the novel is the supposed manuscript that the editor found in the suicide’s grave. This manuscript is Robert’s side of the story, detailing George’s murder, as well as the murder of several other characters, the role played in the murders by the mysterious doppelgänger Gil-Martin, and the details of Robert’s life on the run from the law and from Gil-Martin. Ultimately, the novel’s reader comes to understand that it is Robert Wringhim who is entombed within the suicide’s grave.

If the framing narrative is constructed as a credible representation of Hogg’s authorial intent, then the novel is meant to be a recording of a natural phenomenon. At least, according to the *Blackwood’s* letter, that is what Hogg is ostensibly challenged to produce by his friend Sir Christopher North. Hogg also concludes the *Blackwood’s* letter with a connection to nature. Here, Hogg makes it abundantly clear that the natural aspect of this rather unnatural tale is death itself; after all, death is the natural conclusion to every human’s life.

This focus on nature fits well within the context of both Romanticism and the Gothic novel, traditions that Hogg seems to be integrating into his novel. Both traditions often pushed against artifice, whether in the form of socially constructed ranks and rules, political hierarchies and laws, or institutions created in the name of religion. They looked beyond the constructs of man in hope of finding a greater understanding of the world around them. Often, this greater

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<sup>3</sup> James Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 121.

understanding coincided with scientific understanding, which strove to understand how nature worked. In *Frankenstein*, the titular character turns to science to explore what it means to be human and to find the spark that imbues each being with life. In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, published later in the Victorian Era, Jekyll uses science to explore the two halves of the human soul: the light and the dark. In both stories, the main characters seek an absolute truth and explain away superstitious constructs through science. However, both stories explore the world through supernatural entities, Frankenstein's creation and Mr. Hyde respectively.

Hogg similarly is unable to completely discount the supernatural in light of science. His exploration of a supernatural entity, Gil-Martin, yields no absolute truth, only ambiguities. Even the assertion that death is inevitable for us all, and that, likewise, every story comes to a finish, proves to be an area of ambiguity. On the surface, every death within the novel seems to have a reasonable explanation: Mr. Blanchard, Robert's first victim, is shot; George is stabbed; George's and Robert's biological mother, Lady Dalcastle, is murdered; and Robert commits suicide by hanging himself. But, details from Robert's manuscript reveal supernatural elements within each death: Mr. Blanchard is shot with golden guns from Heaven, George is stabbed during a sword fight with a supernatural Gil-Martin, Lady Dalcastle is murdered while Robert is possessed by Gil-Martin, and Robert hangs himself with an enchanted hay-rope that should not have been able to support his weight.

Likewise, the natural is pitted against the supernatural within the oft critically explored, twice-told Arthur's Seat scene, wherein George ascends to Arthur's Seat and admires the natural phenomenon of a rainbow that appears within the mist, unaware that Robert has followed close behind bent on pushing George to his death from the rocky precipice. George is startled by a figure that emerges from the mist with the "features of a human being of the most dreadful

aspect” and “the face of his brother.”<sup>4</sup> He runs away from it only to collide with his actual brother before he eventually makes it to safety. Each narrative gives a version of the exact same event, but each from a very different perspective. The editor gives scientific explanations of the phenomena that occurs within the mist and “concentrates on George because his hero, like himself, is an empiricist.”<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Robert gives a supernatural account of the story that focuses on his own spiritual struggle.

Most stories would settle on one account over the other, and, likewise, some Gothic novels tended to rationalize away their supernatural elements. Hogg refuses to do this and settles on the “tone of radical ambiguity” that “much recent critical attention...has recognized as central to the novel.”<sup>6</sup> However, there is virtually no agreement among the scholars as to why this ambiguity exists within the novel. Furthermore, the realization that *Justified Sinner* is rife with ambiguity undermines the belief that there’s a truth to be mined out of the text. Is there really a truth to be found? Is there an absolute? In court cases, we look for points where eye-witness testimony converges, points of intersection in the conversational threads, and these we label as truth. We determine absolutes through the moments of agreement within parallel testimonies. Same with texts. No matter how many voices are presented within a text, we look for the points where their stories overlap. These points of overlap within a text tend “to clarify a mystery present in an earlier narrative”<sup>7</sup> and allow us to determine the truth.

Hogg refuses to give his readers any points of convergence. He records the events of *Justified Sinner* through two separate people and comes up with essentially two distinct stories.

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<sup>4</sup> James Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> David Oakleaf, “‘Not the Truth’: The Doubleness of Hogg’s Confessions and the Eighteenth-Century Tradition,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 18.1 (1983): 63.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan C. Glance, “Ambiguity and the Dreams in James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 28.1 (1993): 165.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Harries, “Duplication and Duplicity: James Hogg’s Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner,” *The Wordsworth Circle* 10 (1979): 187.

Furthermore, no two characters within his novel seem capable of agreeing on any one thing. So, very little truth can be recorded. Hogg's narrating editor seeks to arrive at the truth through historical and scientific means, means we as readers would often associate with truth, but he is not able to record the events in a way that lines up with the story Robert tells. He is only able to record a shadow of the truth, a pale reflection of the truth, if indeed Robert's version can be considered the truth at all. Yet, Robert's supernatural version is truth, at least to him. It is his perspective on the situation as it unfolded. Still, Robert's truth is not absolute.

We look at both narrators and judge the story based on our opinion and reflections concerning them. Both narrators believe they are relaying the truth; those reading the novel are not so sure that this is the case. And, if we are unable to find truth within the novel, incapable of finding the absolutes through convergences within the two separate texts, what do we learn from it? Going back to Sidney's concept that literature is meant to both "teach and delight,"<sup>8</sup> and even earlier to Horace's admonition that literature should be "both pleasing and useful for our lives,"<sup>9</sup> where is the instruction? Where is the absolute conclusion that we associate with instruction? It seems likely that by imbuing *Justified Sinner* with ambivalence and ambiguity, Hogg is questioning whether the instruction in literature should point to an absolute truth. It may even be possible that Hogg is questioning whether literature even needs to be instructional at all, seeking instead to mystify and delight his readers.

Scholars explain *Justified Sinner*'s ambiguities in various ways. Each theory focuses in on a narrow aspect of Scottish life. Most theories portray the novel as a commentary on a specific aspect of Scottish society, politics, or religion. Some attempt by varying means to

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<sup>8</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, "The Defense of Poesy," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 2006) 958.

<sup>9</sup> Horace, "Horace: The Art of Poetry (*Ars Poetica*)," *Theatre Arts*, (Baylor University, n.d.).

explain away *Justified Sinner* as “a coded account of Hogg’s painfully ambivalent relationship with the great literary periodicals of his era.”<sup>10</sup> Some theories even call into question literature itself, stating that the “two central narratives...are designed to cast doubt on the ability of conventional narrative forms to render experience.”<sup>11</sup> However, no single theory seems to do justice to the wide scope of ambiguities imbedded in the novel, a scope that I intend to explore fully throughout this paper.

The biggest problem with all of these theories is that they chose a side. Using the earlier example of the deaths, there is both a rational and supernatural side. Some divergence occurs with the parallel accounts of the Arthur’s Seat scene between the editor’s rational explanation of the events and Robert’s supernatural explanation. Because of the division of the text, scholars have been tricked into choosing one explanation over the other, tricked into choosing sides. The temptation of the *either/or* is the great temptation in the ambiguities created by Hogg.

However, choosing sides contradicts Hogg’s main literary theme, “the need for restraint, for moderation in the face of excess zeal.”<sup>12</sup> Within *Justified Sinner*, “Hogg’s faith in the possibility of an authentic middle way...is conveyed...through the irony which undermines the pretensions and extreme positions of both narrators.”<sup>13</sup> This theme of balancing polar extremes corresponds with Hogg’s life itself. He was born to a poor family and became a low-class shepherd at an early age, only to become eventually a published author and poet recognized around the world. Hogg was both a Protestant and “the king o’ the mountain and fairy school.”<sup>14</sup> Hogg sympathized with “groups at opposite ends of the political and religious spectrum, the

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<sup>10</sup> Cates Baldrige, “Antinomian Reviewers: Hogg’s Critique of Romantic-Era Magazine Culture in *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*,” *Studies in the Novel* 43.4 (2011): 385.

<sup>11</sup> Harries, 191.

<sup>12</sup> Nelson C. Smith, *James Hogg*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) 172.

<sup>13</sup> David Groves, “Parallel Narratives in Hogg’s *Justified Sinner*,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 9.2 (1982): 43.

<sup>14</sup> James Hogg, *Anecdotes of Scott*, ed. Jill Rubenstein, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2004) 9.

Highlanders after the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1745 and the Covenanters in hiding in the 1680's."<sup>15</sup> So perhaps, in scenes of *Justified Sinner* such as the Arthur's Seat scene, Hogg is asking his reader to consider an alternative to the *either/or* dichotomy that he presents, because Hogg himself was allowing for the possibility of simultaneously-existing, though polar-opposite, realities, the *both/and* interpretation of the dichotomy. Much like Horace in response to the rhetorical question "Is it nature or art... that makes a poem praiseworthy?"<sup>16</sup> in *Ars Poetica*, Hogg seems to say, "Each asks for assistance from the other."<sup>17</sup> Hogg is being a true Romantic by searching for the greater truth, one that would reconcile the opposite poles in a dichotomy. Such a truth would supersede the human constructs masquerading as the truth which simply choose one pole over the other.

This thesis will explore Hogg's *both/and* interpretation of dichotomy both throughout his career and in *Justified Sinner*, especially in the character Gil-Martin. Chapter 1 will look at *Justified Sinner* within the context of the Gothic tradition and explore how Hogg used Gothic tropes to build ambiguity. Chapter 2 will look at the pattern of ambiguity woven throughout Hogg's body of works in an effort to establish that ambiguity is not limited to *Justified Sinner* alone. Chapter 3 will examine the ambiguities associated with *Justified Sinner* itself. Lastly, Chapter 4 will explore the ambiguities tied to the character Gil-Martin in an effort to explore a new possible interpretation of this character.

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<sup>15</sup> Gillian Hughes, *James Hogg: A Life*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007) 10.

<sup>16</sup> Horace.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 1 – The Importance of Being Double

In order to fully appreciate what Hogg is doing in *Justified Sinner*, a reader first needs to know something about the Gothic genre he is working in. Amid a rainy summer in Switzerland in 1816, Mary Godwin, her lover Percy Bysshe Shelley,<sup>1</sup> her step-sister Claire Clairmont, their neighbor Lord Byron, and John Polidori held a contest to see who could write the best story in imitation of the French and German ghost stories they had been reading to each other. The eventual winner of that contest<sup>2</sup> was Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which became one of the highpoints of English Gothic fiction. However, Frankenstein's intelligent and intelligible creation from the book has all but been replaced by its mentally-simple, green-skinned, fire-fearing counterpart that first appeared in the 1820's through staged adaptations of the novel. Just as the creature itself has been underplayed over the centuries, so has the genre from which it was assembled. Undervalued as mere sensational horror coupled with a grotesque fixation on the macabre, the Gothic novel has at times been treated with either scorn or indifference.<sup>3</sup> The Gothic genre has, perhaps, become more well-known for the parodies<sup>4</sup> of the genre rather than for the works incorporated into its canon.

### Defining the Gothic

Though Gothic literature preceded British Romanticism, they share certain characteristics, perhaps due to their overlapping time periods. Both Gothic literature and the

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of this competition, Mary Godwin and Percy Shelley were lovers. It was not until later that year, once his first wife had committed suicide, that Percy was free to marry Mary, and her name changed to Mary Shelley, the name associated with the novel *Frankenstein*. It is worth noting that she is relaying this story to her readers after her marriage, although the story itself takes place prior to it.

<sup>2</sup> The contest resulted in only two completed and published texts: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and John Polidori's *The Vampyre*. The latter built upon a fragmentary idea presented to the group by Byron.

<sup>3</sup> Robert D. Hume, "Gothic versus Romance: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel," *Modern Language Association* 84.2 (1969): 282.

<sup>4</sup> For a more in-depth look at these Gothic parodies, read Beth Lau's "Madeline at Northanger Abbey: Keats's Anti-romances and Gothic Satire," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 84.1 (1985).

British Romantic period can be hard to define, and indeed British Romanticism has been largely defined by its scholars. Throughout much of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, these scholars have “singled out five poets—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Percy Shelley, and Keats, adding Blake belatedly to make a sixth—and constructed notion of a unified Romanticism on the basis of their works.”<sup>5</sup> Though the British Romantics did not share a central “doctrine or literary quality,”<sup>6</sup> they wrote in a “pervasive intellectual and imaginative climate”<sup>7</sup> which Shelley called “the spirit of the age,”<sup>8</sup> an age of possibility and imagination. A noteworthy characteristic shared by many Romantics was their interest in “reclaiming their national birthright: a literature of untrammelled imagination—associated, above all, with Spenser and the Shakespeare of fairy magic and witchcraft—that had been forced underground by the Enlightenment’s emphasis on reason and refinement.”<sup>9</sup> Gothic authors similarly were interested in magic-themed, imaginative tales, and tended to also follow certain predominant characteristics: “Perhaps most importantly, Gothic novels incorporate mysterious and usually inexplicable horrors, often involving ghosts or other supernatural apparitions, accompanied by spectacular nocturnal storms.”<sup>10</sup> Also, Gothic narratives typically delved into themes of death to explore “how death shapes the subject’s sense of what it means to be a person.”<sup>11</sup>

Ultimately though, the Gothic tradition is more than a collection of bad guys in creepy locales during supernatural weather, and so much more than just a genre fascinated with death. It is a tradition of imagination and the supernatural established by Horace Walpole in *The Castle*

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, ed., introduction, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. D: The Romantic Period*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 2006) 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>10</sup> John Hudson, “Gothic, romance and satire in Northanger Abbey,” *The English Review* 12.1 (2001): 21.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Smith, “Victorian Gothic Death,” *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, eds. Andrew Smith and William Hughes, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012) 168.

of *Otranto* (1764). Walpole had seen *The Castle of Otranto* as “an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success.”<sup>12</sup> In reuniting the two divergent strands of the literary romance, the medieval romance<sup>13</sup> and the modern romance,<sup>14</sup> Walpole sought “to incorporate those elements of the supernatural and marvelous which had been a prominent feature of the medieval romance; but in the delineation of his characters and their reaction to those events he attempted to preserve the realism of the modern novel.”<sup>15</sup>

Almost from its very conception, the Gothic tradition itself began to diverge. One branch felt that “Walpole had been too violent in his use of the supernatural.”<sup>16</sup> The central author in this faction was Ann Radcliffe, who wrote Gothic novels “by a woman, about women and to women,”<sup>17</sup> and created female characters who were “plunged into states of frenzy by superstitious and terrific tales, no longer able to distinguish between real and imagined terrors.”<sup>18</sup> Radcliffe succeeded in marrying “the staple characteristics of Walpole’s genre with the moral imperatives of Richardson.”<sup>19&20</sup> This marriage exceeded Walpole’s combination of the

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<sup>12</sup> Horace Walpole, “The Castle of Otranto,” *The Castle of Otranto and The Man of Feeling*, ed. Laura Mandell, (New York: Pearson, 2007) 7.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the “medieval romance,” especially concerning its literary influence over later iterations of the mode, I suggest reading Northrop Frye’s *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976); Fredric Jameson’s “Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre,” *New Literary History* 7.1 (1975); and Barbara Fuchs’ *Romance*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), which puts the earlier two works into conversation with each other.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the defining characteristics of the modern romance novel, I suggest reading Pamela Regis’ *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, (Philadelphia: U of Penn. P, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Arthur L. Cooke, “Some Side Lights on the Theory of the Gothic Romance,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 12 (1951): 429.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Fred Botting, “Dracula, Romance and Radcliffean Gothic,” *Women’s Writing: the Elizabethan to Victorian Period* 1.2 (1994): 187.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>19</sup> Richardson was the author of the 1740 novel *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded*.

<sup>20</sup> Hudson, 21.

marvelous and the realistic by adding “the pathos of the sentimental novel”<sup>21</sup> into the formula. The other faction, through works such as Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, attempted to outdo Walpole’s use of terror. These authors preyed upon the reader’s sense of fear, “oldest and strongest emotion of mankind...and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”<sup>22</sup>

It is easy to see how *Justified Sinner* with its preoccupation with death and the supernatural would fit squarely within the Gothic tradition. Even its dichotomous split narrative seems to coincide with Walpole’s combination of the supernatural and the natural: Robert’s narrative corresponding to the medieval, supernatural romance and the editor’s narrative corresponding to the realistic modern romance. Perhaps, the only stretch needed to accept *Justified Sinner* as Gothic literature comes from Hogg’s inclusion of “the native (Scottish) scene and vernacular religion into what had been signalized, so far, chiefly as a genre about Catholic Europe.”<sup>23</sup>

### **The Doppelgänger**

One literary tool that was reimagined by Gothic writers amid this blending process was the doppelgänger. By definition, a doppelgänger is merely “a ghostly counterpart of a living person,” a “double,” or an “alter ego.”<sup>24</sup> This literary trope has existed throughout time, often just as the ghost of a formerly living person: the ghost of Hamlet’s father, Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol*, and even the ethereal appearance of Obi-Wan Kenobi in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. However, in the hands of the Gothic writer, it became something

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<sup>21</sup> Cooke, 429.

<sup>22</sup> Leonard Engel, “The Role of the Enclosure in the English and American Gothic Romance,” *Essays in Arts and Sciences* 11 (1982): 59.

<sup>23</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Murder Incorporated: Confessions of a Justified Sinner,” *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*, ed. Duncan Wu, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 359.

<sup>24</sup> “Doppelgänger,” *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. Frederick Mish, (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2000).

ominous. Often a supernatural double of the protagonist, the doppelgänger became a central obsession of the text, “always appear[ing] as an interloper, an unwanted guest, out of place in the texts it visits.”<sup>25</sup> More importantly, the doppelgänger “represents the abiding interdependence of real and fantasy worlds, by rendering them impossibly co-present at the site of the *Doppelgänger* encounter.”<sup>26</sup> In the hands of the Gothic writer, the doppelgänger became the physical embodiment of Walpole’s definition of the Gothic.

But, what is gained by weaving reality and fantasy into one being? This is perhaps best determined by looking at other famous examples of the implementation of the Gothic doppelgänger figure. The earliest such use of the doppelgänger trope that I’ll explore, chronologically, is Frankenstein’s creation in *Frankenstein*. Shelley herself, however, was building upon the established trope found in earlier works, notably her father William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*. In *Frankenstein*, the titular character uses his scientific and alchemic knowledge to animate a being he’s assembled from the body parts of corpses. However, Frankenstein irresponsibly abandons the being he has created and finds himself tormented by a supernatural creation who only seems to appear when Frankenstein is about to lose consciousness, spectrally watches a family in a cottage, displays super-human strength and agility, and compares himself to *Paradise Lost*’s Lucifer. Ultimately, Frankenstein loses his younger brother, his best friend, and his new wife at the hands of his creation. At the same time, the creation displays many of the same characteristics as its creator: both are persuasively eloquent (the creation more so), both begin their narratives at the point of their birth and talk about their childhood quest for knowledge, both consider their respective causes to be just, and both absolve themselves of the culpability for their own actions. As the Scottish novelist Muriel

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew J. Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

Spark notes, “There are two central figures—or rather two in one, for Frankenstein and his significantly unnamed Monster are bound together by the nature of their relationship.”<sup>27</sup>

Edgar Allan Poe similarly uses the Gothic doppelgänger in several of his works. “William Wilson,” published in 1839, is a short story wherein the titular character is plagued by the evil deeds of his doppelgänger who has the same name and roughly the same appearance. In the end, William ends up stabbing his doppelgänger, whose final words are “in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself.”<sup>28</sup> In the confusion of the final moments of the story, the reader is never sure if William has succeeded in killing the double, or has killed himself. Moreover, the reader is left doubting the existence of the double. Similarly, Poe creates a feline doppelgänger within his story “The Black Cat,” published in 1843. The narrator has brutalized a pet cat named Pluto, plucking out one of its eyes and eventually hanging it from a neighbor’s tree. After his house catches on fire, the narrator notes that the cat’s corpse is missing and presumes that it was flung into the conflagration. However, he soon finds himself followed by another black cat which is missing the same eye that he had plucked out of Pluto. He eventually becomes so “exasperated...to madness”<sup>29</sup> that he pursues the cat with an axe and would have killed the double “but this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demonical, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.”<sup>30</sup> The act of the murder is so cleverly insinuated into the frenzy created by the doppelgänger, that it is almost unnoticeable to the reader, or at least understandable as an accident.

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<sup>27</sup> Muriel Spark, *Child of Light: A Reassessment of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, (Hadleigh, Essex: Tower Bridge Publications Limited, 1972) 134.

<sup>28</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, “William Wilson,” *Edgar Allan Poe: Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, (Franklin Center, PA: The Franklin Library, 1987) 65.

<sup>29</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat,” *Edgar Allan Poe: Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, (Franklin Center, PA: The Franklin Library, 1987) 194.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

Perhaps the best known Gothic doppelgänger is presented in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which was published in 1886 and influenced by *Justified Sinner*. In this novel, the reader follows Mr. Utterson in his investigation of the heinous acts of Mr. Hyde and his mysterious connection with Dr. Jekyll. Ultimately, it is revealed that they are one in the same, that the Hyde persona was created by Dr. Jekyll through use of a chemical potion. Jekyll had come to "recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both."<sup>31</sup> He had hoped to be able to separate his dark side from his upright side. However, even though Jekyll acknowledges that Hyde is both his double and himself at the same time, he never accepts responsibility for Hyde's actions, even at the moment that the Hyde persona completely takes over his body: "I am careless; this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself."<sup>32</sup>

In these cases, the doppelgänger serves as a vehicle through which the protagonist can deflect his guilt over murders he's committed, although, arguably, in the case of "William Wilson," it appears to be a murder of self, or a suicide. In "The Black Cat," the doppelgänger is not a double of the protagonist, but it is a double nonetheless. And, as in the other cases, the protagonist absolves himself of the crimes he's committed by blaming them on the doppelgänger. In each of these cases, the reader buys into the frenzy created by the doppelgänger and sympathizes with the would-be murderer through the substitution of a fantastical and paranormal reasoning for the otherwise rationally obvious. However, these alibis seem too fantastic to ever be real. The doppelgänger not only deflects the guilt of the

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories*, (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1994) 62.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

protagonist, but it deflects the reader's condemnation away from the truly guilty party in each scenario, the protagonist himself.

Even though the doppelgänger receives all of the blame in each of these stories, it is never made clear to the reader whether or not the doppelgänger exists, with the exception of *Jekyll and Hyde* in which Hyde is the very real manifestation of Jekyll's darker nature. But, even in Stevenson's novel, the distinction between the two personae cohabitating one physical body is constantly blurred. So, ultimately, it is left up to the reader to determine to what extent the doppelgänger is real, and thereby, to what extent the protagonist is culpable for his crimes.

Hogg uses the doppelgänger to similar effect within *Justified Sinner*. Robert Wringhim, convinced of his predestination as one of the elect predetermined to enter Heaven, comes to believe that he has been chosen by God to murder those who are enemies of God, especially his brother George, through the manipulation by the shape-shifting doppelgänger, Gil-martin. After George is murdered, Gil-Martin transforms himself to look like George and is thus seen by several people. After Robert takes over the inheritance that belonged to his brother, he begins to have episodes where he lays sick in bed while having flashes of visions, as if he were elsewhere committing horrible deeds, including murder. He later comes to understand that these deeds indeed happened, and it becomes obvious to him that his shape-shifting friend has done them in his stead.

Due to the frenzy of the supernatural events in the novel and Robert's casting of culpability onto the doppelgänger, Gil-Martin, the reader is tempted to sympathize with Robert in spite of the murders he commits. Robert, identified as the culprit by the end of the first half of the novel, is essentially absolved of his crimes through the emergence of Gil-Martin in the second half of the novel. Although the editor's narrative claims that it is Robert alone who

commits the crimes, culpability is transferred from Robert to Gil-Martin, the supernatural doppelgänger. Ultimately, however, the reader is never certain if Gil-martin is real or not, since there is the very real possibility that Gil-Martin is nothing more than the delusional manifestation of a fractured mind. Nor does the reader have a clear indication from the author of who or what Gil-Martin might be even if he is real. Hogg leaves it up to the reader to determine what Gil-Martin might be and to what extent Robert is culpable for the crimes committed in the novel. Even Robert himself is never entirely certain of Gil-Martin's intentions throughout the novel, maintaining that Gil-martin is his "dreaded and devoted friend"<sup>33</sup> until the day he dies, and living out his remaining days in both fear and need of this doppelgänger.

### **A Doppelgänger Text**

Following the theme of the doppelgänger, the text splits into two parts. Roughly, they cover the same time span and tell of many of the same events, but they are told from two very different perspectives. The first half is "the objective, rational narrative of the editor,"<sup>34</sup> who has been investigating the story of Robert Wringhim to verify or contradict the story told within the manuscript he found in the suicide's grave. This half is logical and reasoned. Indeed, it reads like the modern detective novel, wherein "a crime, preferably, a murder, is committed; an investigation takes place; the detective 'detects' and finds the criminal; order is restored."<sup>35</sup> This realization has prompted several scholars to note the probable impact that *Justified Sinner* had on the emergence of detective novel.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. John Carey, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 233.

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan C. Glance, "Ambiguity and the Dreams in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 28.1 (1993): 166.

<sup>35</sup> Alice Kinder, "Poe Background Lecture," *Introduction to Detective Fiction*, (Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, Class Lecture, *Scholar*) 1.

<sup>36</sup> For a remarkable and in-depth analysis of this connection, read Matthew McGuire's "James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and the Romantic Roots of Crime Fiction," *CLUES: A Journal of Detection* 30.1 (2012): 8-17.

This half of the doppelgänger text is also very focused on normal human activity and interactions, especially the confrontational interactions between George and Robert. Much of the tension between them stems from Robert's ambiguous identity. The editor is unable to identify who is Robert's biological father, Laird Dalcastle or Rev. Wringhim. Legally, Laird Dalcastle has never denied fathering Robert, but in terms of nurture, Robert is definitely the spiritual son of Wringhim. Also, in this half, Mrs. Logan displays a natural affection for her adopted son, and forms a necessary camaraderie later with Mrs. Calvert, the prostitute who witnessed George's murder. This half of the tale is told with a focus on George, describing his childhood, telling the scenes of his interactions with Robert from his point of view, and detailing his murder and ultimately the investigation thereof. George is the brother who is most capable of interacting in ways that seem normal: he has several close friends, he enjoys his time at the pub and with the ladies, and he attempts to reconcile with Robert. He is also the brother that can appreciate the scene at Arthur's Seat as an opportunity to "converse with nature without disturbance."<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, the second half of the book is told from the perspective and in the words of Robert Wringhim. Robert is always deceiving others in order to protect himself, while never being wholly able to see through all of the deceptions of others, especially Gil-Martin. This constant web of deceit makes this half of the novel convoluted and often hard for the reader who is constantly trying to determine what is really going on throughout each scene. This is the paranormal and fantastic half of the doppelgänger text. Not only is Robert visited by multiple supernatural entities, but he is wholly focused on his Calvinist ways. And, like many Romantic authors, Hogg incorporates Christianity into his definition of the supernatural: "Traditionally, the supernatural has come to be predominantly associated with 'evil' and fear (devils or ghosts); but

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<sup>37</sup> James Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 41.

Hogg and Coleridge take it in its broader sense to incorporate the Christian.”<sup>38</sup> This paranormal focus is why Robert communes with the ethereal lady in white while on Arthur’s Seat rather than communing with nature as George does.

This supernatural half of the doppelgänger text also focuses on the relationship between Robert and the supernatural Gil-Martin. Furthermore, the principal secondary characters, Robert’s mother and Rev. Wringhim, enact an unorthodox relationship in this part of the novel. Rev. Wringhim is supposed to be a strict Calvinist minister, and as such should help to enforce vows made before God such as those recited during a wedding. Instead, he is openly living with a woman who is married to another man and potentially has fathered a bastard child by her.

Just as the two halves of the texts are doppelgängers of each other, it must be mentioned that their respective representative brothers are likewise doppelgängers of each other: “Robert and George are obviously aspects of each other.”<sup>39</sup> Throughout his half of the novel, Robert finds himself haunted by Gil-Martin. Likewise, “George suspects from the beginning that he is ‘haunted,’”<sup>40</sup> not only by his brother, but by “some evil genius in the shape of his brother.”<sup>41</sup> So, not only are they both haunted, though in differing ways, but they both interact with Gil-Martin while he is disguised as the other brother. More importantly, it is through their interaction with Gil-Martin that both brothers end up dead.

The revelation of truth is just as important to this doppelgänger text as the dichotomy of rational versus supernatural. Within the editor’s natural half of the text, the principal agents who reveal the truth recorded by the editor are Mrs. Logan, Mrs. Calvert, and her client. The latter

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<sup>38</sup> Carolyn A. Weber, “Delighting in the Indissoluble Mixture: The Motley Romanticism of James Hogg,” *Studies in Hogg and His World* 17 (2006): 52.

<sup>39</sup> David Oakleaf, “‘Not the Truth’: The Doubleness of Hogg’s Confessions and the Eighteenth-Century Tradition,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 18.1 (1983): 64.

<sup>40</sup> Douglas Jones, “Double Jeopardy and the Chameleon Art in James Hogg’s *Justified Sinner*,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 23.1 (1988): 166.

<sup>41</sup> James Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 45.

two witness the murder, while the former deems herself to be George's surrogate mother, and as such, needs to investigate into his untimely murder. These characters essentially call it like they see it, and are generally correct in their perceptions. They are the characters who are most clearly able to see what is happening within the novel itself, and they principally inhabit the half of the text that is fixated not only on revealing truth, but truth as derived by empirical observation, historical research, and scientific means.

However, Robert, his mother, and Rev. Wringhim, the principal characters of the supernatural half of the text, are focused on truth as derived from religion. They deem themselves to be superior to those around them, if not socially, then most assuredly spiritually. However, given the shroud of mystery surrounding Robert's birth, their sanctimony seems to be more deceitful than truthful. Not only has Reverend Wringhim potentially fabricated the biological lineage of Robert in order to maintain the propriety of his relationship with Lady Dalcastle, but when the façade is questioned by their servant John, Rev. Wringhim reacts with "great wrath and indignation."<sup>42</sup> However, he never outright denies the accusation, only berates John for maligning his character.

Robert outdoes his *adoptive* father's cant by fabricating an alias. While on the run at the end of his narrative, Robert tells the people that he meets, "Cowan is my surname,"<sup>43</sup> a distortion of a name that he has previously foresworn: "'not a Colwan, Sir; henceforth I disclaim the name."<sup>44</sup> He deliberately hides the truth, and even creates a fictitious backstory as "a first-rate classical scholar"<sup>45</sup> when he later goes to work for a printer. But, even this fabrication pales in comparison with the self-deluding fantasy that Robert concocts by concluding that Gil-Martin

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<sup>42</sup> James Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

“was no other than the Czar Peter of Russia, having heard that he had been travelling through Europe in disguise.”<sup>46</sup> While he is attempting to find a reasonable explanation for a supernatural being, he fails to take into account all of the eye-witness testimony that would otherwise indicate to him that Gil-Martin is both physically and spiritually dangerous. In many ways, the constant pattern of lies and deception in his life has left him blind to the truth.

There is one particular moment that stands out as a stark example of Robert’s blindness to the truth. Amid his second confrontation with George on the tennis courts, Robert, desiring harm to befall his brother, quotes the biblical prophet Balaam: “Lo now, if I had a sword into mine hand, I would even kill him.”<sup>47</sup> Though he means that he would kill his brother, he doesn’t understand the implications of the words he’s just said. This quote comes from the biblical story of Balaam’s disobedience. Balaam wants to kill his donkey, unaware that the injuries he’s received from the donkey were inflicted in an effort to save him from God’s vengeful angel. Through this quote, Robert puts himself in the shoes of the prophet who is content to disobey God and willing to kill the only being that wants to help him. This is exactly Robert’s own predicament, only he is so caught up in the veneer of his own religious sanctimony that he doesn’t even understand the impact of his own words. His parents have instilled in him the perception that he is a religious prodigy, and he is convinced of the superiority of his own biblical understanding, but he does not understand the context of the verse that he is quoting. He understands a degree of religious theory, but lacks a complete understanding of the text that the theory is based upon.

The clarity of the empiricists versus the cant of the religious zealots seems to harken back to Walpole’s theory of the Gothic, especially as it applies to the doppelgänger. Just as Walpole

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 152.

said that Gothic fiction was the meeting of old romantic supernatural elements with the rational and reasoning perspectives of those witnessing the supernatural, the empiricists embrace the most reasonable conclusions while their religious doppelgängers fabricate fantastic illusions. This dichotomy seems to come to a head in the story that Samuel, Robert's servant, tells his master. A fairy-blessed man named Robin<sup>48</sup> lifts up the robe of a travelling minister who has beguiled the entire town of Auchtermuchty to reveal cloven hooves, a sure sign that the minister is really the Devil in disguise. This is a very telling moment in the novel because the servant, who speaks with the local Scottish brogue, is able to see something that his superior cannot. Whether it is just his superstitious nature, or wisdom that comes from thinking simply and without the deceitful duplicity, Samuel is able to discern the devilish nature of Gil-Martin long before Robert does. And, thinking back on Samuel's advice, Robert does at least inspect Gil-Martin's feet once looking for hooves. But, even after he suspects that Gil-Martin could be the Devil, Robert does nothing to unmask him; he cannot break the illusion that he himself created, the illusion that Gil-Martin is Czar Peter of Russia.

A certain degree of duplicity is fairly common within the Gothic genre. Many of the better-known novels of Hogg's day featured two or more narrators, and each one "recounts events that could not be known to the other."<sup>49</sup> What truly sets Hogg's *Justified Sinner* apart from the others is the unnerving "failure of the double narratives to complete or illuminate each other."<sup>50</sup> Instead of narratives that inform each other, Hogg leaves his reader with a mess of unanswered questions. Hogg absolutely refuses to allow the marvelous elements of his novel to

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<sup>48</sup> This is an interesting name for the hero of this story. Robin Goodfellow is the English version of a pooka, a shape-shifting Irish fairy, and he's struggling with Satan for control of the town's souls. This is very similar to the theory that I put forth in Chapter 2 that Gil-Martin is a fairy struggling against demonic forces for Robert's soul.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Harries, "Duplication and Duplicity: James Hogg's Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner," *The Wordsworth Circle* 10 (1979): 187.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

be “brought much into view,”<sup>51</sup> which as Sir Walter Scott notes, would cause them to lose their effect. If these marvelous elements can retain their effectiveness through Hogg’s unresolved ambiguity, then they must be considered in conjunction with the empirical elements within the novel. Again, Hogg has allowed for the possibility of simultaneously existing, though polar-opposite, realities. By doing so, he suggests that any greater truth to be found within the pages of *Justified Sinner* must include both realities.

### **A Gothic Hoax**

This doppelgänger text, when combined with the framing narrative and Hogg’s creative insertion of himself into the novel, helped to perpetrate a hoax, as indeed *Justified Sinner* must be labelled. In 1823, Hogg published a letter in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* revealing the fantastic case of a single grave. Ten months later, he published his controversial and scandalous novel, purportedly containing not just the material found at the grave, but the true journal of a serial killer! Even within the text itself, the unnamed narrative voice of the editor seems sympathetic to readers’ suspicions of fraud: “The letter from which the above is extracted, is signed James Hogg, and dated from Altrive Lake, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1823. It bears the stamp of authenticity on every line; yet, so often had I been hoaxed by the ingenious fancies displayed in that Magazine, that when this relation met my eye, I did not believe it; but from the moment that I perused it, I half formed the resolution of investigating these wonderful remains personally, if any such existed.”<sup>52</sup> However, by adding his authoritative story to the text, along with the credibility he gains from using Hogg’s name, the editor urges the reader to accept the veracity of the source of the text, even if not the tale told within the text.

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<sup>51</sup> Sir Walter Scott, “On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition: and particularly on the Works of Ernest Theodore William Hoffman,” *The Foreign quarterly review* 1.1 (1827): 62.

<sup>52</sup> James Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 245.

Such a hoax is commonplace within the Gothic genre. *Frankenstein* is written with a framing narrative that insists that the novel is a factual occurrence recorded in a letter from Capt. Robert Walton to his sister. Walpole's preface to his genre-creating *The Castle of Otronto* claims that the novel had been "found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England."<sup>53</sup> The genre of the novel itself, not just the Gothic sub-genre, owes its existence to such hoaxes.<sup>54</sup> Defoe's proto-novel *A Journal of the Plague Year* claims to be "written by a citizen who continued all the while in London"<sup>55</sup> even though Defoe himself was only five when the plague broke out. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* begins with two letters ostensibly verifying the veracity of the novel. Henry Fielding refers to his novel *Tom Jones* as a history, implying that he is recording facts rather than creating fiction. Ultimately, with little or no help from their authors, these novels' readers must decide for themselves to what degree to suspend reality as they immerse themselves within allegedly genuine depictions of the world.

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<sup>53</sup> Walpole, 3.

<sup>54</sup> For a detailed exploration of the relationship between the novel and hoaxes, read Margaret Russett's *Fictions and Fakes: Forging Romantic Authenticity, 1760-1845*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, (New York: Oxford UP, 2010) 1.

## Chapter 2 - The Ambiguous Mr. Hogg

Through his perpetration of a hoax, Hogg imbued his novel with ambiguity. Because of the marketing strategy proceeding the release of *Justified Sinner*, and the framing narrative predicated upon Hogg's *Blackwood's* letter, the novel's reader is never entirely certain of the veracity of the text. To what degree is the reader to accept the words of the editor? How about Robert's words? And, what is the reader to make of the fact that the whole novel ties so neatly back to the events outlined in a previously published article? These questions are never answered for the reader. Such ambiguity is not just a trope of *Justified Sinner*. Hogg has a proclivity for ambiguity that seeps into his other works as well. Beyond *Justified Sinner*, ambiguity is "Hogg's main theme, too, [which] has continuous application"<sup>1</sup> throughout his body of work.

### *The Queen's Wake*

We see such ambiguity as early in his works as *The Queen's Wake*, Hogg's first commercial success. The framing narrative of this epic poem provides the first perplexity. *The Queen's Wake* professes to be a historical recording of a competition, known as a wake,<sup>2</sup> "held by the bards of Scotland in Edinburgh's royal palace of Holyroodhouse to welcome Mary, Queen of Scots on her return to her native land from France in 1561."<sup>3</sup> The winner of this wake is to receive a harp from Mary, festooned with "gems and gold that dazzling shone."<sup>4</sup> In his own

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson C. Smith, *James Hogg*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) 172.

<sup>2</sup> In Hogg's own notes to the poem, he defines a wake as "the festive meeting which took place on the evening previous to the dedication of any particular church or chapel...In Scotland...which was always the land of music and of song, music and song were the principal, and often only, amusements of the Wake...those serenades played by itinerant and nameless minstrels in the streets and squares of Edinburgh...about the time of the Christmas holidays...seem to be the only reminder of the ancient wakes now in Scotland."

\* James Hogg, *The Queen's Wake: A Legendary Tale*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005) 375.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas S. Mack, Introduction, *The Queen's Wake: A Legendary Tale*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005) xxv-xxvi.

<sup>4</sup> Hogg, *Queen's Wake*, 365.

notes to the poem, Hogg calls the historical events that he based the poem on into question. He first cites Scottish historian John Knox, who states that things happened pretty much as Hogg records in his poem: “the melodie, as sche alledged, liked her weill, and sche willed the sam to be continued sum nychts efter with grit diligence.”<sup>5</sup> However, Hogg quickly offers an alternate history by a French companion to the Queen, Dufresnoy, who records no such concert, only a drunken gathering of “five or six hundred scoundrels from the city, who gave her a serenade with wretched violins and little rebecks...and began to sing Psalms so miserably mistimed and mistuned, that nothing could be worse.”<sup>6</sup>

At the same time that Hogg’s notes call into question the historical accuracy of his own poem, the poem itself raises similar questions. Shortly after the wake’s second bard sings, the narrator, ostensibly Hogg himself, tells the reader:

Certes that many a bard of name,  
Who there appeared and strove for fame,  
No record names, nor minstrel’s tongue;  
Not even are known the lays they sung.<sup>7</sup>

Not only are the names of the bards lost to time, but so are the songs that they sang. Though the poem acknowledges that some of the “rhymes which still prevail”<sup>8</sup> could be ones that were sung during the wake, their connection to that wake lost over time, it likewise acknowledges that there is no way to determine which they might be. This printed history has failed to record all the literature shared, albeit orally, over the course of a mere three nights.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 377.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

This inability to preserve all of history and literature is an interesting point for the poem to raise, and it fits squarely into the critical discussion that has come to dominate Hogg scholarship in recent years, that of print culture.<sup>9</sup> As Hogg biographer Gillian Hughes reminds us, Hogg grew up surrounded by his mother's oral tradition of "fearful tales and songs of the supernatural, how the fairies would trip along the bottom of a lonely dell, how deadlights or a shapeless contorted appearance would announce the death of some near relative, and how the spirit of the gathering storm was heard to shriek through the air."<sup>10</sup> This upbringing within the oral tradition, when combined with the printed word's inability to preserve all of literary tradition, seems to validate the premise put forth by scholarship that throughout Hogg's writings "the wisdom of local Scottish people, holding onto their tradition, is more reliable than the printed word."<sup>11</sup>

However, the narrator of *The Queen's Wake* confesses in the aforementioned passage that oral tradition has failed to preserve the stories shared across those three nights long before his attempt to preserve them in print. This seems more in line with the Enlightenment ideals of the superiority of print over oral tradition as promoted by Samuel Johnson: "When a language begins to teem with books, it is tending to refinement as those who undertake to teach others must have undergone some labour in improving themselves...By degrees one age improves upon another. Exactness is obtained, and afterwards elegance. But diction, merely vocal, is always in its

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<sup>9</sup> To further explore this discussion, read the collection of essays found in either *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace*, eds. Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009) or *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, eds. Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012), or Douglas S. Mack's "James Hogg and his Publishers: *The Queen's Wake* and *Queen Hynde*," *Authorship, Commerce and the Public: Scenes of Writing, 1750-1850*, eds. E. J. Clery, Caroline Franklin, and Peter Garside, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002) 67-83.

<sup>10</sup> Gillian Hughes, *James Hogg: A Life*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007) 8.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel W. Harnish, Jr., "James Hogg: *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and Manufactured Tradition," *Studies in Hogg and His World* 17 (2006): 47.

childhood.”<sup>12</sup> While Hogg would have decried Johnson’s depiction of bards as barbarians, it cannot be denied that he was attempting to establish himself as a professional writer when he wrote *The Queen’s Wake*. Notwithstanding his upbringing within an oral culture, he “was obviously attracted by the prospect of a radically enlarged sale, not only as a way of realising larger profits, but also as a means of making contact with a wider urban readership that he had long felt denied him.”<sup>13</sup>

Edinburgh, besides being the major printing hub of English literature apart from London, was also widely regarded as the Athens of the North. It was a city where reason and Enlightenment philosophy coexisted with superstitious beliefs in witchcraft and fairies. Hogg, considering himself both a good Christian and “the king o’ the mountain and fairy school,”<sup>14</sup> was a man of like contradiction. Just as he inhabited the gulf between print culture and oral tradition, he likewise inhabited the chasm between Christianity and folk lore. Hogg, however, like much of Scotland at the time, saw no conflict with accepting both supernatural realities as separate yet equal forces at work in the world. This is how he could blend these realities almost effortlessly throughout *The Queen’s Wake*. In the thirteenth bard’s song, “Kilmeny,” the titular heroine is transported to a realm that seamlessly combined “features of Heaven, Fairyland, and Eden.”<sup>15</sup> In the seventeenth, “The Abbot M’Kinnon,” a ship full of Christian monks is tossed about in a supernatural storm created by the god of the sea, nearly lured over a cliff by the enchanting melody of a mermaid, and ultimately sacrificed for their sins, pulled beneath the waves.

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<sup>12</sup> Samuel Johnson, “A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland,” *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, ed. Peter Levi, (New York: Penguin Books, 1984) 116-7.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Garside, “Hogg and the Book Trade,” *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, eds. Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012) 30.

<sup>14</sup> James Hogg, *Anecdotes of Scott*, ed. Jill Rubenstein, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2004) 9.

<sup>15</sup> Mack, *Queen’s Wake*, xlv.

While the church itself, as well as folklorists towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century such as Napier and Dalyell, proclaimed the fairy world to be subservient to Hell, it would seem that much of Scotland disagreed. As *The Queen's Wake* itself noted:

That fairies were, was not disputed;  
But what they were was greatly doubted.  
Each argument was guarded well,  
With 'if,' and 'should,' and 'who can tell.'<sup>16</sup>

The Rev. Robert Kirk, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Scottish minister and author of *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, & Fairies*, was one such individual who seemed to have departed from the church's stance on fairies. Having lived among the common folk of Scotland, he "treats the land of faery as a mere fact in nature, a world with its own laws, which he investigates without fear of the Accuser of the Brethren,"<sup>17</sup> a designation given to Satan in the Bible.<sup>18</sup>

Folk tales recorded later similarly show the fairy world as a world unto its own, subjugated by neither Heaven nor Hell. In one such tale, "The Fairy and the Bible-Reader," a beautiful woman dressed in green approaches an old man reading a Bible along the Ross-shire coast and inquires if the scriptures offer hope to her kind. In reply, "the old man spoke kindly to her; but said that in those pages was no mention of salvation for any but the sinful sons of Adam. On hearing this, the fairy flung her arms despairingly above her head, and with a shriek plunged into the sea."<sup>19</sup> In another tale, "Departure of the Fairies," a young brother and sister watch in amazement as a long procession of fairies on horseback pass their cottage on the Sabbath.

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<sup>16</sup> Hogg, *Queen's Wake*, 263.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Lang, Introduction, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns & Fairies*, ed. Andrew Lang, (London: David Nutt, 1893) xv.

<sup>18</sup> Specifically, this is found in Revelation 12:10. It is also worth noting that Satan's name derives from the Hebrew word for "accuser," as seen in William Smith's *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1999) 75.

<sup>19</sup> George Douglas, ed., *Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales*, (New York: Arno Press, 1977) 134.

Extremely curious concerning this sight, the boy asks the final rider, “What are you little manie?”<sup>20</sup> The enigmatic reply is quite simply, “Not of the race of Adam...the people of peace shall never more be seen in Scotland.”<sup>21</sup>

These two tales clearly indicate that fairies are something other than humans. Since they are not of the same lineage as the “sinful sons of Adam,” they do not fall under the same rules that govern humanity, even the spiritual rules. They are not offered Heavenly salvation, as seen in the first tale, nor is there room for them in a Christianized Europe, as seen in the second tale, though Christianized Europe contrariwise managed to find room for the Devil.

### *A Queer Book*

Within his poem “The Origin of the Faeries,” originally published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1830, and a year later in *A Queer Book*, Hogg explores “one of his favorite themes, the disappearance of the fairies from Scotland.”<sup>22</sup> In this poem, the Knight of Dumblane comes across a maiden while out hunting and is immediately taken by her beauty. In fact, he is so overwhelmed by her beauty and smile that he swoons. He awakens and realizes that she has placed his head on her bosom while caressing his head in an effort to comfort him. However, the realization of where his head lays only makes him swoon again. This time, he comes to in her home, and for a year is content to live “but to prove the new delights and the joys of love.”<sup>23</sup> Eventually, as her attention towards him wanes, he decides to return home.

After an undetermined amount of time, she appears before him in his bower with a baby in each arm. As soon as he embraces her and proclaims his love for her, in walks another woman who looks exactly the same with a baby in each of her arms, too. In all, seven women

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<sup>20</sup> Kevin Crossley-Holland, ed., *Folk-Tales of the British Isles*, (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986) 79.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> P. D. Garside, *A Queer Book*, ed. P. D. Garside, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007) 256.

<sup>23</sup> James Hogg, *A Queer Book*, ed. P. D. Garside, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007) 161.

appear, each identical in appearance to the next, and each carrying two babies. Knowing that he loves each woman, and that all fourteen children are indeed his own, he is still puzzled at what has happened and calls for his mother to explain it to him. Familiar with tales and lore, his mother realizes that these women are the seven weird sisters “from the ages of an early time,”<sup>24</sup> who were cursed with eternal virginity and unrequited love “unless a mortal knight should fall in their love-snares, and wed them all.”<sup>25</sup> Freed from their curse, the seven weird sisters refuse to allow their children to be christened, releasing them into the world, and naming them *the fairies*. The Knight of Dumblane becomes “the patriarch King of the Scottish Fays,”<sup>26</sup> at least until his death when he is borne away to Hell. As his mother realizes, “for all this numerous comely birth...her son was lost to earth...and lost to Heaven—the worst of all.”<sup>27</sup>

Within this poem, Hogg “combines two elements common in fairy lore: the enticement of an adult male into fairyland; and sexual intercourse between a fairy and a human, bringing problematical results.”<sup>28</sup> More importantly, he offers an explanation of the fairies, one that removes them from the spiritual confines of Christianity. Before the weird sisters release their children into the world, they prophesy over them:

‘They are neither of heaven nor yet of earth;  
And whether they will live till time be done...  
Is a mystery which no eye can pierce...  
But this we know, that above or below,  
By the doors of death they shall never go...

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 166

<sup>28</sup> Garside, 256.

Blithe be your lives, and sinful never.’<sup>29</sup>

This clearly casts the fairies as beings beyond the Christian understanding of Heaven and Hell. Unlike scholars towards the end of the 1800’s who tried to explain fairies away as mere demonic manifestations, Hogg seems content to believe that they are part of a supernatural reality that coexists alongside Christianity. However, as the weird sisters continue their prophesy, they reveal that the fairies will eventually need to leave Scotland “when the psalms and prayers are nightly heard.”<sup>30</sup> Though separate, coexisting realities, Hogg notes that eventually one reality will come to overshadow the other.

### **A Brownie Mix**

Hogg seemed to relish the ambiguity created by pairing up Christianity and folk lore within the same text, and often even within the same being. At the same time, he enjoyed the ambiguity created by playing with the traditional roles attributed to the fairies. This is perhaps most clearly seen through his depiction of a staple of Scottish lore, the brownie. Brownies were seen as benevolent though humbly attired fairies who helped with household duties. In Hogg’s hands, they were agents of ambiguity.

In “The Brownie of the Black Hags,” Hogg tells the tale of Lady Wheelhope “who was badly spoken of in the country”<sup>31</sup> for her tendency to murder her own servants. That is, until one day she hires Merodach, the titular brownie. Lady Wheelhope takes an instant disliking to Merodach and constantly, wrathfully reproaches him. Unlike the other servants, Merodach does not fear Lady Wheelhope and “only mocked her wrath, and giggled and laughed at her, with the

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<sup>29</sup> Hogg, *Queer Book*, 167.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>31</sup> James Hogg, *James Hogg: Selected Stories and Sketches*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982) 94.

most provoking derision.”<sup>32</sup> This only drives her into a frenzied rage, and she tries time and again to kill Merodach, though “never did she make a blow at him, that she did not repent it.”<sup>33</sup> In one scene, her murder attempt leads to the death of her favorite servant. In another, the death of her cat. During her last major attempt, she inadvertently murders her own son! Driven to a state of sheer madness and desperate to win this struggle, she follows Merodach as he leaves the family’s employ. But, Merodach only beats her mercilessly as she follows him through the wilderness: “Her friends looked on her no more after her; and the last time she was seen alive, it was following the uncouth creature up the water of Daur, weary, wounded, and lame, while he was all the way beating her, as a piece of excellent amusement.”<sup>34</sup>

Merodach is a character of constant ambiguity. First of all, his appearance is constantly described using contradictory terms. At his introduction, he is described as a person that “had the form of a boy, but the features of a hundred years old, save that his eyes had a brilliance and restlessness...of a well-known species of monkey.”<sup>35</sup> This is a description that is repeated throughout the story in various ways. But, even this contradictory description is unstable; and towards the end of the story, Hogg describes Merodach’s eyes as those of a ferret. Any attempt to describe him beyond his physical features always ends in ambiguity as well. Hogg describes him as a monkey, a human, a devil, a Jew, a wizard, a kelpie, a blackguard, elvish and a “strange and terrible creature.”<sup>36</sup>

Adding to the ambiguity, though Merodach enjoys a salary of milk and bread, the typical payment accepted by brownies, his ultimate abuse of Lady Wheelhope is decidedly not the act of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 98.

a benevolent being. Or, is it? By focusing her wrath on himself, Merodach lifts the burden of Lady Wheelhope's murderous tendencies from the rest of the staff, ultimately putting an end to her reign of terror. But Hogg never gives a decision on this ambiguity. Is Merodach benevolent or a terror? It completely relies on whether the reader chooses to view the character through the eyes of the servants for whom he is a savior, or through the eyes of Lady Wheelhope over whom he sits in judgement. In spite of this messianic allusion, Merodach refuses to remain in the presence of an open Bible toward the end of the story, throwing it across the room when the man holding it will not close it.

Whereas Hogg mingles Christian elements into his Black Hagg brownie, he likewise blends supernatural and historical elements in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*. Hogg uses historical events as a key component of the story and models his novel on Sir Walter Scott's scholarly and factual presentation of history in the Waverly novels.<sup>37</sup> The events and characters of *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* are similar to those in Scott's *The Tale of Old Mortality*, but according to Hogg, Scott complained that *Bodsbeck* "'is a false and unfair picture of the times and the existing characters...an exhaggerated and unfair picture.'"<sup>38</sup> Hogg responded that "'I was obliged sometimes to change the situations to make one coalesce with another but in no one instance have I related a story of a cruelty or a murder which is not literally true. An' that's a great deal mair than you can say for your tale o' Auld Mortality.'"<sup>39</sup> Hogg's was not concerned with providing his readers with a factually accurate retelling of a historical period, though they might find themselves "'in one exceedingly like it—fully believable and thus perhaps more real.'"<sup>40</sup> Hogg indicates that *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* should be read as an instance of literal truth by

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<sup>37</sup> Smith, 82.

<sup>38</sup> Hogg, *Anecdotes*, 50.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

predicating it upon historical events and people. However, it is fiction. The reader is never entirely certain whether the novel is to be read as history or fiction, as Hogg offers no faithfulness to one form or the other.

In *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, the brownie is revealed to be John Brown who was deformed by a wound sustained during the battle of Bothwell Bridge. Ingeniously, Brown has adopted the guise of the brownie to hide himself from a fanatic named Clavers who is hunting down all Cameronians. Through the legend that is eventually built up around the persona of the Brownie of Bodsbeck, Brown is able to come and go as needed, unhindered and unchecked. However, this revelation stands in sharp contrast to the continued insistence throughout the novel of a strong belief among the locals of the brownie's existence. Through this belief, the brownie takes on a life of his own apart from the exploits of Brown as a legend capable of a life sustained beyond the unmasking of Brown. Brown's endeavors to rescue the other Cameronians only serves to create a real brownie in the minds of the locals: "It is as if Brown merely disguised himself as a real person"<sup>41</sup> for the purpose of his unmasking.

Hogg's Brownie of Bodsbeck is a ghost, an ethereal entity that survives beyond the limits of its original form. In a way, by revealing Brown as the Brownie of Bodsbeck, Hogg only increases the supernatural element of the story. Again, this challenges the literary norm created by Scott, whose work Hogg was modelling *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* after. In several works, Scott prefers to adopt a "method of explaining away the apparently supernatural,"<sup>42</sup> one that shows "the effect of fear upon the agents of the story."<sup>43</sup> By doing so, Scott ensures that reason will prevail over superstition in his novels. However, within Hogg's tales, a reader is usually

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>42</sup> Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance*, (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1921) 153.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 152.

presented with both a very real manifestation of the supernatural and some form of assertion that the tale is very true. A reader is never entirely sure whether he or she is to reasonably dismiss the events of the rest of the work due to the appearance of the supernatural in it, or to embrace the reality of the supernatural based on the accuracy of the history of the work.

### **The Fine Line Between Lunacy and Ambiguity**

Many of Hogg's shorter stories play out this dichotomy of history versus fiction, and reality versus imagination, as well. Almost as if he were channeling episodes from *The Twilight Zone*, Hogg weaves tales that cannot be true, but at the same time, must be true. We can discern such ambiguity in the fictional account of James Beatman.

In "Strange Letter of a Lunatic: To Mr Hogg, of Mount Benger," James Beatman recounts his experience with his exact double after taking a pinch of snuff from a strange old man's golden snuff box, and as the title implies, he does so through a letter to none other than James Hogg. Beatman goes about his daily routine, only to find that everything he intends to do has already been done, such as paying the bar bill. However, during a later opportunity that Beatman has to confront his double on the matter, his double insists on his own frustration that Beatman has not allowed him to pay the exact same bill. Later, Beatman encounters a young woman whom he has never met that swears he has offended her previously, so much so that her brother has challenged Beatman to a duel for her honor. These events leave Beatman "in dread perplexity, whether I was the devil or James Beatman."<sup>44</sup> In the wake of such confusion, Beatman resolves that drastic measures need to be taken to resolve his situation: "I had become, as it were, two bodies, with only one soul between them, and felt that some decisive measures

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<sup>44</sup> Hogg, *Selected Stories and Sketches*, 165.

behaved to be resorted to immediately.”<sup>45</sup> Beatman’s letter ends with a duel between the two Beatmans.

At this point of the tale, Hogg steps in to express his own perplexity at having read this letter. He admits he would have dismissed the letter entirely had it not been validated through a letter from Alexander Walker, a mutual friend of both Hogg and Beatman. In his letter, Walker assures Hogg that, though no one saw the actual duel, several witnesses heard two shots, two fired pistols were found at the site of the duel, and Beatman was found wounded in a manner too unlikely to have been self-inflicted. As improbable as Beatman’s account is to rational readers, it is the only account that makes Walker’s account make sense. Hogg’s reader is once again stuck, made uncertain by the combination of supernatural events and Hogg’s continued assurance of the authenticity of these same events.

So, Hogg’s reader is left once again with a puzzle. But, the reader must not only determine whether to accept the tale as truth or not, but the reader must also attempt to determine who or what Beatman’s doppelgänger could be. Is the double a manifestation of Beatman’s break from reality, a clear indication that he indeed is a lunatic? Or, is it a real entity? Beatman refers to the double as a devil, though never as *the* Devil. The double could be an entity from Hell, but it could also be a fairy. Beatman meets the snuff-wielding old man on Castle Hill, above what used to be Nor Loch before it was drained in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The enigmatic duel takes place “in a concealed dell near the corner of the lake.”<sup>46</sup> Dells were the frequent home and playground of fairies throughout Scottish folk lore, and shapeshifting

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 166.

habitants of lochs such as the water-horse were known to both take on human form and to lure unsuspecting humans to their death, often beneath the waters of the loch itself.<sup>47</sup>

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This penchant for ambiguity is part of Hogg's legacy, and perhaps it is the reason his legacy has endured so long. A reader completing any of Hogg's works cannot put that book behind with a sense of closure. Hogg's readers must continue to think about what they have just read. Hogg refuses to answer questions; he only raises them. He presents no rationale to his readers in neatly-wrapped, easy-to-digest explanations. Both history and the supernatural are presented to his readers, and it's up to his readers to determine which is the more reasonable explanation of the events Hogg records. While all of this ambiguity can be hard for a reader to sort through and even polarizes the scholarship surrounding his works, it is a fundamental part of what made Hogg such an effectual Gothic author.

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<sup>47</sup> Lewis Spence, "Mythical Beasts in Scottish Folklore," *The Scotsman* 04 Mar. 1933: 15.

## Chapter 3 – The Ambiguities of a *Justified Sinner*

It would be erroneous to dismiss *Justified Sinner* as a text whose ambiguities result merely from the clumsy endeavor of a simple shepherd in over his head with the complexities of literature. Rather, it is a text predicated upon ambiguity. At every point when Hogg could bring a moment of clarity, he refrains from providing his readers with a clear and exact decision between the potential alternatives. Although it is entirely possible that some of these ambiguities are the result of the ineptitude of a shepherd, yet resonate centuries later with readers in a way that the shepherd never anticipated, for the most part Hogg's ambiguities are better seen not as accidental characteristic of the novel, but rather an extension of the theme that was woven throughout his body of work. The fact that we may never fully know which of *Justified Sinner's* ambiguities are accidental, with brilliance later read into them, and which are intentional adds yet another layer of ambiguity in an already complex book.

### **The Supernatural: Manifestations of Insanity or Reality?**

Perhaps the most troublesome ambiguity within *Justified Sinner* is the ambiguity created by the introduction of supernatural elements, or, what literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov identifies as *the fantastic*. The fantastic is introduced into a text when, “in a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world.”<sup>1</sup> This occurrence creates a paradox for both the character involved and the reader, both of whom wonder “whether what is happening to him is real, if what surrounds him is indeed reality...or whether it is no more than

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<sup>1</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Cornell UP, 1975) 25.

an illusion,”<sup>2</sup> or a dream. This is the nature of the ambiguity in the fantastic, an ambiguity which “is sustained to the very end of the adventure: reality or dream? Truth or illusion?”<sup>3</sup>

Within tales of the fantastic, this ambiguity drives the narrative. At its core, “*all narrative is a movement between two equilibriums which are similar but not identical.*”<sup>4</sup> At some early point in any narrative, the initially established equilibrium or stability is broken and the character then spends the remainder of the narrative trying to restore that equilibrium. Stability is ultimately restored, but it is always different from that with which the narrative began. And, what force “could better disturb the stable situation of the beginning...if not precisely an event external not only to the situation but to the world itself?”<sup>5</sup> Yes, there are other means by which an author might destabilize a text, but “the supernatural achieves the narrative modification in the fastest manner.”<sup>6</sup>

In *Justified Sinner*, reality and illusion, or the natural and the supernatural, collide in the figure of Gil-Martin, Robert’s doppelgänger. A doppelgänger is simply a double, although often a supernatural double, and has been a staple in literature since the story of Cain and Abel. In *Justified Sinner*, it is Gil-Martin who urges Robert towards his own instance of fratricide. Robert was already convinced by his adoptive (and possibly biological) father, Calvinist minister Rev. Wringhim, that he is predestined for Heaven. Gil-Martin enters the story and convinces Robert that since he is predestined, he is likewise incapable of sinning. Gil-Martin urges Robert to wage war on the enemies of God, who include his brother George.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 163. The italics were Todorov’s addition to this passage, not my own.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 166.

Gil-Martin is conspicuously absent from the first component of the novel, the editor's narrative, save for a singular mention of his name and the appearance of someone walking down the street with Robert who may or may not have been Gil-Martin. It is not until the second half of the novel, Robert's narrative, that Gil-Martin really comes into his own. Once he arrives in the story, he completely takes over and steals the show, which is part of what makes Gil-Martin such a brilliant doppelgänger.

Gil-Martin reveals himself one day while Robert is walking along the road. As he approaches Robert from the other direction, Robert is astonished "on perceiving that he was the same being as myself! The clothes were the same, to the smallest item. The form was the same; the apparent age; the colour of the hair; the eyes; and, so far as recollection could serve me from viewing my own features in a glass, the features too were the very same."<sup>7</sup> The next time they meet, Gil-Martin has taken on another form, and eventually he settles into the form of Robert's dead brother, George.

Gil-Martin maintains this guise, the guise of a dead man, for the remainder of the narrative, at least from what Robert sees and can record. However, when Robert becomes gravely ill after inheriting the Dalcastle estate, he has dreams that he is elsewhere committing heinous acts, including murder. Once he recovers and is confronted with the fact that these acts were indeed committed, he realizes that they must have been committed by the only other being capable of assuming his appearance. Throughout the novel, Gil-Martin reads Robert's thoughts and anticipates his every action, and try as he might, especially towards the end of the novel, Robert is no more able to evade Gil-Martin than he could his own shadow.

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<sup>7</sup> James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. John Carey, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 116-7.

Just exactly who or what Gil-Martin is seems to be an unsolvable riddle, and as such, “there is little agreement among the critics as to what Hogg’s demon really is.”<sup>8</sup> Obviously, because of the Christian themes that are so prevalent in *Justified Sinner*, especially as the text wrestles with the Calvinist tradition of predestination, some scholars find it easy to just assume that Gil-Martin is the Devil in human guise: “Gil-Martin of the Justified Sinner ranks as a unique attempt in our literature to incarnate the Fiend amid realistic surroundings.”<sup>9</sup> Others have maintained that Gil-Martin is rather a manifestation of “Robert’s divided self.”<sup>10</sup> This theory posits that Robert, though desiring to separate himself from his darker desires, fails to fully “separate the warring parts of himself.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, Robert’s illness which leaves him bedridden while dreaming of Gil-Martin’s dastardly deeds would really be “Robert’s attempt to cease committing crimes by locking himself away in a room [which] proves ‘impossibly’ ineffectual.”<sup>12</sup> Other critics take this psychological split even further, insisting that “Robert, George, and Gil-Martin are divided aspects of a single character.”<sup>13</sup>

Regardless of the number of shared personalities, the possibility that Gil-Martin is the manifestation of a fractured mind is fascinating. If this is true, then *Justified Sinner* “is ‘one of the earliest...studies of the criminal mind,’ with the Editor acting as proto-detective as he tries to solve the multiple mysteries at the heart of the novel.”<sup>14</sup> This is not an unreasonable conclusion. The mind, especially how it works in relationship to memory and the body, is a theme that Hogg

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<sup>8</sup> L. L. Lee, “The Devil’s Figure: James Hogg’s Justified Sinner,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 3.4 (1966): 231.

<sup>9</sup> Sir George Douglas, *James Hogg*, (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1899) 99-100.

<sup>10</sup> David Eggenschwiler, “James Hogg’s Confessions and the Fall Into Division,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 9.1 (1971): 33.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>12</sup> Meredith Evans, “Persons Fall Apart: James Hogg’s Transcendent Sinner,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 36.2 (2003): 206.

<sup>13</sup> David Oakleaf, “‘Not the Truth’: The Doubleness of Hogg’s Confessions and the Eighteenth-Century Tradition,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 18.1 (1983): 68. The italics are my own, added for emphasis.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew McGuire, “James Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and the Romantic Roots of Crime Fiction,” *CLUES: A Journal of Detection* 30.1 (2012): 11.

explores in several of his short stories. In one such story, “George Dobson’s Expedition to Hell,” the titular character has an intense dream foretelling his own death, as well as the death of four of his friends. Hogg prefaces this tale with a discussion of the mind in relation to dreaming:

There is no phenomenon in nature less understood, and about which greater nonsense is written, than dreaming...and I firmly believe that no philosopher that ever wrote knows a particle more about it than I do... he does not know what mind is; even his own mind...far less can he estimate the operations and powers of that of any other intelligent being.<sup>15</sup>

Ultimately though, regardless of whether Gil-Martin “is the Fiend incarnate, or...a fantasy of Colwan’s [i.e. Robert’s] mind,”<sup>16</sup> equilibrium or stability must be re-established by the end of the narrative. In the case of the fantastic, this return to equilibrium also means a resolution to the supernatural elements within the text, the very same supernatural elements that brought about its instability to begin with. The resolution of the supernatural elements brings us back to Sir Walter Scott’s claim that “the marvelous...loses its effect by being brought much into view.”<sup>17</sup> His predecessor, Edmund Burke said much the same thing: “TO [sic] make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes.”<sup>18</sup> Once an author explains the supernatural, what initially seems to transgress against the laws of nature

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<sup>15</sup> James Hogg, *James Hogg: Selected Stories and Sketches*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982) 41.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Simpson, *James Hogg: A Critical Study*, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1962) 187.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Walter Scott, “On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition: and particularly on the Works of Ernest Theodore William Hoffman,” *The Foreign quarterly review* 1.1 (1827): 62.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Burke, “Obscurity,” *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757) 43.

ultimately loses the ability to defy reason and rationality, and can be safely restored to a place within the confines of the laws of nature once more; the ambiguity is resolved.

However, Hogg resolves none of the ambiguities within *Justified Sinner*. Who or what Gil-Martin might be is never determined, neither by the characters within the novel, predominantly the editor and Robert, nor by the reader. Since the issue of Gil-Martin is not “brought much into view,” in other words resolved through scrutinizing the character, the equilibrium is never re-established. Indeed, the novel ends not only with its two brotherly protagonists, George and Robert, dead but also with no answer to the question raised by the editor upon sharing with the reader Robert’s narrative: “What can this work be? Sure, you will say, it must be an allegory; or (as the writer calls it) a religious PARABLE, showing the dreadful danger of self-righteousness? I cannot tell.”<sup>19</sup>

The readers of Hogg’s *Justified Sinner* are obligated to share in the editor’s confusion. Mirroring the editor’s question, readers must ask themselves, “what can this novel be?” Perhaps the answer lies in Todorov’s theory that “in the fantastic...the transgression of the laws of nature made us even more powerfully aware of them.”<sup>20</sup> If we are made “powerfully aware” of how nature works after supernatural elements of a text transgress against the laws of nature, even though these elements are eventually resolved, then our awareness must become even greater if these transgressions and transgressors are never resolved. In *Justified Sinner*, Hogg is forcing his reader towards a greater understanding that something isn’t necessarily transgressing against the laws of nature just by being outside of humanity’s current understanding of nature. Perhaps, then, we need to redefine our understanding of nature rather than merely dismissing what isn’t easily understood. *Justified Sinner* seems to be asking the question of whether the supernatural

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<sup>19</sup> Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 240.

<sup>20</sup> Todorov, 173.

is breaking the actual laws of nature, or merely that which humanity understands as “The Laws of Nature.”

### **Conflicting Testimonies**

*Justified Sinner*'s ambiguities, however, are not confined to the supernatural alone, and bleed over into the natural elements of the novel as well. Division into two narratives augments the novel's confusion and ambiguity. The first narrative is written by the narrating editor as he investigates the events in a manuscript that he found which was over a hundred-years old. The second half is the manuscript itself, the story of the justified sinner as told by the justified sinner, Robert Wringhim. Stylistically, the two halves are quite different. The editor's half reads like a piece of modern investigative journalism. He starts with a mystery and investigates through public records and eye-witness testimony to piece together the entire story as best as he can. By the end of this half, a mystery has been presented to the reader, yet is neatly resolved. Robert's half is a personal journal, recounting many of the same events as the first, only from his perspective and his perspective alone. This half is chaotic, and major spans of time are left unaccounted for. In the end of this half, the reader has more question than answers.

Occasionally, the two narratives converge, both covering the same event. However, when this happens within the novel, two separate stories still emerge. For instance, Robert twice confronts George on the tennis courts. In the editor's narrative, George and his friends find Robert to be a little uncanny, but mostly just annoying: “[Robert] was always in his way as with intention to impede him, and ever and anon his deep and malignant eye met those of his older brother with a glance so fierce that it sometimes startled him.”<sup>21</sup> Still, this intrusion eventually

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<sup>21</sup> Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 21.

turns into a brawl. After the altercation, George's sincere appeal for an amicable peace is rejected by his younger brother.

In Robert's version of the story, he records that "they eyed me with terror in their looks,"<sup>22</sup> Robert feeling certain that George and his friends feel the terror of God's wrath poured through him during their encounters. Instead of being bested by his older brother, Robert records that "they all fled and dispersed at my eye, and I went home in triumph." Similarly, Robert assumes that each one of George's attempts at peace are superficial.

This pattern is repeated throughout the novel. The editor outlines the details of a situation, and Robert echoes these details in his narrative, but with a very different take on the story. However, it is far more common for the two narratives to diverge rather than converge. In the editor's narrative, Drummond is framed for the murder of George, an occurrence not repeated in Robert's narrative. In order to clear Drummond of the charges and find George's true murderer, Mrs. Logan (George's surrogate mother) and Mrs. Calvert jump on Robert not far from his recently inherited estate and pin him to the ground in an effort to extract his confession to the murder of George. After "they mocked, they tormented, and they threatened him...after putting him in great terror,"<sup>23</sup> they hog-tie him and go to the authorities to have him arrested. When the authorities return to collect Robert, he has disappeared, as far as the record shows, forever. Yet, this sequence of events never happens in Robert's version of the events. He wakes up one day, and is told by Gil-Martin that he must flee because the body of his murdered mother has been found and the police are on their way to arrest him.

Furthermore, both narratives end in vastly different ways. The editor's half ends with George dead, though at least Drummond is cleared of all charges. However, Robert has

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 89.

disappeared. Robert's narrative extends beyond that moment though. It details his flight from prosecution, and his flight, albeit failed, from the supernatural entity known as Gil-Martin. Hiding out in whichever refuges will take him in, he moves from place to place until the day he dies. He finds work at one point as a printer, during which time he prints the manuscript that the editor of the first half finds in the suicide's grave. Robert's manuscript ends with a suicide note; he can no longer run from his paranormal pursuer, and death proves more bearable than Gil-Martin.

This inconsistency within the text calls both narratives into question. The editor is piecing together a puzzle that is over one-hundred years old, mostly from the testimony of Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Calvert. However, both of these women are ambiguous figures themselves. Mrs. Logan may or may not have been Laird Dalcastle's mistress, and Mrs. Calvert is a prostitute who seems to know the ins and outs of the job in spite her insistence that this is only her second occasion of stooping to this profession. The editor's "judgement is also partial and faulty."<sup>24</sup> In his narrative, George is the hero and Robert the villain. One must also doubt the editor's other sources. He is somehow able to recount George and Robert's experience on Arthur's Seat, but his account deviates drastically from Robert's own. Given that the only two witnesses to the event were George and Robert themselves, and the editor's account differs from Robert's first-hand account, then he must be relying on the account as recorded by someone whom George told about the events. In the narrator's account, George nearly runs over Robert trying to escape from an aberration in the mist, but then stops to talk to Robert and attempts to reconcile their relationship. In Robert's account, George continues home instead and the only conversation is with Gil-Martin. Plus, the editor even seems to doubt his own investigation at

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<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Harries, "Duplication and Duplicity: James Hogg's Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner," *The Wordsworth Circle* 10 (1979): 191.

times. He opens his narrative with the words “it appears from tradition.”<sup>25</sup> These are hardly the opening words of a man confident about the reliability of his sources. Robert’s narrative is likewise compromised because “his sense of causality, as well as his sense of identity, is askew.”<sup>26</sup> Quite naturally, he is the hero of his own story, but the fact that his story includes Gil-Martin, calls his entire narrative into question. Are these the ramblings of a deranged man? Are these mere fabrications? The rational mind tends to reject any testimony predicated upon the supernatural.

### **Alien Invasion**

Another ambiguous dichotomy is presented through a tension between the locals and the Calvinists which stems from each group believing that the other are outsiders. The Calvinists believe that everyone with different beliefs are reprobates predestined for Hell. Because of this belief, they bully all others regardless of social rank, sanctimoniously deeming them to be inferior outsiders. Robert, especially, abuses his family’s servants and frequently treats them as if they are the enemy. By doing so, the Calvinists alienate themselves from the rest of society. However, the Calvinists are themselves outsiders. When Lady Dalcastle first arrives upon the Dalcastle lands, she is travelling from Glasgow. Shortly thereafter, when the Rev. Wringhim arrives to save Lady Dalcastle from her heathen husband, he too arrives from, and eventually escorts her back to, Glasgow. When they come with Robert to Edinburgh, the principle setting for much of the novel, all three are outsiders from Glasgow.

The locals accept the rational explanation for things inherent in the novel’s first narrative, and seemed to be able to see things more clearly. It is the local characters in the second narrative who continually recognize Gil-Martin as dangerous, even when Robert himself is blind to this

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<sup>25</sup> Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Harries, 190.

fact. Robert and his parents rely on complex Calvinist theologies to explain all things. Their cant frequently keeps the Calvinists from comprehending things that their local counterparts clearly can. After all, the editor acknowledges that he is “only relating to the greater part of the inhabitants of at least four counties of Scotland, matters of which they were perfectly well informed.”<sup>27</sup> So, the Calvinists, as they adhere to their religion’s man-made regulations, are missing understanding necessary to interpret the events that unfold in this novel. Inversely, the local characters believe in both demons and fairies, and form a religious understanding based on actual experience with things that cannot otherwise be explained. They embrace the rational explanation, not only concerning the relationship of Rev. Wringhim and Lady Dalcastle, but on a much broader scale, they embrace a rational explanation of the world around them.

The strife between the locals and the Calvinists rears its head early. Towards the beginning of the editor’s version of the story, Robert’s mother, Lady Dalcastle, invites the Rev. Wringhim over to calm her after a fight with her husband. They stay up all night talking alone in her room, which eventually becomes their habit. The editor insists that there is no misconduct between the two because they are both predestined for Heaven, and thus, are presumed beyond lustful temptation. Yet, twice in the middle of the night, Lady Dalcastle’s servant gets out of bed “and stood listening at the back of the door, ready to burst in should need require it”<sup>28</sup> because Rev. Wringhim becomes a little wild and passionate amid their discussion. This behavior seems more the action of a servant who is listening to her mistress’ sexual antics than one who is concerned about her safety. Since Lady Dalcastle “would not consort with her husband herself,”<sup>29</sup> it seems more than plausible that Robert is Rev. Wringhim’s son, even though the

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<sup>27</sup> Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

editor notes “it is more than probable that he [Robert] was his [George’s] brother in reality.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed, they would still be half-brothers even if they share the same mother but different fathers. Lady Dalcastle’s probable infidelity is something that scholarship has picked up on as well: “[Lady Dalcastle’s] disputations with the Rev. Mr. Wringhim, with their ‘fiery burning zeal,’ are parodies of sexual infidelity, especially since they generate a symbolic, if not literal, bastard in Lady Dalcastle’s second son.”<sup>31</sup>

During Robert’s narrative, this suspicion is confirmed when a family servant named John said to Robert, “I ne’er, for my part, saw a son sae like a dad.”<sup>32</sup> John’s statements seems to imply that Robert not only acts like Rev. Wringhim, but physically looked like Rev. Wringhim’s biological son. Robert relays John’s words to Rev. Wringhim as soon as he can, and the reverend goes outside immediately to confront John. John defends his statement, and, following Rev. Wringhim’s verbal attack, likens the reverend to a hypocritical Pharisee in the New Testament. Rev. Wringhim never outright denies the accusation that John has put forth, seeming more concerned with the fact that John has insulted him. The local servant has deduced a truth that Rev. Wringhim and Lady Dalcastle thought was hidden behind their pretenses of piety.

So, who are the real outsiders? It is possible that the piety and the religion of Rev. Wringhim and Lady Dalcastle were fabrications. They could serve to pacify and comfort the adulterous couple, and provide a form of security from the judgement of their neighbors. It seems as though they do not abide by the entirety of their established religious code, though they fully expect everyone else in *Justified Sinner* to. As Calvinists, they deem anyone who does otherwise as spiritually inferior and predestined for Hell, but Rev. Wringhim and Lady Dalcastle

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>31</sup> Eggenschwiler, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Hogg, *Justified Sinner*, 102.

may also perceive them as a threat to their carefully crafted façade, like John is. Then again, what if their religious beliefs are correct?

This tension between the local citizens and the self-righteously offensive Rev. Wringhim and Lady Dalcastle creates another ambiguity in the novel. Robert assumes that he is one of the souls predestined for Heaven due to what Rev. Wringhim tells him, although at times he doubts his own salvation. Because Rev. Wringhim tells him that he is one of the elect, Robert can be more easily drawn into Gil-Martin's plans for murder, for Robert knows that he essentially can do no wrong as a member of the elect. So, is Robert really saved? If he is, then what would usually be perceived as morally unethical actions really are justifiable. However, this neither sits well with the reader, nor entirely with Robert himself. For the reader, there is the possibility that Rev. Wringhim's declaration that Robert is one of the elect is merely the final act of covering up Robert's potential illegitimate origins. Yet, Hogg never explicitly tells his reader whether or not Robert is truly one of the elect, leaving it to readers to determine this on their own.

### **Of Hogs and Men: To Whom Should I Listen?**

When Hogg chooses to insinuate himself into the text, it's as one of the people, not as a member of the literary elite. When the editor goes on his quest to find the "Scots mummy"<sup>33</sup> mentioned in the letter, he has mutual friends introduce him to Hogg, and the three invite Hogg to join them. Hogg's refusal is recorded in the local dialect, the dialect most suited to his Ettrick Shepherd personality: "'Od bless ye, lad! I hae ither matters to mind. I hae a' thae paulies<sup>34</sup> to sell, an' a' yon Highland stotts<sup>35</sup> down in the green every ane; an' then I hae ten scores o' yowes to buy after, an' if I canna first sell my ain stock, I canna buy nae ither body's. I hae mair ado

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>34</sup> A breed of sheep that had been previously described in *Justified Sinner*.

<sup>35</sup> A young bull.

than I can manage the day, foreby ganging to houk<sup>36</sup> up hunder-year-auld banes.”<sup>37</sup> With his shepherding duties, he does not have time for such fanciful adventures. As for the letter he wrote, the one that sparked the editor’s quest, he has come to regard it as but “a queer fancy for a woo-stapler to tak.”<sup>38</sup>

However, this pastoral pose is not all there is to the real James Hogg; it simply cannot be. The real James Hogg indeed wrote those words, and it is probable that he spoke in a similar manner when it suited his needs or whims. However, he wrote all the other voices in *Justified Sinner* as well. He was not only fluent in dialect, but capable enough to write the majority of *Justified Sinner* in coherent, grammatically-correct (for the most part) English, the language of the editor and the framing narratives’ investigators. And, the letter is no mere queer fancy, but an important device that Hogg uses to craft the even larger fancy that is the novel. So, if this is not a fair representation of the *entire* James Hogg, then why did he choose to portray himself this way?

The most probable answer comes from the ongoing conversation surrounding print culture. Some scholars hold that Hogg portrays himself this way to attack the “primacy of the English language and culture.”<sup>39</sup> Obviously, the locals are portrayed as having their own sort of wisdom, wisdom that can see through the façades created by their establishment counterparts. They are likewise able to “resolve questions beyond the comprehension of more literate characters,”<sup>40</sup> the outsiders such as Robert and even the narrating editor. Hogg’s locals are more honest and genuine, while the outsiders have been stripped of these virtues through their cant.

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<sup>36</sup> Dig.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Samuel W. Harnish, Jr., “James Hogg: *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and Manufactured Tradition,” *Studies in Hogg and His World* 17 (2006): 47.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Hogg embraces these virtues through his local caricature on the pages of *Justified Sinner*, and he seems to do so in order to expose those who had defamed him.

Hogg's humble self-caricature emanates from the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, a series of "vitriolic personal satire[s]"<sup>41</sup> regular featured in *Blackwood's*. The *Noctes Ambrosianae* was "the product of prominent Edinburgh literary figures... consist[ing] of fictional dialogues between these *Blackwood's* figures,"<sup>42</sup> which of course include Hogg. These vitriolic attacks were devastating: "In the hands of *Blackwood's* writers—but not Hogg himself—the 'Ettrick Shepherd,' the signature used by Hogg since *The Queen's Wake* (1813), was caricatured as a boorish and befuddled clown whose rude, rustic speech was transcribed in the *Noctes* by dialect, unlike the other characters who were all represented in plain English."<sup>43</sup> This unfortunate and embarrassing depiction virtually undid Hogg's literary achievements in the eyes of the public. Rather than being acknowledged as the celebrated author of *The Queen's Wake* and other popular works, The Ettrick Shepherd became little more than a rustic with a few moments of unfathomable luck, an idiot savant. These representations damaged Hogg's reputation, and afterwards "Hogg did not seek celebrity; he had the arguably more formidable task of correcting notoriety."<sup>44</sup>

So, who was the real Hogg? According to Sir Walter Scott's biographer, John Buchan, the real Hogg had a very interesting heritage, "for there had been witches on the paternal side, and his maternal grandfather, Will o' Phawhope, was the last man on the Border who had spoken with the fairies."<sup>45</sup> It is almost as if Hogg was born to write about the supernatural. However, a

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<sup>41</sup> Karen Fang, "A Printing Devil, a Scottish Mummy, and an Edinburgh Book of the Dead: James Hogg's Napoleonic Complex," *Studies in Romanticism* 43.2 (2004): 168.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott*, (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1967) 62.

little research reveals to the reader that Hogg himself was the originator of such tales concerning his origins. In *Tales and Sketches*, “Hogg describes Will o’ Phaup’s triumphs as a runner and assures the reader that he was ‘the last man of this wild region who heard, saw, and conversed with the Fairies.’”<sup>46</sup> What we do know for certain is that Hogg’s childhood was filled with “tales of kings, giants, knights, fairies, kelpies, brownies, etc., etc.”<sup>47</sup> tales told by his mother which exposed him to “the whole oral Scottish tradition.”<sup>48</sup> Although he did quite literally begin his career as a shepherd, he soon began to write poetry and grew to become one of Scotland’s most “important poets, second only to Robert Burns in his lyrics.”<sup>49</sup> From there, Hogg set out to master other literary genres. Still, he always held on to those stories from his childhood, and even though his works are full of history and humor, he is perhaps best remembered for “the supernatural and the horrific [that] pervade his poetry and prose.”<sup>50</sup>

Hogg creates a fictitious persona of himself in his novel *Justified Sinner*, all the while speaking in the fictional voices of either the editor or Robert Wringhim. He writes convincingly in both proper English and in a Scottish dialect. All the while, he creates a mystery in *Justified Sinner* that could neither be solved by the English nor by those Scots who preferred English culture over Scottish. Not only had he truly mastered his craft, but it would seem that Hogg had the last laugh.

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<sup>46</sup> Simpson, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Nelson C. Smith, *James Hogg*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) 18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

## Chapter 4 - Gil-Martin

In a book full of ambiguities in both the natural and supernatural realms, it seems logical that the ambiguities would complicate the identity of Gil-Martin as well. However, after perusal of the scholarship pertaining to *Justified Sinner*, a reader might well conclude that this particular ambiguity has been resolved. In “The ‘cameleon art’: James Hogg’s Gil-Martin and Some Other Devils,” Robin MacLachlan subtly acknowledges that “by the end of [Robert’s] *Confessions* there can be few readers who do not recognize his acquaintance as possessing many of the features that Western culture attributes to the Devil, and that view is shared by a number of witnesses within the story itself.”<sup>1</sup> Others are far more blunt concerning the center of *Justified Sinner*’s supernatural confusion. L. L. Lee takes an in-depth look at the role played in the novel by “the Devil, or Gil-Martin as Hogg names him.”<sup>2</sup> Douglas Mack asserts that Robert “is befriended by a mysterious stranger, Gil-Martin, who is in fact the Devil.”<sup>3</sup> H. B. de Groot explores the theme of antinomianism in *Justified Sinner* as promoted “by Gil-Martin (who, of course, is both the Devil and Wringhim’s darker self).”<sup>4</sup>

The introduction of Gil-Martin brings the natural into contact with the supernatural,<sup>5</sup> and in so doing, Robert’s doppelgänger is the source for much of the ambiguity imbedded in *Justified Sinner*. It seems problematic to conclude that the only unambiguous element of the entire novel is the harbinger of ambiguity himself. After delving into what *Justified Sinner* scholarship has said about the figure of Gil-Martin over the last several decades, I will introduce a potential

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<sup>1</sup> Robin MacLachlan, “The ‘cameleon art’: James Hogg’s Gil-Martin and Some Other Devils,” *Studies in Hogg and His World* 21 (2010): 7.

<sup>2</sup> L. L. Lee, “The Devil’s Figure: James Hogg’s *Justified Sinner*,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 3.4 (1966): 231.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Mack, “Hogg’s Religion and The Confessions of a Justified Sinner,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 7.4 (1970): 272.

<sup>4</sup> H. B. de Groot, “Calvinism, Presbyterianism, Antinomianism: The Theological Background of the *Confessions*,” *Studies in Hogg and His World* 21 (2010): 38.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 1.

alternative that will push against the standard theories about Gil-Martin by suggesting a new interpretation of the character. Although the goal may at first sound counterintuitive, I hope that my own theory will muddy up the clear scholarship and potentially return this figure to the same level of ambiguity as the rest of the novel.

### **Gil-Martin as the Devil**

Overall, it is quite easy to see why the assumption that Gil-Martin is the Devil has been made. As Robin MacLachlan points out, “when the *Confessions* first appeared in mid-July 1824, one can fairly say that the Devil was abroad in European culture.”<sup>6</sup> Certainly, the theatre did its part in fostering this fiendish phenomenon in Edinburgh at this time where the play *German Der Freischutz, Or, The Spectre Huntsman of Bohemia* was being performed.<sup>7</sup> MacLachlan also notes that “James Hogg’s love of the theater is well documented,”<sup>8</sup> so it is reasonable to assume that he was familiar with this production. Even in print culture, “there had by then been a number of partial copies of *Faust I*, for example the substantial extracts translated by John Aster for a *Blackwood’s* article that appeared in June 1820, which Ian Duncan suggests Hogg is likely to have read.”<sup>9</sup>

In the midst of this burst of devilish entertainment, Hogg wrote *Justified Sinner*, and so created Gil-Martin. *Justified Sinner* itself deals with several complex Christian themes, especially as the text wrestles with the Calvinist tradition of predestination. Robert Wringhim, Lady Dalcastle, and his adoptive father, Rev. Wringhim, are all Calvinists, and their Calvinist and Presbyterian doctrine is fully displayed for the reader in the scene in which young Robert

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<sup>6</sup> MacLachlan, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>8</sup> Robin MacLachlan, “A Travelling Player in James Hogg’s *Ettrick; or Robbers!! Phantasmagoria!! And Brownies!!*,” *Studies in Hogg and His World* 22 (2012): 60.

<sup>9</sup> MacLachlan, “cameleon art,” 8

joins the rest of his family in reciting their catechism.<sup>10</sup> Robert also spends much of his earlier scenes with Gil-Martin in antinomian discussions, pondering to what extent those who are predestined for Heaven are free from the consequences of their sinful actions. Karen McConnell brings Arminianism into her discussion of *Justified Sinner* because “an understanding of the emphasis that this branch of Protestant theology places on individuals’ sovereignty in their acceptance of or resistance to grace offers a way of reading Robert’s own position.”<sup>11</sup> Such intense theological themes make the assumption that Gil-Martin is the Devil in human form quite understandable.

In addition to these extensive theological discussions, Robert also receives warnings from key characters throughout the novel that seem to associate Gil-Martin with the Devil. Robert explains to his mother why he appears sickly upon his return home one day, noting, “I have been conversant this day with one stranger only, whom I took for an angel of light.” Immediately, his mother replies, “It is one of the devil’s most profound wiles to appear like one.”<sup>12</sup> Later in the story, one of Robert’s servants, Samuel Scrape, tells him a parable of a town named Auchtermuchy, where the devil in preacher’s garb nearly leads the whole town astray until a fairy-blessed man named Robin Ruthven<sup>13</sup> raises the devil’s robe, exposing his cloven feet to Auchtermuchy’s citizens. Samuel even slips as he’s warning Robert that the young lady’s body has been found, and that a mob is on the way to arrest Robert: “it is said the devil—I beg pardon

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<sup>10</sup> de Groot, 36.

<sup>11</sup> Karen M. McConnell, “Rationally Murderous: Antinomianism, Arminianism, and Enlightenment Thought in James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*,” *Studies in Hogg and His World* 21 (2010): 30.

<sup>12</sup> James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. John Carey, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 121.

<sup>13</sup> Hogg is pulling from a rich literary tradition with this surname. It was the surname of the titular vampyre in Polidori’s 1819 novella *The Vampyre*. Polidori in turn borrowed it from Caroline Lamb’s *Glenarvon*, who likewise permuted the name of Byron’s Newstead Abbey tenant, Lord Grey de Ruthyn.

sir, *your friend*, I mean,—it is said your *friend* has made the discovery.”<sup>14</sup> Moments like these help to further cement the idea of Gil-Martin-as-Devil in the reader’s mind.

One scene, more than any other, really seems to contextualize the theme of Heaven vs. Hell. That is the scene wherein Robert, bent on murdering his brother, George, ascends to Arthur’s Seat. Lost in a fog, Robert lifts his eyes to Heaven for guidance:

I heard...a still small voice...which uttered some words of derision and chiding...and perceived a lady, robed in white, who...regarded me with a severity of look and gesture...but coming closer to my side, said, without stopping, ‘Preposterous wretch! how dare you lift your eyes to heaven with such a purpose in your heart? Escape homeward, and save your soul, or farewell for ever!’<sup>15</sup>

This woman in the mist could easily be interpreted as an angelic being sent by Heaven to warn Robert away from the task his heart is set on accomplishing. But, as he turns to go home, he runs into Gil-Martin in the fog. Gil-Martin inquires as to why Robert is returning home, and what “that wench who descended from the hill”<sup>16</sup> had to say. Gil-Martin convinces Robert to continue with his mission, but in so doing, Gil-Martin obviously sets himself at odds with the lady in the mist, at least to everyone except Robert.

By his very nature and actions, Gil-Martin seems devilish. He is continually getting Robert into trouble, leading him further and further down a sinful road, even urging him to commit “justified” murder. Robert, at moments, seems to acknowledge this, even confronting Gil-Martin as the angry mob approached his home: “‘Ay, and who has been the cause of all this?’ said I, with great bitterness.”<sup>17</sup> Robert backs down from his accusation as he readies

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 157-8.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 207.

himself to flee, but it is obvious to the reader, as it has been for some time up to this point, that Gil-Martin is influencing Robert's very thoughts: "All my dreams corresponded exactly with his suggestions; and, when he was absent from me, still his arguments sunk deeper in my heart than even when he was present."<sup>18</sup> More than mere mind-control tricks, there were moments when Gil-Martin seemed capable of possessing Robert: "Immediately after this I was seized with a strange distemper...and it confined me to my chamber for many days...I generally conceived myself to be two people...I rarely conceived myself to be any of the two persons. I thought for the most part that my companion was one of them, and my brother the other."<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps Gil-Martin's most devilish trick is his ability to change form. When Robert first perceives him, he is merely a young man in the distance. Robert walks closer and exclaims to the reader "What was my astonishment, on perceiving that he was the same being as myself!"<sup>20</sup> Yet, the following day, when Robert again comes across Gil-Martin, he is puzzled by Gil-Martin's "cameleon art of changing...appearance"<sup>21</sup> Even later, after Robert has killed his brother George, he notices "the likeness between him and my late brother."<sup>22</sup> Such demonstrations of the "cameleon arts" practically define the Devil. As John Graham Dalyell points out in his book *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, originally published only ten years after *Justified Sinner*, "so varied were [Satan's] shapes, his costume, and character: so numerous and ingenious his wiles and stratagems: that this arch-enemy of the human race, assuming the guise of virtue, or decked in the fairest form, could spread his snares for innocence, and was received with open arms."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 153-4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>23</sup> John Graham Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, (Norwood, PA: Norward Editions, 1973), 546.

One characteristic of Gil-Martin that must not be ignored is his name. In his analysis of Gil-Martin's name, Philip Rogers reminds us of "the dramatic emphasis Hogg gives to its revelation."<sup>24</sup> As his relationship with the previously unnamed Gil-Martin grows, Robert finally realizes "I could neither tell him [i.e. Reverend Wringhim] who my friend was, what was his name, nor of whom he was descended; and I wondered at myself how I had never once adverted to such a thing, for all the time we had been intimate."<sup>25</sup> So disturbed is Robert by this revelation that he "inquired the next day what his name was."<sup>26</sup> Robert's friend initially refuses to acquiesce to his request, but eventually he partly yields and tells Robert, "You may call me Gil for the present."<sup>27</sup> When Robert further presses for his friend's "Christian or surname,"<sup>28</sup> Robert's doppelgänger at last reveals his name: "'O, you must have a surname too, must you!...Very well, you may call me Gil-Martin. It is not my *Christian* name; but it *is* a name which may serve your turn."<sup>29</sup>

For the reader, there is no suspense in the revelation of Gil-Martin's name here. Having already read the first half of the novel, the editor's narrative, the reader has already been exposed to the name as Robert cries out for his friend while Mrs. Calvert and Mrs. Logan pin him to the ground. Granted, this is the first time that the name is applied to an actual character, but having been previously invoked, it comes as no real surprise to the reader. This delayed association of a name with a character only serves to reveal the complexities of Gil-Martin himself by indicating his own desire for an ambiguous identity.

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<sup>24</sup> Philip Rogers, "A name which may serve your turn': James Hogg's Gil-Martin," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 21.1 (1986): 89.

<sup>25</sup> Hogg, 129.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

These complexities inherent in Gil-Martin have been a recurring theme in the critical discussion of *Justified Sinner*. However, Rogers reveals that “in spite of critical interest in Gil-Martin, only two attempts have been made to explain the meaning of his curious name.”<sup>30</sup> Literally translated, Gil-martin means “servant or apostle of St. Martin.”<sup>31</sup> At first, it seems impossible to reconcile the disparity between the Devil and a saint, but Rogers assures us that “the connection of St. Martin to the devil, is, in fact, quite direct, for the most common legends about the saint concern his exorcisms and personal struggles with Satan.”<sup>32</sup>

Rogers’s explication of Gil-Martin’s name offers us one more remarkable insight into this character. As mentioned earlier, when Robert first asks for a name, Gil-Martin offers only the name Gil. Interestingly, Gil- is a Scottish prefix commonly added to family or clan names. It is also the part of Gil-Martin’s name that means *servant*. Thus, Gil-Martin acknowledges himself as a servant, even though “the devil avoids naming whom he serves.”<sup>33</sup> At the same time that Robert is inquiring after Gil-Martin’s name, he is also obliquely inquiring after his lineage. It is then that Gil-Martin memorably and proudly replies, “I have no parents save one, whom I do not acknowledge.”<sup>34</sup> It is quite impossible for the reader to look at Gil-Martin’s aversion to acknowledging both his only parent and the one whom he serves, and not be reminded of the lines spoken by perhaps the greatest Devil in all of literature, Milton’s Satan: “Here at least we shall be free...Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav’n!”<sup>35&36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Rogers, 89. On page 96, Rogers specifies that these two attempts are on pages 158 and 170 of Douglas Gifford’s *James Hogg* and page 17 of John Wain’s “Introduction” to the Penguin edition of *Justified Sinner*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>34</sup> Hogg, 129.

<sup>35</sup> John Milton, “Paradise Lost,” *The Annotated Milton: Complete English Poems*, ed. Burton Raffel, (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 144.

<sup>36</sup> Milton’s Satan, in turn, seems to be echoing Israel’s rejection of God through the words *non serviam* as recorded in the Latin Vulgate’s Book of Jeremiah.

## Complicating Gil-Martin

Miltonic parallels aside, there are three things that complicate this otherwise simple classification of Gil-Martin as the Devil. The first comes during Robert's escape from prosecution over the murders of his mother and a young lady "whose affections [he] had seduced."<sup>37</sup> Though Robert manages to evade both the authorities and the mob that are after him, he still finds himself "tormented and pursued by fiends of Hell."<sup>38</sup> Robert relies on the hospitality of villagers and simple farmers during his flight, but finds that each apparent safe haven is attacked during the night by supernatural storms and demonic forces. One such night, Robert's human hosts, frightened by the attack on their home "exclaimed that all the devils in hell were besieging the house."<sup>39</sup> Forcefully ejected from the relative safety of the house, Robert comes face-to-face with the "monstrous shapes"<sup>40</sup> of his demonic pursuers for the first time as they battle Gil-Martin:

I was momentarily surrounded by a number of hideous fiends, who gnashed on me with their teeth, and clenched their crimson paws in my face; and at the same instant I was seized by the collar of my coat behind, by my dreaded and devoted friend, who pushed me on, and, with his gilded rapier waving and brandishing around me, defended me against their united attacks.<sup>41</sup>

This is the principal passage that indicates a possibility that Gil-Martin may not have been intended to be read consistently as the Devil himself. A story about the Devil fighting fellow demons, such as appears to be the case in *Justified Sinner*, is not theologically sound. In

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<sup>37</sup> Hogg, 191.

<sup>38</sup> Mack, 272.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

the Gospel of Luke, after being accused of using the powers of Beelzebub to drive out demons from the possessed, Jesus rebukes his accusers by saying, ““Any kingdom divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub.””<sup>42</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup> Century biblical scholar Matthew Henry, while commenting on this portion of the scripture, wrote, “It can by no means be imagined that such a subtle prince as Satan is should ever agree to measures that had such a direct tendency to his own overthrow, and the undermining of his own kingdom...Satan would herein act against himself.”<sup>43</sup>

One of the few things that *Justified Sinner* scholars seem to be able to agree on is that Hogg knew his Bible and the prevailing religious views of his day. Hogg himself said of his own childhood, ““I neither read nor wrote nor had I access to any book save the Bible.””<sup>44</sup> Ian Duncan emphasizes that this Biblical knowledge was obtained “early in life, in the same way that he knew parts of his mother’s enormous stock of folk literature—he learned it by hearing it, by repetition, by question-and-answer sessions with his mother...it was the unconsciously absorbed familiarity with a central family text known to all from earliest youth.”<sup>45</sup> This seems to have been a more than adequate way to have learned his Bible and language since “critics have pointed to Hogg’s command of ‘English with Biblical overtones’, his ability to write of a Devil who ‘speaks out of Scripture’, and of Robert...who ‘has a ready command of Puritan cant’.”<sup>46</sup> Douglas Mack reminds readers that Hogg was “a man close to the Calvinist tradition” who “was writing with care on a subject about which he was passionately concerned, and on which he had

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<sup>42</sup> *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), Luke 11:17&18.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 1861-2.

<sup>44</sup> Ian Campbell, “James Hogg and the Bible,” *Scottish Literary Journal* 10.1 (1983): 14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

no doubt meditated for many years.”<sup>47</sup> Likewise, H. B. de Groot reminds readers that “books of theology were among [Hogg’s] earliest reading when he worked for James Laidlaw at Blackhouse farm,”<sup>48</sup> which, in turn, enabled him to write *Justified Sinner* in a way that “parrot[ed] Calvinist and Presbyterian doctrine.”<sup>49</sup> Hogg was able to satirize “extreme Calvinism,”<sup>50</sup> “critique...Antinomian fanaticism,”<sup>51</sup> and discuss the “soteriological ideas...[of] predestination, election and justification”<sup>52</sup> inherent in Scottish Calvinism. Furthermore, “the demonology outlined in the novel also has its roots in a markedly Presbyterian source.”<sup>53</sup>

So, why would the Devil be fighting his own demons in this scene? Given his in-depth understanding of the Bible, Hogg must have known that such a conflict would be theologically unsound. But Hogg liked to play with supernatural conventions and twist them on their head. In *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, the brownie, a type of Scottish fairy, turns out to be human. As we have seen in *The Three Perils of Man*, a friar contends with a warlock. So, it’s not out of the realm of possibility that this may be just another attempt by Hogg to reimagine the supernatural. However, such a reimagining would change nothing in *Justified Sinner*. If this scene were just a reimagining of Christian conventions, then one would expect it to affect Gil-Martin, either for the better or for the worse. Robert admits at the end of the same scene that he is “captive by my defender at his will and pleasure;” he is completely under Gil-Martin’s control at this point. Gil-Martin does not need to fool Robert through an elaborate hoax of fighting his own minions to gain Robert’s trust or loyalty; there simply isn’t a reason at this point in the story, when Robert’s

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<sup>47</sup> Mack, 274.

<sup>48</sup> de Groot, 42.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>50</sup> Mack, 272.

<sup>51</sup> McConnell, 22.

<sup>52</sup> Crawford Gribben, “The *Justified Sinner* (1824) and Scottish Presbyterian Demonology,” *Studies in Hogg and His World* 17 (2006): 127.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

will already is no longer his own. Moreover, the Devil would surely gain nothing by keeping Robert's soul out of the hands of his minions in a demonic civil war.

The second complication of the Gil-Martin-as-only-the-Devil assumption is the color most associated with him. Dalyell reminds us of the importance of color at this time: "If black is a mystical color in Scotland, it has been always in combination with the metamorphosis of Satan, or his imps."<sup>54</sup> Yet, in *Justified Sinner*, "it is Robert, by the way, who dresses in black, becoming the Black Man, that traditional figure of the Devil."<sup>55</sup> Green is the only color associated with Gil-Martin. When Robert puts on Gil-Martin's clothes to disguise himself for his escape, he describes Gil-Martin's clothing for the first time: "I put on his green frock coat, buff belt, and a sort of a turban that he always wore on his head."<sup>56</sup> Later, in the printer's office, Linton describes Gil-Martin to Robert since Gil-Martin has been asking around looking for Robert: "Rather a gentlemanly personage—Green Circassian hunting coat and turban—Like a foreigner—Has the power of vanishing in one moment though—Rather suspicious circumstance that. Otherwise, his appearance not much against him."<sup>57</sup>

While Gil-Martin can and should be read as the Devil, the possibility exists that Gil-Martin should be read as *both* the Devil *and* something else. In the previous passage, we begin to see who else Gil-Martin might actually be if not just the Devil, because the color green continually appears throughout the tales concerning fairies<sup>58</sup> as the color that the fairies are dressed in.<sup>59</sup> In his first critically accepted work, *The Queen's Wake*, Hogg himself establishes

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<sup>54</sup> Dalyell, 434.

<sup>55</sup> Lee, 237.

<sup>56</sup> Hogg, 208.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>58</sup> Alison Packer, Stella Beddoe, and Lianne Jarrett, *Fairies in Legend & the Arts*, (London: Cameron & Tayleur, 1980), 27.

<sup>59</sup> Dalyell, 535.

this connection: “A fairy band come riding on...their doublets green.”<sup>60</sup> If Gil-Martin were also to be read as fairy, then his skirmish with the demons pursuing Robert would become more plausible. Instead of a theologically unsound demonic civil war, Gil-Martin could thus represent the struggle between fairy and Christian beliefs in Scotland.

This hypothesis makes even more sense in light of the third complication, Hogg’s tendency to liberally use fairies in his stories, a subject treated in a previous chapter. So, readers of *Justified Sinner*, especially those familiar with Hogg’s other works, should be asking why Hogg, a writer renowned for his use of fairy elements in his poetry and stories, would suddenly decide to leave that element out of *this* specific novel. Hogg himself saw “no inconsistency in maintaining beliefs in both faery lore and Christianity.”<sup>61</sup> Indeed, it can even be said that “the chief reason for the effectiveness of the supernatural in Hogg’s works is his own ambivalent attitude.”<sup>62</sup> This ambivalence “is appropriate to the nature of the country. Scotland in the early nineteenth century possessed in Edinburgh a cosmopolitan center for sophisticated literature and a home for rational, common-sense philosophy. Yet [it] also possessed a widespread belief, even at this time, in witchcraft and other supernatural phenomena.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, Hogg’s own ambivalence allowed him to appeal to both halves of a divided Scottish sensibility, in large part because he kept one foot firmly grounded in the fairy world and the other foot firmly planted in Christianity.

Scottish fairies are unique among the other fairies of the British Isles. The more familiar fairies, “the delicate, joyous, tricksy, race of moonlight revelers”<sup>64</sup> such as Puck from

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<sup>60</sup> James Hogg, *The Queen’s Wake: A Legendary Tale*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), 260.

<sup>61</sup> Nelson C. Smith, *James Hogg*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 127.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>63</sup> Jonathan C. Glance, “Ambiguity and the Dreams in James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 28.1 (1993): 165.

<sup>64</sup> George Douglas, “Introduction,” *Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales*, ed. George Douglas, (New York: Arno Press, 1977), xviii.

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, bear little resemblance to "the soulless, man-stealing, creations of the Scottish peasant's fancy."<sup>65</sup> The Scottish fairies are a "whimsical, irritable, and mischievous tribe'...sometimes 'capriciously benevolent' to men but more often inimical."<sup>66</sup> It would be easy to see Gil-Martin among the ranks of this sort of fairy.

Furthermore, many of Gil-Martin's attributes that lead to the assumption that he is the Devil are concurrently to be found within the Scottish fairy lore. Shape-shifting is common throughout Scottish folklore. The water-horse, which tends to inhabit the lochs "of the Western Highlands...had the power of transforming its shape, and could appear as a young man or boy, or even at times as an inanimate object."<sup>67</sup> Its apparent cousin, the Kelpie, habitant of streams, sometimes "assumed the likeness of a small black horse or 'sheltie,'" although "regarding the precise shape of the Kelpie, there is no 'standard' opinion."<sup>68</sup> Though Bogles may not be as malicious towards humans as Gil-Martin is towards Robert, they nonetheless "[delight] rather to perplex and frighten mankind than either to serve or seriously to hurt them,"<sup>69</sup> and so are "still to be feared."<sup>70</sup> However, Drows are "more frequently hostile than friendly to man, [and] these subterranean people...are particularly dangerous at midnight."<sup>71</sup>

Though the fey deeds may not be on par with Gil-Martin's demonic possession of Robert, tales exist in Scottish mythology of fairies stealing "human babies, substituting either a block of wood or a particularly ancient and unattractive fairy as a changeling."<sup>72</sup> Therefore, it became common practice to place "in the bed where lay an expectant mother, a piece of cold iron to

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Coleman O. Parsons, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction*, (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), 174.

<sup>67</sup> Lewis Spence, "Mythical Beasts in Scottish Folklore," *The Scotsman* 04 Mar. 1933: 15.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> George Douglas, ed., *Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales*, (New York: Arno Press, 1977), 146.

<sup>70</sup> Parsons, 256.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>72</sup> Alison Packer, Stella Beddoe, and Lianne Jarrett, 22.

scare the fairies, and prevent them from spiriting away mother and child to elfland.”<sup>73</sup> One particular story of a fairy kidnapping recorded by Kirk in his 17<sup>th</sup> Century treatise *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns & Fairies* bears some uncanny similarities to Robert’s possession experiences throughout *Justified Sinner*: a “Woman taken out of her Child-bed, and having a lingring Image of her substituted Bodie in her Roome, which Resemblance decay’d, dy’d, and was bur’d. But the Person stolen returning to her Husband after two Years Space, he being convinced by many undeniable Tokens that she was his former Wyfe, admitted her Home, and had diverse Children by her.”<sup>74</sup>

Even the mysterious woman in white that Robert met in the fog may have roots in fairy lore. Though she seems angelic, Christian beliefs have always ascribed the masculine gender to angels, and literature at this point seldom deviated from this norm. However, Sir Walter Scott may offer us a clue to her identity in his Waverly Novels. In *Peveiril of the Peak*, he describes “a Banshie, or female spirit, who was wont to shriek, ‘foreboding evil times;’ and who was generally seen weeping and bemoaning herself before the death of any person of distinction belonging to the family”<sup>75</sup> to which she is connected. While Hogg’s woman in white never shrieks, she definitely portends “foreboding evil times,” and did so prior to what would have been the death of a person of distinction in Robert’s family: George, his own brother whom he sought to murder.

Finally, we return to Philip Rogers’s theory concerning the name of Gil-Martin. His whole theory hinges on the probability that Hogg was mindful of the legends of St. Martin as he

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<sup>73</sup> James Napier, *Folk Lore: or, Superstitious Beliefs in the West of Scotland within this Century*, (Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1975), 29.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns & Fairies*. ed. Andrew Lang, (London: David Nutt, 1893), 33-4.

<sup>75</sup> Parsons, 76.

wrote *Justified Sinner*. Rogers addresses this issue by saying, “naming his devil figure Gil-Martin implicitly suggests that he was. There is evidence too that the primary source of legends about St. Martin...was widely read in Scotland.”<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Roger’s theory hinges on the assumption that Gil-Martin can only be the Devil, which I hope I have demonstrated may be a questionable assumption.

But, there is no denying Rogers’s assertion that Gil-Martin’s name must have significance. So, if my theory is true, and Gil-Martin should also be read as a fairy, what might that significance be? It may simply refer to the Martin Clan, in which “the name *Mac Gille Mhartainn*...is recorded.”<sup>77</sup> The most important part of the clan’s history for us to note is that the Martin/MacMartin Clan “eventually occupied what we now know as Northern Ireland (Ulster) and Western Scotland (Argyll).”<sup>78</sup> Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, James Napier focused on Western Scotland in his account of the Scottish supernatural, *Folk Lore: Or, Superstitious Beliefs in the West of Scotland within This Century*, because “those superstitions, now either dead or in their decadence, but which, within the memory of persons now living, had a vigorous existence...in the West of Scotland.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, the Martin clan was an integral part of the region of Scotland that was basically known as the last bastion of Scottish mythology.

Far more interesting than this clan’s history, at least for *Justified Sinner*’s purposes, is the Highland saying that grew up around it. The members of the Martin clan “gained a reputation in Scotland of being very cunning. The origin of the Highland saying: ‘Sliochd nan sionnach - Clann Mhartainn’ (‘Race of the foxes - Clan Martin’) comes from that.”<sup>80</sup> Equally important is

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<sup>76</sup> Rogers, 91.

<sup>77</sup>David Dorward, *Scottish Surnames*, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1978), 42.

<sup>78</sup> Clan Martin, “Home,” *Clan Martin International*, (Clan Martin, 2012-13).

<sup>79</sup> Napier, 1.

<sup>80</sup> Clan Martin, “Home.”

the fact that “a fox's nickname in Gaelic is a Gillie; more specifically a ‘Gille-Martainn’ or Martin's Gillie.”<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the Gille-Martainn of Gaelic folklore is “a shape-changing trickster.”<sup>82</sup> Perhaps the name Gil-Martin is not a reference at all to St. Martin, but rather a way to imply that Robert’s doppelgänger is as cunning as a fox!

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At this point, it is indeed fair to ask why this hypothesis matters. In the simplest of terms, if Gil-Martin is indeed fairy, then Robert’s soul is no longer merely torn between Heaven and Hell. Rather, a third, equally powerful realm has entered the contest for his soul. The passage of *Justified Sinner* that initially troubled me would thus actually portray a fairy battling against the forces of Satan for control of Robert’s soul, and such a battle between mythological elements and Christian elements is something that has yet to be explored within the context of *Justified Sinner*.

At its most complex, this theory shines a light on “one of [Hogg’s] favorite themes, the disappearance of the fairies from Scotland.”<sup>83</sup> “The fairies have now totally disappeared, and it is a pity they should; for they seem to have been the most delightful little spirits that ever haunted the Scottish dells. There are only very few now remaining alive who have ever seen them...when the gospel was not very rife in the country.”<sup>84</sup> Just as “the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a revival of interest in the collection and publication of genuine, ancient folktales and traditions of the British Isles,”<sup>85</sup> it also saw an increase in rationally explaining away such phenomena. Thus, folklorists such as Dalyell and Napier tried to rationalize the fairy in light of Christianity. Dalyell, in his

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Garside, ed., “Notes,” *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Ed. Peter Garside, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2002) 226.

<sup>83</sup> P. D. Garside, *A Queer Book*, ed. P. D. Garside, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007), 256.

<sup>84</sup> James Hogg, *Queen’s Wake*, 380.

<sup>85</sup> Alison Packer, Stella Beddoe, and Lianne Jarrett, 30.

work, includes a chapter on “Imaginary Beings,” a.k.a. fairies, roughly two-thirds of which deals just the Devil and his demons. Not surprisingly, the Devil also plays a predominant role in the rest of the text as well. Napier, in his work, defines all superstition as “*beliefs and practices founded upon erroneous ideas of God and nature.*”<sup>86</sup> He rationalizes the fairies away as either pantheistic gods of bygone eras or servants of Satan:

such beliefs are but survivals in altered form of what...religious tenets. What were formerly divinities have given place to the more lowly fairies, brownies, &c., and...through the opposing influence of Christianity, been removed to the other side...servants of the devil, actively opposing the kingdom of Christ.

Some...have identified them with the fallen angels.<sup>87</sup>

However, as previously mentioned, Hogg had no problem accepting the simultaneous coexistence of these two alternate supernatural realities: the fairy and Christianity. Perhaps, through the creation of Gil-Martin, he is pushing back against the assumption that fairies are demonic forces.

Or perhaps, Hogg is playing with his readers in *Justified Sinner*. The literary trope of the doppelgänger is the meeting point of reality and the supernatural in Gothic literature, as well as the point of confusion between the two. Similarly, Hogg creates two groups of otherworldly-minded people within the novel: the superstitious locals who happen to see things much more clearly than do Robert’s group of educated Calvinists. For those locals, Calvinism would be the supernatural element encroaching into their fairy reality. For the Calvinists, supernatural fairies would be haunting their Christian reality. Gil-Martin, a doppelgänger who can be potentially seen as representative of both at once, might also represent the two supernatural realities at war

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<sup>86</sup> Napier, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 26.

with each other. Which is *reality* and which is the *supernatural* is then left up to the reader to decrypt.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, I do not wish to go as far as claiming that Gil-Martin *is* fairy; I merely wish to assert that he *may* be fairy. By introducing this possibility, I hope to return the identity of Gil-Martin back to its place among the ambiguities that constitute *Justified Sinner*, as well as the ambiguities that are characteristic of Hogg's other works. After all, it is these ambiguities that I have sought to further explore in this thesis. To pretend that I have reached an absolute conclusion as to the identity of Gil-Martin would be to pretend that I have come to a complete understanding of Hogg himself. I have no such understanding, nor is it likely that I ever will. For, who has known the mind of Hogg?

## Conclusion – A Legacy

Hogg “inspired and influenced many nineteenth-century British writers, from the Brontës to Robert Louis Stevenson,”<sup>1</sup> even after his death in 1835. In 1885, Robert Louis Stevenson published *A Child’s Garden of Verses* containing the poem “My Shadow:”

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.  
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;  
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.<sup>2</sup>

In this poem, it is easy to see shades of Gil-Martin, even though at first glance these words seem merely to reflect a child’s fascination with his shadow.

But Hogg’s legacy is more than just extending the lifespan of the doppelgänger trope, more than just bridging the gap for the uncanny double to cross over from the pages of his predecessors to those of his successors. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* pulls several key structural elements from *Justified Sinner*. His novel begins with unsolved murder, which Mr. Utterson conducts his own investigation into, and through that investigation, the doppelgänger Mr. Hyde emerges. The narrative begins as a third person account of all the events, but it ends with a letter from Jekyll confessing everything concerning his interaction with the doppelgänger.

More importantly, Stevenson picks up on Hogg’s method of enshrouding his doppelgänger with seemingly excessive layers of ambiguity. Thus, the reader is never certain

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<sup>1</sup> Suzanne Gilbert, “Hogg’s Reception and Reputation,” *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, Eds. Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012) 45.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, “My Shadow,” *The Collected Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Ed. Roger C. Lewis, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2003) 32.

how much control Jekyll ever has over Hyde, and by extension, over his own darker nature. Since Hyde is a very real doppelgänger, who terrorizes the citizens of London in a very different form than that of Jekyll, the reader has to marvel as the doppelgänger transforms from Jekyll into Hyde and back again. Even so, the reader must wonder not only how the human body is capable of such a transformation, but what could trigger such a transformation. And, since Jekyll is very aware of his doppelgänger Hyde, the reader must question just how culpable Jekyll is for the crimes committed by Hyde. All of these questions surround Jekyll and Hyde, but none of them are answered by Stevenson. At the end of the story, the reader learns that Jekyll is tired of his struggle against Hyde, and he finally succumbs to Hyde's control. Though the reader finds out that the protagonist has died, Stevenson gives his reader no indication of the fate of the doppelgänger.

Hogg's impact was not only felt in England, but in the America as well where "writers such as Irving, Cooper, Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau and Longfellow were familiar with him."<sup>3</sup> Nelson C. Smith, in his critical review of Hogg's works, has a similar list of authors which also includes Poe who "was intimately acquainted with *Blackwood's*, as his parodies, criticisms, and stories show; he doesn't mention Hogg, but alludes often to the *Noctes*."<sup>4</sup> Smith demonstrates the key failure in Hogg scholarship to link Hogg to Poe: without a definitive mention of Hogg's name in any of Poe's writings, it is impossible to conclusively prove that any similarities then between the two authors could be more than mere coincidence.

The influence of *Blackwood's* in Poe's writing is well documented.<sup>5</sup> Because of this, and because Poe's storytelling career began as Hogg's was nearing its end, it's easy to presume that

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<sup>3</sup> Gilbert, 45.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson C. Smith, *James Hogg*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) 169.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael Allen's *Poe and the British Magazine Tradition*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1969); Jonathan H. Hartmann's *The Marketing of Edgar Allan Poe*, (New York: Routledge, 2008); and J. Lasley Dameron's "Poe,

Poe's writings were influenced by Hogg's. Throughout Hogg scholarship, connections have continuously been drawn between the two authors in a fruitless attempt to establish Hogg as a literary influence on Poe's work. For example, after connecting the words of Dupin in "The Purloined Letter" to Gil-Martin's claim that "by assuming his likeness I attain to the possession of his most secret thoughts,"<sup>6</sup> Barbara Bloede concludes, perhaps more wishfully that authoritatively, that "the similarity is such that coincidence would seem to be out of the question."<sup>7</sup>

This desire to connect Hogg to Poe makes sense. After all, Poe is easily one of the most recognizable names in American literature, credited with significant contributions to the genres of the short story, science fiction, and detective fiction. Also, Poe produced what is widely believed to be one of the greatest works of Gothic fiction in the English language, "The Fall of the House of Usher," interestingly published just ten months after he published some parodies of *Blackwood's* Gothic fiction. Such a connection would be a boon to Hogg scholarship.

Yet, the much-needed definitive mention does exist. In one essay entitled "Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe," Poe specifically references Hogg: "Well, Aries Tottle flourished supreme, until the advent of one Hog, surnamed 'the Ettrick shepherd', who preached an entirely different system, which he called the *a posteriori* or inductive. His plan referred altogether to sensation."<sup>8</sup> Editor Harold Beaver adds his commentary to this passage, calling it "a punster's joke that irrelevantly ropes in the Scot, James Hogg (1770-1835), best

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'Simplicity,' and Blackwood's Magazine," *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Cultures* 51.2 (1998): 233-42.

<sup>6</sup> James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, 125.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Bloede, "James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*: The Genesis of the Double," *Etudes anglaises* 26 (1973): 177.

<sup>8</sup> Poe, *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, 214.

remembered today for *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824).”<sup>9</sup> Poe knew of Hogg, his Ettrick Shepherd persona, his literary reputation and his writing conventions.

Like Hogg, Poe was no stranger to hoaxes. Baudelaire, a French poet and critic who translated many of Poe’s works into French, comments “that fooling people was Poe’s main…hobbyhorse.”<sup>10</sup> One of his most famous has now been dubbed “The Balloon-Hoax.” Originally published in the *New York Sun* as a news article, it bore the headline “The Atlantic Crossed in Three Days!”<sup>11</sup> The article purports to be printing the real manuscript of the two daring adventurers that had made this voyage: “The particulars furnished below may be relied on as authentic and accurate in every respect, as, with a slight exception, they are copied *verbatim* from the joint diaries of Mr Monck Mason and Mr Harrison Ainsworth, to whose politeness our agent is also indebted for much verbal information respecting the balloon itself, its construction, and other matters of interest.”<sup>12</sup> Following an extensive description of the balloon itself, Poe includes the entries from the three-day adventure. Every bit of this article, save a few historical facts, is completely fabricated.

In addition to the hoax connection, Poe and Hogg share another literary connection, that of the detective novel. Most scholars credit the birth of this genre to the 1841 publication of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Poe’s brilliant detective Auguste Dupin and unnamed sidekick established the framework that others followed, such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who created the celebrated Sherlock Holmes, and Agatha Christie, who created both Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot. As previously mentioned, Hogg’s *Justified Sinner* can easily be seen as

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<sup>9</sup> Beaver, 404.

<sup>10</sup> Harold Beaver, Introduction, *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Harold Beaver, (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) xvii.

<sup>11</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, “The Balloon-Hoax,” *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Harold Beaver, (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) 110.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

something of a proto-detective novel as it wrestled with layers of mysteries while investigating the workings of the criminal mind. Scottish Romantic authors, especially those publishing in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, seem to have created the fertile ground from which Poe grew the genre through his creation of Dupin.

Lastly, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* gives us another connection between Poe and Hogg. Hogg's name was closely tied to *Blackwood's*, as he was not only a regular contributor to the magazine, but also one of its cofounders. *Blackwood's* initial commercial success came through the publication of a hoax called "Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript," of which Hogg was one of the key authors. However, the magazine was also largely responsible for publicly disgracing Hogg by hijacking his persona of the Etrick Shepherd.

Besides the literary tradition of hoaxing that *Blackwood's* perpetrated, Poe also seemed interested in the Gothic fiction it promoted. In 1838, fourteen years after the original publication of *Justified Sinner*, Poe published "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and its companion piece and sequel "A Predicament." In the former, we are introduced to a female writer named Zenobia, who travels to Scotland to find out from Mr. Blackwood himself how to write a Blackwood article. Mr. Blackwood, in turn, "received me with great civility, took me into his study, and gave me a clear explanation of the whole process,"<sup>13</sup> beginning with "get yourself into such a scrape as no one ever got into before."<sup>14</sup> Zenobia promptly replies that she "had an excellent pair of garters, and would go and hang myself forthwith."<sup>15</sup> After her interview with Mr. Blackwood, Zenobia sets out into Edinburgh to explore the city in the latter story, "A Predicament." She climbs a tower, and sticks her head out a hole to view the city, only to find

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<sup>13</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, "How to Write a Blackwood Article," *The Short Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, eds. Stuart and Susan Levine, (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1990) 359.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

that her head is stuck. Almost immediately, she realizes that she has stuck her head out of the clock face of the tower, and that she will soon be decapitated by the minute hand. Unable to get her faithful dog to extricate her, and too far above the street below to have her cries for help heard, she counts down her remaining minutes.

While I have yet to find any conclusive evidence that Poe was influenced directly by *Justified Sinner* specifically, the passage from “Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe” helps to validate all of the correlations found by scholars such as Bloede. While it is too far of a stretch to attribute all of Poe’s literary contributions to a predecessor such as Hogg, it would be quite interesting to determine what role a lowly Scottish shepherd played in influencing the literature of 19<sup>th</sup> Century America.

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