

ABSTRACT

Between Two Worlds and Between the Lines:
A Reading of the Supernatural in James Hogg's Fiction

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I examine James Hogg's portrayal of the supernatural in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, *The Three Perils of Man*, *The Three Perils of Woman*, and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. To do so, I use terminology from Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* to explain how Hogg negotiates between the enchanted world of Ettrick Forest and the disenchanted world of Enlightenment Edinburgh. Because Hogg is between these two worlds and presents a porous receptivity of the supernatural to a buffered, Enlightenment audience, the sub-texts and complex narrative layers are particularly revelatory of Hogg's messages. In his fiction, Hogg often undermines the attempts of implied Enlightenment readers to explain away, categorize, or moralize the presence of the supernatural. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of a permeating supernatural realm that is just as real as the material world but is finally unable to be systematized and controlled.

Between Two Worlds and Between the Lines:
A Reading of the Supernatural in Selected Fiction of James Hogg

by

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DEDICATION

To my father,
who first taught me about words

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the oft-quoted opening to “The Mysterious Bride,” Hogg writes:

A great number of people now-a-days are beginning broadly to insinuate that there are no such things as ghosts or spiritual beings visible to mortal sight. Even Sir Walter Scott is turned renegade, and, with his stories made up half-and-half, like Nathaniel Gow’s toddy, is trying to throw cold water on the most certain, though most impalpable, phenomena of human nature. (335)

This passage represents one of the basic distinctions between Hogg and his contemporaries—in this case, Walter Scott. On one level, Hogg uses this passage to counter Scott. Where Scott tries to throw cold water on supernatural phenomena, Hogg asserts that they are “certain.” However, Hogg’s qualification in this passage is also important. He writes that while these supernatural phenomena are certain, they are also “impalpable,” or difficult to understand. I believe this passage describes the space Hogg seeks to create for the supernatural in his fiction—an open space in which the supernatural is certain and no less real than the natural but is also unable to be systematized or controlled. Throughout his stories and novels, Hogg often creates this space by subverting common and simplistic interpretations of the supernatural, ranging from interpretations that are scientific, to moralistic, to religious. Instead, he asserts the certain presence of the supernatural along with the human inability to formulaically comprehend it.

In this thesis, I will sometimes use Walter Scott as a representative counterpoint for Hogg, with the important qualification that Scott is one perspective among many in

Enlightenment Edinburgh and in Romanticism. However, I use Scott as a counterpoint because he was likely the most influential novelist of the early part of the nineteenth century, and because of his close relationship with Hogg and their shared professional circle, Hogg and Scott have many natural parallels. Hogg and Scott remained close friends throughout most of their professional lives, which took place largely in the intellectual epicenter of Edinburgh. However, whereas Scott was born to an upper-middle class family of scientists and professionals in Edinburgh, Hogg was born to farmers in rural Ettrick—differences that were reflected in both the style and subject matter of each author’s respective works. Most significantly, where Scott often endorsed using natural means to explain away the supernatural, Hogg undermined the simplicity of that formula. As Douglas Mack notes regarding *The Shepherd’s Calendar*, Hogg creates “a sophisticated subversion of some of the assumptions of Enlightenment Edinburgh” (Introduction xii)—one of the most important assumptions being the role of the supernatural.

Enlightenment Edinburgh

In this thesis, I take my cue from Mack and use the phrase “Enlightenment Edinburgh” to highlight certain features of the world that Hogg undermines and contrasts. This is not, of course, to cast the Scottish Enlightenment pejoratively, but merely to observe that it at least in part defines the hegemonic, elite power structure in Edinburgh during Hogg’s time. In several key ways, Scott’s fiction exemplifies the perspectives of a gentleman of the Scottish Enlightenment, which is why he provides an appropriate counterpoint for Hogg’s undermining of Enlightenment Edinburgh.

Many historians date the decline of Enlightenment Edinburgh's influence with the French Revolution,¹ so as Ian Duncan observes, it might be more appropriate to think of Hogg's era as "post-Enlightenment" (*Scott's Shadow*, 23). Duncan further shapes the dialogue between Scott and Hogg around the influential political magazines of their era: *Blackwood's* and the *Edinburgh Review*. Duncan writes, "*Blackwood's* momentous achievement was the construction of a 'Romantic ideology' to oppose the neo-Enlightenment liberalism of the *Edinburgh Review*, which it denounced for Jacobin tendencies of skepticism and materialism" (27). To what extent either magazine was actually Jacobin or Whig or advocated skepticism and materialism is not the subject of this thesis, but Duncan's comment provides a reference point for how Hogg questioned some of the supposed assumptions of "Enlightenment" thinkers in Edinburgh. Duncan further develops his depiction of post-Enlightenment Edinburgh by identifying Hume as a key thinker influencing Scott's writing:

Following Hume, Scott made fiction the performative technique of a liberal ideology—an ideology that stakes its modernity on the claim of having transcended primitive modes of belief (superstition and fanaticism) through a moral and cognitive abstraction from the submerged life of history, the blind rage of politics. (29)

When I mention that Hogg subverts Scott and some of the assumptions of Enlightenment Edinburgh, I have in mind primarily the assumption that certain beliefs are in fact more primitive than others. Terming the beliefs of rural Scottish folk as "primitive" is to assume a historical and cultural superiority that Hogg often questioned in his fiction.

¹ For example, David Buchan in *Crowded with Genius: The Scottish Enlightenment: Edinburgh's Moment of the Mind* (1).

Between Two Worlds

Because the Scottish belief in the supernatural was often grounded in oral tradition and folklore, Hogg was particularly suited to comment on Scott's use of the supernatural. The difference can be thought of in terms of "distance" versus "closeness." Because of his goals as an historian, his upbringing in the city of Edinburgh, and his stance regarding the supernatural, Scott often takes the role of an anthropologist in his novels—from a distance, he controls and explains away the supernatural. Victor Sage elaborates on this theme in Scott, explaining how "folk materials are framed as they are represented by editorial activity, so that the beliefs of the past are brought, apparently in the spirit of anthropological enquiry, into the progressive present, for the modern reader's contemplation" (16). In contrast, Hogg's closer association with oral storytelling and his rural upbringing give him insights into traditions and perspectives that Scott would not have had. David Sandner comments on each author's relative position in regards to the supernatural: "While Scott maintains an antiquarian's interest in the supernatural, Hogg is identified more closely with the folk and their common belief in the supernatural: Scott collects supernatural folk tales for his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*; Hogg acts as his guide and his mother as one of Scott's sources" (75-6). Hogg's closeness to the original material of the supernatural—the stories and the people who believe them—gives him a unique voice to question Scott. And, of course, living and working in Enlightenment Edinburgh, Hogg also understood well the perspective of those, like Scott, who often viewed rural Ettrick people and their beliefs as naïve. I have included the phrase "between two worlds" in the title of this thesis because I believe Hogg was always aware

of his position between the two worlds of rural Ettrick and Enlightenment, urban Edinburgh and that this awareness is often a factor in the shape his fiction finally takes.

Between the Lines

Because of Hogg's positions between two worlds, his subversion of Enlightenment assumptions is particularly subtle. Often, Hogg juxtaposes natural and supernatural worlds to assert that the folk perspectives of rural Ettrick are as valid and as real as the sophisticated perspectives of urban, elite Edinburgh. However, Hogg's primary audience consists of educated people from Edinburgh. Because of this, I argue that Hogg's questioning of Enlightenment assumptions can often be found in the sub-texts of his short stories and novels. Other critics have noticed that Hogg frequently uses an antiquarian, Enlightenment narrator whom he later undermines; I extend this argument by showing how Hogg undermines any narrators and characters who assume a simple, controlling explanation for supernatural events. This extends to religious, scientific, and moralistic characters. Hogg reveals these characters' perspectives to be incomplete and flawed and, ultimately, to fail to comprehend the supernatural.

Against these failed and incomplete perspectives, Hogg includes characters whose voices are given more credence. In particular, Hogg seems to use the Scots dialect intentionally in his fiction. Often, the Scots-speaking characters are the ones who identify that the simplistic explanations of surrounding characters are unable to contain the supernatural. The Scots-speaking characters usually assert the presence of the supernatural but admit their own human inability to systematize it. In most cases, paying close attention to Hogg's use of language and dialect is revelatory of the sub-text in a

particular work. Because this sub-textual story is implicit, I refer to it as “between the lines.” Hogg writes between the lines because he is uniquely between two worlds.

Critical Framework

In shaping my thesis, I have found Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* particularly helpful. I use his terms “porous self,” and “buffered self” throughout my chapters to describe Hogg’s depiction of the supernatural in his fiction. In *A Secular Age*, Taylor explains the transition from prevalent belief in God to the possibility for exclusive humanism, which he describes as “accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing” (18). This “disenchantment” is a long process, beginning in the late medieval period and contributing to exclusive humanism’s being an option for the educated elite during Hogg’s time.

Taylor explains that the “enchanted world” is a “crucial feature of the pre-modern condition” and is “the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in” (26). A prominent feature of the enchanted world is the porous self, which Taylor explains as an openness and vulnerability to the outside world, which consists of spirits, demons, and other supernatural forces. In contrast, Taylor explains that the prominent feature of the disenchanted world, which involves the “replacement of a cosmos of spirits and forces by a mechanistic universe” (300) is the buffered self, which has closed the porous boundary between itself and the outside world. Taylor also explains that for the buffered self, because meaning is within the human mind, there is room for a subjective ordering of the world (38). In contrast, for the porous self, meaning is outside the human mind, and this self is susceptible to the influences of a cosmos charged with meaning.

Along those same lines, Taylor distinguishes between the terms “cosmos” and “universe.” He explains that the “cosmos” is an order “humanly meaningful,” whereas the “universe,” while also ordered, is not explicitly connected to human meaning (60).

I believe that Hogg’s fiction shows his acute awareness of the tensions involved in the shift from an enchanted to a disenchanted world and from the porous to the buffered self. Hogg’s rural Ettrick perspective and his Enlightenment Edinburgh perspective are not perfect representations of the enchanted and the disenchanted worlds, but some of their key features fit into the categories that Taylor describes.

“Supernatural Realism”

Hogg shows to his readers—and sometimes to his characters—that the accepted Enlightenment belief about the immutable laws of nature is insufficient to describe reality—a world in which miracles are just as real as the laws of physics. As Mack comments regarding the ending of “Mr. Adamson of Laverhope,” “The thrust of the story is that the traditional Christian world-view, dismissed by the narrator as peasant superstition, is in fact the source of an enlightenment which is genuine and real” (“Aspects” 133). Hogg’s theme in this story can be extended to many of his other works of fiction as well.

Critics have hinted at this theme in Hogg. Duncan comes the closest to articulating it, referring to it as Hogg’s “most striking technique.” Duncan’s comments are inspired by a reading of *The Three Perils of Man*, but he extrapolates them to apply to Hogg’s work more broadly. He writes:

These events are ancient and modern, real and fantastic, all at once. In Hogg’s most striking technique, analogous to twentieth-century magic realism, natural and supernatural effects occupy the same narrative

dimension, the same epistemological and ontological register—neither is more ‘real’ than the other...Indeed, it turns out to be the magical plot that produces the most dense and vivid rhetoric of ‘realism’ in Hogg’s prose.... (“Scott, Hogg, Orality” 66-7)

Duncan identifies “magic realism” as the best term to describe to describe Hogg’s techniques. However, there are two reasons why this explanation is incomplete. First, to describe Hogg’s portrayal of the supernatural as a “technique” minimizes the implicit argument he is making through his inclusion of supernatural elements alongside natural elements. Hogg is not merely using an artistic technique; he is making a metaphysical claim.

Secondly, the term “magic realism” does not quite fit Hogg. The term was first used in the 1920’s in connection to surrealist art. Murfin and Ray state in the *Bedford Glossary* that the term “came to be applied to fictional prose works that are characterized by a mixture of realistic and fantastic elements” (242). The key difference between Hogg’s works and magic realism is that in magic realism, “fantastic” elements are often simply accepted by the readers and the characters. The source of the supernatural power is left ambiguous because the point of the “technique” is not to understand the source of that power. In Hogg’s works, however, when the world of natural law is juxtaposed with the supernatural world, the characters (and, presumably, the readers) question why the supernatural is present and from where it comes. The intrusion of the supernatural on the natural world is not a technique; it is a jarring juxtaposition that Hogg uses to argue for his perspective about reality.

Additionally, the word “magic” denotes (and connotes) non-Christian traditions. The *OED* defines “magic” as “the use of ritual activities or observances which are intended to influence the course of events or to manipulate the natural world, usually

involving the use of an occult or secret body of knowledge; sorcery, witchcraft.” These elements are certainly present in Hogg. However, they are not the only kind of supernatural elements that Hogg explores, for he also includes references to fairies and to miracles in response to Christian prayer, which are both supernatural forces outside of the calculated manipulation of humans.

Instead of using the term “magic realism,” I introduce and intend to use the term “supernatural realism” to explain Hogg’s ongoing argument in his fiction. I replace “magic” with “supernatural” because the word “supernatural” means simply “belonging to a higher realm or system than that of nature; transcending the powers or the ordinary course of nature” (*OED*). Therefore, it can be used more broadly to capture Hogg’s references to witchcraft, miracles, and fairies.

I would like to further qualify my argument by clarifying the difference between the terms “superstition” and “supernatural” in Hogg’s work. “Superstition” is typically defined as “an irrational religious belief or practice; a tenet, scruple, habit, etc. founded on fear or ignorance” (*OED*). In contrast, “supernatural” is a more neutral term that simply refers to something that transcends “the ordinary course of nature” (*OED*). The important difference between Hogg and Scott is that Scott conflates “superstition” with “supernatural,” implying that *all* belief in the supernatural is irrational. Hogg, on the other hand, creates space for belief in the supernatural that is just as rational as belief in the natural. At times, Hogg agrees with Scott about the way in which “superstition” is the product of thoughtlessness and fear and can be used to manipulate people, but he does not argue that all beliefs in the supernatural are superstitious.

“Supernatural realism,” then, can be defined as “reasonable belief in the supernatural.” Through Hogg’s use of supernatural realism, he argues not only that “natural and supernatural effects occupy...the same epistemological and ontological register” (Duncan) but also that belief in the supernatural is just as reasonable as belief in the natural.

Outline of Chapters

In chapter two, I interpret three stories in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*. Hogg wrote many of the stories in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*, to be a part of certain “classes,” or thematically based groups. The group I examine is called “Fairies, Brownies, and Witches.” In my chapter, I use Taylor’s distinction between the porous and the buffered self and look at how those terms apply to Hogg’s readers. I argue that Hogg is aware of his urban, Edinburgh readers’ positions as “buffered” readers; they understood themselves to be safely outside of and above folk tales about the supernatural. In response to his buffered readers, Hogg implicitly shows that true comprehension and enjoyment of the story is only accessible to the reader who maintains a certain receptivity to it.

In chapter three, I read *The Three Perils of Man* and *The Three Perils of Woman* as companion pieces. In both books, the controlled, systematic explanation of events proffered by characters or the narrator is subtly undermined by a subtext in which forces beyond the comprehension of humans influence the events of the plot. In particular, Hogg uses the Scots dialect of several major characters to undermine both Enlightenment perspectives and the religious didacticism of other characters and narrators.

Finally, in chapter four, I read *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as a dialogue between what Taylor terms the “buffered” self and the “porous” self. By undermining both the Editor’s and Robert Wringhim’s perspectives, each of which contains key features of a grotesquely buffered perspective, Hogg creates space for certain important understandings of the world that are only available to those who are maintain a porously receptive perspective. Hogg undermines the Editor and Robert Wringhim through showing their inconsistencies and limited perspectives, but also through the inclusion of characters who penetrate their deceptions and assert a different understanding of events.

Textual Commentary

My primary texts are the Stirling/South Carolina research editions published by Edinburgh University Press. With the renewed interest in Hogg over the past several decades, critics have become increasingly aware of the extent to which Hogg’s novels were bowdlerized. Many of those critics, such as Douglas Mack, attribute the marginalization of Hogg to the insipid versions of his novels that were passed on to subsequent generations. The Stirling/South Carolina research editions restore Hogg’s novels as they were first published and comment on revisions from original manuscripts as well.

The only exception to this is *The Three Perils of Man*, for which the Stirling/South Carolina version is not yet available. In lieu of that edition, I have found particularly helpful Gillian Hughes’ article “Recovering Hogg’s Personal Manuscript for *The Three Perils of Man*,” in which Hughes discusses several of the major textual revisions of the novel.

CHAPTER TWO

“Visions that Have Been”: The Buffered Reader in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*

In *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor makes a crucial distinction between the “porous” and the “buffered” self. He explains that a condition for the disenchantment of the world was “a new sense of the self and its place in the cosmos: not open and porous and vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers, but what I want to call ‘buffered’” (27). He adds that, for the buffered self, “the possibility exists of taking a distance from, disengaging from everything outside the mind... This self can see itself as invulnerable, as master of the meanings of things for it” (38). Taylor’s terms provide a useful framework for situating James Hogg’s dialogue about the supernatural in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*,² which is a collection of short stories from the rural folk in Ettrick, Scotland and was first published in installments in *Blackwood’s Magazine* throughout the 1820’s.

The title of Hogg’s collection hints at his entrance into Taylor’s porous versus buffered framework. In *The Shepherd’s Calendar*, Hogg remembers when time was marked primarily by the erratic and mysterious elements of nature—what he refers to as the “red lines in the shepherd’s manual” (1). A shepherd’s calendar arises from the unpredictable patterns of the natural world; it is impossible to predict and control and is a constant reminder that each person is a part of a grander story, of which he is not the

² *The Shepherd’s Calendar* is a series of short articles that James Hogg composed throughout the 1820’s and that were published by William Blackwood in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. After much haggling with Blackwood, the stories were finally published in book form in 1829. As Douglas Mack notes in his introduction to *The Shepherd’s Calendar*, Hogg published other stories as a part of “The Shepherd’s Calendar” series (xix), but the stories included in Mack’s authoritative, scholarly text are the ones originally published together in two volumes in 1829. This is the text that will serve as the basis for this chapter, with occasional supporting references from Hogg’s related short pieces.

writer. Hogg explains that mention of a past terrible storm to a shepherd “never fails to impress his mind with a sort of religious awe and often sets him on his knees before that Being who alone can avert such another calamity” (1). A shepherd’s calendar assumes a porous self that is responsive to outward forces and is part of the cosmos.

In contrast to the shepherd’s calendar are the Gregorian calendar and clocks, which neatly slice time, dividing evenly the months, days, and hours. This kind of time-telling is representative of the buffered self, which is the “master of the meaning of things for it” (Taylor) and imposes an order upon the universe rather than understanding its place within the cosmos. Using a clock or the Gregorian calendar does not preclude an understanding of one’s place in the cosmos, of course, but this control over the passage of time is a natural outworking of understanding oneself as buffered.

Hogg, I argue, was particularly aware of being between these two understandings of the self. *The Shepherd’s Calendar* consists of folk tales that Hogg retells as a professional writer in Edinburgh, but it also contains Hogg’s own experience as a shepherd. This subtle blending of perspectives positions Hogg as one who affirms this porous understanding of time but who lives and writes in a community of buffered selves.

An additional angle from which to examine this dialogue is through the contrast of Hogg’s and Scott’s perspectives as folklorists. In one sense, Hogg is an early folklorist, gathering, editing, and publishing folk tales as an ethnographic study. However, his role in shaping the folk tales is markedly different than that of contemporaneous folklorists, such as Scott, who often depicts the lives of rural folk as curiosities to document. In contrast, Hogg presents the beliefs of rural folk not as artifacts interesting to study but as valid understandings of how to live and think. As

Tom Killick summarizes, “Relating traditional tales meant more to someone in Hogg’s position than preserving antiquated curiosities; it meant accessing a system of beliefs that predated and contravened many of the suppositions of the Enlightenment and which called into question the hegemony of Scotland’s cultural elites” (129). Questioning Enlightenment assumptions is one of Hogg’s goals in much of his writing. However, as a body of tales, Hogg’s *Shepherd’s Calendar* might be better described as a complex negotiation between two kinds of time-telling and two kinds of selves: the porous and the buffered.

This negotiation takes its most distinct shape in Hogg’s portrayal of the supernatural in his tales. A porous self is one who is susceptible to and receptive of supernatural elements, whose boundaries between the natural and the supernatural are blurred. A buffered self, however, draws a distinct line between the natural and the supernatural, and safely insulates himself in an empirical understanding of the natural world, which maintains an ontological primacy. One of Hogg’s chief interests in *The Shepherd’s Calendar* is exploring themes of the supernatural, and both porous and buffered selves figure in this exploration.

While Hogg’s use of supernatural elements has not gone unnoticed,³ no lengthy study has been done regarding the specific ways in which Hogg employs the supernatural in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*.⁴ Collectively, Hogg’s tales in *The Shepherd’s Calendar* are

³ In *The Rise of the Historical Novel*, John MacQueen also notices the prevalence of supernatural elements in *The Shepherd’s Calendar* as an important aspect of the work (206) and Mack comments that the *Shepherd’s Calendar* tales “make up a sequence of sophisticated and complex narratives in which the supernatural plays a particularly striking role” (“Aspects” 129).

⁴ Interest in Hogg has steadily increased over the last several decades, but there is still little scholarship published regarding *The Shepherd’s Calendar*. Tom Killick has written one of the more thorough and interesting studies, commenting on Hogg’s combination of the Scottish oral tradition and the German literary tale (124). He places Hogg’s *The Shepherd’s Calendar* in the context of other collections

his contribution to the dialogue about the relationship of the self to the supernatural. They reveal his nuanced awareness of being between the two worlds of rural, folk Ettrick and urban, Enlightenment Edinburgh and present a carefully qualified perspective regarding the relationship of the porous self and the buffered self to the supernatural.

Early reviews of *The Shepherd's Calendar* maintain that the tales are flawed in structure and have no overarching motifs.⁵ With the surge of Hogg scholarship over the last several decades, there have been several helpful readings of *The Shepherd's Calendar* that conclude that the tales do, in fact, have unifying themes.⁶ I also contend that *The Shepherd's Calendar* is a planned and structured collection. Beyond Hogg's interest in the supernatural, the editing and publication history of the stories reveals that while the themes in *The Shepherd's Calendar* are diverse, some of the articles work together as groups. A "class system" seems to have existed for the articles and, for many of them, is noted along with the title. Letters between Hogg and Blackwood indicate that the system was devised before Hogg wrote the tales (or at least after he published the first article, "Storms") rather than applied afterwards.⁷ The bulk of Hogg's pieces in *The Shepherd's Calendar* fall into one of three classes: "Class Second. Deaths, Judgments,

of short tales during the era and concludes, "In spite of the harsh editing it received in its collected version, *The Shepherd's Calendar* remains one of James Hogg's finest prose works and perhaps the best collection of traditional and regional tales from the Romantic period" (148).

⁵ Stephenson (1922) argues that "there is no continuity and no unity in *The Shepherd's Calendar*. It is merely a collection of short stories reprinted from *Blackwood's Magazine*" (94) and Simpson (1962) claims, "Hogg's collections of tales and sketches were put together on no definite plan" (112).

⁶ Notably, Killick, MacQueen, and Rubenstein.

⁷ Hogg writes to Blackwood on April 5th, 1827, "I have another No of the Callender finished of the same class called 'Smithy Cracks'" (261), supporting the contention that he wrote the pieces in this collection with a certain "class," or theme, in mind. Mack's edition of *The Shepherd's Calendar* preserves both Blackwood's classes and the individual titles by which the stories were first published in 1829. From these two titles, I argue that Hogg not only wrote many of the stories in *The Shepherd's Calendar* to correspond to specific themes but also that he used each story within a theme differently. Read together, the stories within each of the classes reveal Hogg's nuanced arguments about the particular theme.

and Providences,” “Dreams and Apparitions,” and “Class IX. Fairies, Brownies, and Witches.”

In this chapter, I look at the three stories in Hogg’s “Fairies, Brownies, and Witches” section and seek to extend observations about Hogg’s use of the supernatural in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*. In particular, I will explore how Hogg navigates between the porous and the buffered reader in this section and in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*. At times, Hogg seeks to undermine certain assumptions of Enlightenment thinkers, and I argue that his own awareness of being between two worlds gives the dialogue between the porous and the buffered perspectives a rich and layered complexity in these tales. Hogg does not simply argue that buffered selves should become porous selves, but he does seek to free the buffered self from the small enclosure of his systematic world and to create a space in which the buffered self is open to supernatural realism.

The initial reviewer of *The Shepherd’s Calendar* in *The Edinburgh Literary Journal* (1829) explains Hogg’s depictions of the supernatural as the beliefs of the uneducated, valuable mostly for the thrills the audience can get from scary stories: “[the folks’] superstitions, remarkable as these are,—[are] often highly poetical, and as often prodigiously ludicrous...there are stories in these volumes which we certainly would not advise persons with weak nerves to read alone at midnight” (244-5). This perspective situates the reviewer and those who share his perspective as buffered selves, who are insulated against the supernatural but can appreciate it in the form of outlandish but false folk tales. Regarding this attitude, Taylor writes:

Perhaps the clearest sign of the transformation in our world is that today many people look back to the world of the porous self with nostalgia. As though the creation of thick emotional boundary between us and the cosmos were now lived as a loss. The aim is to try to recover some

measure of this lost feeling. So people go to movies about the uncanny in order to experience a frisson. Our peasant ancestors would have thought us insane. You can't get a frisson from what is really in fact terrifying you. (38)

A *frisson* is defined as “an emotional thrill” (*OED*), and in French, it simply means a “shiver.” What Taylor means is that watching a film about the uncanny in which one has a “thick emotional boundary” results in a frisson, not in actual terror, for one cannot experience actual terror about something believed to be unreal or imaginary.

In his book *Pilgrims of the Sun* (1815), Hogg writes a poem called “Superstition,” in which he laments the loss of superstition in Scotland. Hogg’s description of superstition in this poem provides further shape to the porous versus buffered perspectives that he explores in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*. He allegorizes superstition as a sovereign “Empress” who holds great influence over men’s souls and then writes:

But gone is her mysterious dignity,
and true Devotion wanes away with her;
While in loose garb appears Corruption’s harbinger. (131)

As Hogg goes on to explain in his poem, “corruption’s harbinger” is “thou skeptic leveler” who is “ill-framed to wage war [with] visionary bard” (132). His construction of this passage aligns the queen “Superstition” with the “visionary bard,” who are both in opposition to the “skeptical leveler.” The opposing factions are contrasted throughout the rest of the poem; Hogg criticizes the skeptic for a narrowness of vision and mourns the departure of superstition.

Here, Walter Scott’s writings about the supernatural provide helpful counterpoints to Hogg’s argument. At the end of *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, Scott connects the appeal of fairy stories to the folly and ignorance of youth: “I may, however, add, that the charm of the tale depends much upon the age of the person to whom it is

addressed; and that the vivacity of fancy which engages us in youth to pass over much that is absurd, in order to enjoy some single trait of imagination, dies within us when we obtain the age of manhood” (316). For Scott, the value of superstitious tales is entirely dependant on the age and “vivacity of fancy” of the reader. When children become adults, they learn to buffer themselves from the absurdity of superstitious tales. Scott continues by explaining that he will not write supernatural stories because his time of youth and foolishness has passed and adds that there would probably not even be an audience to appreciate these tales: “Even the present fashion of the world seems to be ill suited for studies of this fantastic nature; and the most ordinary mechanic has learning sufficient to laugh at the figments which in former times were believed by persons far advanced in the deepest knowledge of the age” (320). Scott’s sense of historical superiority is obvious here, and he concludes that education and culture have forever dispelled superstition even among the most common people. Scott’s perspective in the closing of his letter resembles the buffered self of the skeptic, whom Hogg criticizes.

In “Superstition,” Hogg also includes a passage in which superstitious beliefs are laughed away, but Hogg counts this a great loss:

For true devotion wanes away with thee [Superstition];
All thy delirious dreams are laughed to scorn,
While o’er our hills has dawned a cold saturnine morn. (138)

For Hogg, the laughing away of superstition is not a praiseworthy advancement; rather, it brings a “cold saturnine morn.” Killick further illustrates the opposed perspectives of Hogg and Scott regarding the supernatural: “Scott argues that serious dangers arise if the supernatural is allowed to operate unchecked in fiction, and the outpourings of a diseased fancy cannot qualify as art or literature” (126). In contrast to Scott’s buffered view of

supernatural portrayals as “diseased fancy,” Hogg maintains a middle ground in which he identifies the limitations of this buffered perspective but understands the impossibility of returning to a completely porous, pre-modern understanding of the supernatural. Instead, Hogg creates a space for the buffered reader to have receptivity and openness towards the supernatural.

The skeptic in “Superstition” is not meant specifically to portray Scott, but Scott serves as a representative of the perspective that Hogg counters in his poem. Hogg extends his criticism of the skeptic in the opening of “Superstition”:

Joy in thy light thou earth-born Saducee,
That earth is all thy hope and heritage:
Already wears thy front the line of age;
Thou see’st a heaven above—a grave before;
Does that lone cell thy wishes all engage?
Say, does thy yearning soul not grasp at more?
Woe to thy grovelling creed—thy cold ungenial lore!” (132)

In this passage, Hogg attributes materialistic tendencies to the skeptic, condemning his reliance on the earth as all his “hope and heritage” and his narrow focus on the grave rather than on heaven. He ends the stanza by proclaiming woe to the skeptic’s “grovelling creed” and his “cold ungenial lore.” Hogg’s choice of the terms “creed” and “lore” in this description unambiguously cast the conflict as one of competing ideologies. The skeptic’s lore is narrow in its vision and ends in the grave, whereas Hogg’s lore of “superstition” looks to heaven and offers an expansive alternative to the buffered, Enlightenment perspective.

Hogg continues “Superstition” by asserting his own perspective in contrast to that of the skeptic’s:

Be mine to sing of visions that have been,
And cherish hope of visions yet to be;

Of mountains clothed in everlasting green,
Of silver torrent and of shadowy tree,
Far in the ocean of eternity.” (132-3)

A few stanzas later, Hogg explains more specifically the nature of those “visions”:

Those were the times for holiness of frame;
Those were the days when fancy wandered free:
That kindled in the soul the mystic flame,
And the rapt breathings of high poesy. (138)

The “visions” that Hogg claims are closely associated with “holiness,” “fancy,” and “poesy,” and only those who sense the supernatural and are receptive to its presence have access to these visions.⁸

Ideologically positioned between Ettrick and Edinburgh, Hogg is always sensitive to his audience. He is particularly aware of his readers in the “Fairies, Brownies, and Witches” section and it is Hogg’s dialogue with the implied buffered reader that unifies these tales. Throughout the three stories, Hogg teases his buffered readers with their desire to explain and systematize the events narrated to them. He does this by suggesting possible historical, empirical, and didactic explanations but then subsequently undermining them. What is left is Hogg’s implicit affirmation of a more open response to the tales, which is accepting of their mystery and wonder without seeking to place

⁸ Some interesting parallels to Hogg’s poem can be found in Wordsworth’s poem “The Wishing Gate.” Wordsworth also personifies superstition and laments its loss:

[In] the land of Wishes—there
Dwell fruitless day-dreams, lawless prayer,
And thoughts with things at strife;
Yet how forlorn, should ye depart,
Ye superstitions of the *heart*,
How poor, were human life! (7-12)

Just as Hogg connects superstition to an important facet of human imagination and quality of life, Wordsworth concludes that without “superstitions of the heart” human life would be “poor.” And, as Hogg attributes this quality of life to fancy “wandering free,” Wordsworth observes a kind of freedom in the disorder of “fruitless day-dreams” and “lawless prayer.”

them in categories. Hogg shows that the completely buffered self cannot truly experience these tales.

“Mary Burnet” is Hogg’s first story in the “Fairies, Brownies, and Witches” section. Hogg’s opening comments to the story parallel it to his observations in the poem “Superstition” and cast the telling of the story as a challenge to the buffered self:

I must likewise relate scenes so far out of the way of usual events, that the sophisticated gloss and polish thrown over the modern philosophic mind, may feel tainted by such antiquated breathings of superstition. Nevertheless, be it mine to cherish the visions that have been, as well as the hope of visions yet in reserve, far in the ocean of eternity, beyond the stars and the sun. For, after all, what is the soul of man without these? What but a cold phlegmatic influence, so inclosed within the walls of modern scepticism, as scarcely to be envied by the spirits of the beasts that perish? (200)

Hogg’s comments about “visions” use almost identical wording to his comments about visions in the poem “Superstition.” Such a close mimicking of the language of his previous poem could not have been unintentional. If Hogg’s stories in this class are associated with the “visions” in the poem “Superstition,” then it seems that they would also serve the same function as those visions—to provide sight to those who are porously receptive. Hogg’s description of the “gloss and polish” of the “modern philosophic mind,” which is “inclosed within the walls of modern scepticism” fits Taylor’s description of the buffered self, which has created barriers between itself and the rest of the world. Throughout the tales in “Fairies, Brownies, and Witches,” Hogg questions the security of the buffered self’s enclosures and emotional boundaries.

In “Mary Burnet,” a rakish young man, John Allanson, attempts to seduce Mary Burnet, with disastrous consequences. When she will not meet him for a tryst, he summons her through occult powers. She appears but then runs off a cliff and appears to

drown. Allanson goes to her home to report her death, only to find that she is in her bed and dry but seems to have an awareness of the occult events that have occurred. The next day, she disappears (almost) without a trace, and Allanson descends into complete wickedness and debauchery. Years later, he is seduced to his own death by a fairy-version of Mary Burton.

The first way an educated, buffered reader from the Enlightenment period might try to understand a fairy story is through an antiquarian lens, in which the events of the story are linked to historical events, and supposedly supernatural phenomena are explained from a contemporaneous, rational perspective. The antiquarian distances himself from the events of the story and neatly assimilates them into history by imposing order and explanations. Hogg's narrator initially colludes with the antiquarian impulse of his implied buffered reader. He begins the story by explaining, "The following incidents are related as having occurred at a shepherd's house, not a hundred miles from St Mary's Loch; but, as the descendants of one of the families still reside in the vicinity, I deem it requisite to use names which cannot be recognised, save by those who have heard the story" (200). The narrator provides a specific geographical location for the story, seeming to ground it as a verifiable event. He also indicates that he has changed the names in the story to protect the anonymity of one of the families involved in the story. In the previous paragraph, Hogg makes a distinction between the stories in this class and the other stories in the book, which are "founded on facts" (200), so his excessive details to ground "Mary Burnet" in facts are tongue-in-cheek. Initially, Hogg seems to play along with his buffered reader. His narrator states that the lake at which the principal event occurs is "well known to many an angler, and to none better than the writer of this

tale” (201), and mentions the same fact again a page later (202), seeming to emphasize that the tale occurs in an identifiable location.

However, after carrying his buffered reader through a tale in which the events are historically and geographically verified, Hogg uses his narrator to undermine the antiquarian control of the story. After Mary Burnet disappears mysteriously, the narrator explains: “Bonny Mary Burnet was lost. She left her father’s house at nine o’clock on a Wednesday morning, the 17th of September, neatly dressed in a white jerkin and green bonnet, with her hay-raik over her shoulder; and that was last sight she was doomed ever to see of her native cottage” (208). The style of the passage and the emphasis on minute details call to mind a police report for a missing person, in which the bare facts are outlined. At this point in the story, the circumstances surrounding Mary Burnet and John Allanson become stranger and stranger, and the description of Mary’s disappearance draws satirical attention to the inability of the buffered, antiquarian reader to understand and control the events in the story.

Hogg makes this even more apparent later in the story. When Allanson arrives at the fair in Moffat, he eventually encounters a woman whom he supposes to be Lady Keith. The narrator grabs hold of that detail, remarking, “the mention of this name in the tale, as it were by mere accident, fixes the era of it in the reign of James the Fourth, at the very time that fairies, brownies, and witches, were at the rifest in Scotland” (212). The first part of his comment aligns with the antiquarian impulse to control events by dating them, but when he mentions that the time is when “fairies, brownies, and witches were at the rifest,” he undermines the whole project of dating the events within a controlled and acceptable version of history, in which people are safely distanced from fairies. I contend

that this is Hogg's hinting at the inability of the buffered reader to understand the story by typical antiquarian methods.

Hogg also pokes fun at the characters in the tale for their attempted systematic explanations of Mary Burnet's disappearance:

Jean affirmed that it had been the Mermaid of the loch that had come to him in Mary's shape, to allure him to his destruction... But Andrew Burnet, setting his bonnet to one side, and raising his left hand to a level with that, so that he might have full scope to motion and flourish with it, suiting his action to his words, thus began, with a face of sapience never to be excelled: 'Gudewife, it doth strike me that thou art very wide of the mark. It must have been a spirit of a great deal higher quality than a meer-maiden, who played this extra-ordinary prank. The meer-maiden is not a spirit, but a beastly sensitive creature, with a malicious spirit within it. Now, what influence could a cauld clutch of a creature like that wi' a tail like a great saumont-fish, hae ower our bairn, either to make her happy or unhappy? Or where could it borrow her claes, Jean? Tell me that. Na, na, Jean Linton, depend on it, the spirit that courtit wi' poor sinfu' Jock there, has been a fairy, but whether a good ane or an ill ane, it is hard to determine.'" (205)

Mary's parents assume that supernatural creatures exist and that they can interfere in human affairs, but the comedy in this passage is in Andrew's attempts to categorically understand supernatural creatures. Hogg's mentioning of Andrew's "motion and flourish" as he speaks and his face of "sapience" subtly poke fun at Andrew's detailed conjectures regarding the respective appearances and abilities of mermaids and fairies. Andrew's attempts to systematize the world of supernatural creature are a subtle mimicry of the antiquarian attempts to date and locate the story in history. This passage also implies the narrator's distance from Andrew's beliefs. While the narrator urges an open space for the buffered self to believe the supernatural, he understands the impossibility of becoming fully absorbed in the porous understanding of the world.

Finally, Hogg also undermines the attempts of his readers to dilute the tale into didacticism. Upon the conclusion of Allanson's section of the narrative, Hogg's narrator comments, "in this manner, mysterious beyond all example, terminated the career of that wicked and flagitious young man. What a beautiful moral may be extracted from this fairy tale!" (217). This passage contains an internal contradiction, for it seems strange to suggest that a moral can be derived from the tale when it is "mysterious beyond all example." Because of this contradiction, I argue that Hogg is subtly challenging those buffered readers who would translate the tale into a simple account of justice. Furthermore, the idea that one can "extract" a moral from the tale assumes a buffered perspective, in which one is totally separate from the story and can dissect it from the outside.

Throughout the story, the various attempts of the buffered readers and characters fail to adequately explain the events in "Mary Burnet." By undermining each of these attempts, Hogg does not allow his buffered readers to categorize the story and instead insists that they maintain an open and porous acceptance of the supernatural and the mysterious.

The lengthiest example of one of these moments occurs early in the story, soon after Mary Burnet has gone missing. After Mary's brother searches for her, Hogg writes:

No one had seen any traces of his sister, but an old crazy woman, at a place called Oxcleuch, said that she had seen her go by in a grand chariot with young Jock Allanson, toward the Birkhill Path, and by that time they were at the Cross of Dumgree. The young man said he asked her what sort of a chariot it was, as there was never such a thing in that country as a chariot, nor yet a road for one. But she replied, that he was widely mistaken, for that a great number of chariots sometimes passed that way, though never any of them returned. These words appearing to be merely the ravings of superannuation, they were not regarded; but when no other traces of Mary could be found, old Andrew went up to consult this crazy

dame once more, but he was not able to bring any such thing to her recollection. She spoke only in parables, which to him were incomprehensible. (208)

The old woman's comments are initially dismissed because she mentions seeing "chariots," which were elegant coaches that were seldom, if ever, used in rural Scotland. Yet, at the end of the story, Mary appears before her parents in a "gilded chariot" (221), verifying the sight of the old "crazy" woman. This confirmation of the old woman's report adds credence to the rest of her report, that "a great number of chariots sometimes passed that way." The hint of a fairy world that is visible only to a few is an example of Hogg's urging a suspension of disbelief and an openness in his buffered readers. Those readers can sense that another world, which does not fit into any systematic explanation, exists alongside the "real" world of the story. The passage also creates questions about what we view as "crazy" and indicates that there might be a coded meaning behind the old woman's parables, similar to those in "Tibby Hyslop's Dream."

In "The Witches of Traquair," Hogg follows a similar pattern to "Mary Burnet." The main distinction is that in "Mary Burnet," Hogg's emphasis is on undermining buffered explanations of the story and in "Mary Burnet," it is on affirming the experience available an open, more porous reader. At the beginning of the tale, Hogg again teases his antiquarian, buffered reader:

But the tale is a very old one, and sorry am I to say that I cannot vouch for the truth of it, which I have hitherto, for the most part, been accustomed to do, and which I feel greatly disposed to do at all times, provided the tale bears the marks of authenticity impressed on the leading events, whether I know of a verity that every individual incident related *did* happen or not. (223)

Hogg's quibbling about the verifiability of the story seems to be subtly poking fun at any readers who would attempt to place the story into an actual history of witchcraft.

In “The Witches of Traquair,” Colin Hyslop is on the verge of becoming a warlock. His motivation for doing this is to win the affection of the woman he loves. Before he commits himself to witchcraft, however, two mysterious women interfere and guide him towards righteousness.

The mysterious and inexplicable element in this story is the pair of women in white. They first appear in the form of two beautiful deer and distract Colin from signing his soul away into witchcraft (225). Later, they appear as women “clothed in white, with garlands on their heads” (227). Hogg writes:

Colin perceived that one of them was lame, and the other supported her by the hand. The two comely hinds that had come upon him so suddenly and unexpectedly...instantly came over Colin’s awakened recollection, and he was struck with indescribable awe...Bawty [Colin’s dog] was affected somewhat in the same manner with his master...Colin perceived, from these infallible symptoms, that the beings with whom he was now coming in contact were not the subjects of the Power of Darkness. (227)

Colin knows, based on his own intuition and his dog’s reactions, that the women are not evil. Colin’s moment of “indescribable awe” occurs when he is overcome with the sublime power of the supernatural beings, and the unsystematic way that he understands the women encourages the reader to share his humble and open acceptance of the supernatural.

While the women seem to be good and help Colin free himself from witchcraft, it is never clear exactly what the women are. At one point the narrator references the “Lady of the Moor” (234), but it is never clear within the story who she is and what her powers are. The women request that Colin meet with them in a fairy ring (228), and Colin sits within the ring when he wants to summon their presence (232). The women apparently have the same power to shape-shift as the witches. While they are opposed to

the witches, they do not seem clearly aligned with Christianity, either. At the end of the story, when Colin is on trial for witchcraft before Catholic judges, he accidentally causes them to believe that the women resemble an image of the Virgin Mary. This, of course, saves him from the stake, but the narrator makes it clear that Colin did not actually think either of the women resembled the image of the Virgin Mary (239-40).

The magical objects that the women give Colin to battle the witches further complicate the story. They give him a vial, which contains a bitter liquid, and bid him to drink it (229). The liquid in the vial changes Colin by making him repentant of his errors and giving him the strength to withstand the witches. The women also give Colin a gold medal that “seemed to have been dipped in blood” (233). The medal gives Colin a mysterious immunity to the supernatural powers of the witches. Exactly what the objects are, how they work, and from where their power is derived are left undisclosed in the story, but it is clear that they are efficacious and are connected to a mysterious power. When Colin is on trial for witchcraft, the searchers notice that the medal is “locked to his body with steel, so that no hands could loose it” (239).

At the end of the story, Hogg again uses his narrator to undermine the attempts of buffered readers to interpret the story:

It has always appeared to me to have been moulded on the bones of some ancient religious allegory, and by being thus transformed into a nursery tale, rendered unintelligible. It would be in vain now to endeavour to restore its original structure, in the same way as Mr Blore can delineate an ancient abbey from the smallest remnant, but I should like exceedingly to understand properly what was represented by the two lovely and mysterious sisters, one of whom was lame. It is most probable that they were supposed apparitions of renowned female saints; or perhaps Faith and Charity. This, however, is manifest, that it is a Reformer’s tale, founded on a Catholic allegory. (240)

After all of his suppositions about possible sources and explanations for the story, the narrator appears to be confounded by its meanings. He concludes that it has been “rendered unintelligible.” This comment makes it clear that Hogg is subtly undermining his narrative voice, for the story, at many moments, is deeply intelligible and meaningful. It doesn’t make sense that Hogg, the author, would tell a story that he believed was completely unintelligible. I claim that the narrative voice in this passage represents the buffered perspective that Hogg shows cannot comprehend the meaning of the story. Because this narrator is obsessed with decoding the significance of the two sisters and distilling the story down to its barest allegory, he misses its true meaning—to engage and delight the porous reader, who accepts the presence of a complex and mysterious supernatural world that is often beyond categorization.

Hogg’s “The Brownie of the Black Haggs” is the briefest and probably the most disturbing of the three tales in the “Fairies, Brownies, and Witches” class. The story centers on the strange and obsessive relationship between the Lady of Wheelhope and her servant, Merodach. The Lady of Wheelhope is a cruel tyrant in her home and is known for arbitrarily murdering her servants. Eventually, a dwarfish servant named Merodach is hired. The Lady of Wheelhope develops an intense hatred for him and repeatedly attempts to murder him, but Merodach has a mysterious power over her that allows him to turn every one of her violent actions against him into an action against her. For example, she tries to poison Merodach, but Merodach somehow knows about her plan and gives the poisoned food to the Lady of Wheelhope’s favorite dog. Eventually, the Lady of Wheelhope becomes completely obsessed with Merodach and follows him when he leaves her home. At the end of the story, her mangled and wounded body is found.

Where the buffered reader might be tempted to distill the story down to a simple allegory of justice, Hogg shows that this conclusion is not so simple by frustrating all attempts to understand the character and motives of Merodach. At the end of the story, Hogg writes that the Lady of Wheelhope's body is found by a group of Covenanters, "some of the very men whom she had exerted herself to destroy, and who had been driven, like David of old, to pray for a curse and earthly punishment upon her" (254). This might lead the reader to think that Merodach is God's instrument to bring justice upon the Lady of Wheelhope. Yet Hogg also shows Merodach's antipathy to the Bible. When Merodach first brings the Lady back to her home, he seizes the Bible from the Lady's husband and throws it against the wall (253). It does not seem that an agent invoked by the Covenanters would treat the Bible so sacrilegiously, so this undermines the simplistic religious moralizing of the story.

Finally, the narrator's comment at the closing of the story hints at the openness that Hogg wants his buffered readers to experience. The narrator writes, "It is many years since I heard it; but, however ridiculous it may appear, I remember it made a dreadful impression on my young mind" (254). The "impression" of the story, which is separate from the categorization of its meaning, is one valuable aspect of telling the story.

Having been previously criticized by Scott for his "unchecked" exploration of the supernatural, Hogg was sensitive to the way buffered readers would interpret his supernatural tales. In his class "Fairies, Brownies, and Witches," Hogg repeatedly engages and then subverts various buffered attempts to systematize and distill his stories. Instead, he subtly affirms that the value in a fairy story lies in the heightened awareness and vision it provides to readers, through its reminders of the mysterious, the

supernatural, and the inexplicable. However, this heightened awareness is only accessible to the reader who looks outside the boundaries of his buffered enclosure.

CHAPTER THREE

“Far aboon a’ our comprehensions”: The Spiritual Subtext of *The Three Perils*

In *The Roots of Romanticism*, Isaiah Berlin explains that Blake “desired some kind of recovery of control over the spiritual element, which had become petrified as a result of human degeneration and the wicked work of unimaginative killers of the human spirit such as mathematicians and scientists” (50). Berlin identifies this goal as an essential feature of Blake’s “mysticism,” and it describes the way in which many of the Romantics responded to Enlightenment ideologies. They sought to refocus attention on the mysterious presence of the supernatural—a presence they felt was unsystematic but also undeniable. James Hogg, in particular, was deeply invested in this project. Hogg lived his early years in the rural Ettrick Forest of Scotland and was steeped in the supernatural lore of the folk, so his questioning of the Enlightenment assumptions about the supernatural was not just an intellectual debate but a defense of a different view of life.

Hogg criticism frequently mentions Hogg’s fascination with the supernatural in his fiction and poetry. Important studies have been done regarding the supernatural in Hogg’s poetry; however, the way Hogg responds to Enlightenment assumptions receives most potent expression in his novels. In the novels, Hogg usually incorporates a narrative voice that mimics the antiquarian, editorial voice exhibited in the novels of Walter Scott. Hogg’s undermining of the Enlightenment narrator in his own fiction makes his criticism of the Enlightenment assumptions about the supernatural particularly stark. In Hogg’s

novels, the juxtaposing of the natural and the supernatural upsets the control the narrator purportedly exhibits over the text and is Hogg's most convincing argument for an understanding of spirituality that had been "petrified" (in Berlin's words) by Enlightenment thinkers.

In Hogg's two longest novels, *The Three Perils of Man* (1822) and *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823), the supernatural plays a key role in the central events of each text. While the novels share similar titles, they have not been viewed as companion pieces until recently, by Meiko O'Halloran. Beyond their attention to the supernatural, the novels have widely disparate plots that do not seem initially to lend themselves to a comparison. However, I argue that the many parallel themes in the novels reveal how Hogg is answering similar questions about the supernatural in each book. Furthermore, the fact that *The Three Perils of Woman* immediately follows *The Three Perils of Man* suggests an exploration of how Hogg's fiction develops.

The Three Perils of Man contains two narratives that are largely separate from each other; Hogg devotes about half of the book to each narrative. The first narrative is a chivalric border episode surrounding the siege of Roxburgh, in the vein of a Scott novel but with some important departures (Gifford xxi). The second pertains to the supernatural adventures of a band of travelers at the warlock Michael Scott's castle, Aikwood. The magical world of Aikwood is juxtaposed with the non-magical world of Roxburgh,⁹ so Hogg's use of the supernatural here is a clear instance of supernatural realism, which I define in the introduction to this thesis. Graham Tulloch suggests that the Aikwood section demands significant critical attention in any interpretation of *The*

⁹ Both Aikwood and Roxburgh are real, historical locations.

Three Perils of Man. I also suggest that the Aikwood episode is a key passage not only in *The Three Perils of Man* but also for Hogg's *oeuvre*, for it is in this passage where his imaginative portrayal of the supernatural runs unchecked.

While Hogg's *The Three Perils of Woman* does not contain such unchecked explorations of the supernatural, the central episode in "Peril the First: Love" is a bizarre and startling instance of a supernatural event. The protagonist of the story is Gatty Bell, who predicts her own death and then dies with her family surrounding her, exactly as she foretells. Gatty's knowledge of the exact time of her own death is the first instance of a seemingly supernatural event. The second occurs when Gatty's father and husband pray for her resurrection. Gatty appears to rise from the dead, but with only an "animal existence" (202). After exactly three years existing in this state, Gatty awakens as if from a coma and returns to health and intelligence. Much critical debate surrounds the exact nature of Gatty's illness, but as Douglas Mack concludes, the supernatural does play a role in the events ("Gatty's Illness" 135).

Despite some similarities, it might seem as though the case for reading *The Three Perils of Man* and *The Three Perils of Woman* as companion pieces can be made no more strongly than reading any other two of Hogg's works together, as most of them contain elements of the supernatural. However, the parallels in title alone suggest a comparison.

Several critics have noticed the connections between the books,¹⁰ but to my knowledge, the only article that includes a lengthy comparison of the two novels is by

¹⁰ Ian Duncan sees the presence of Walter Scott in each of the works as the linking factor. He argues, "The blatantly biographical invocation of 'Wattie Scott' early in *The Three Perils of Woman* opens a trajectory opposite to the fantastic proliferation of Scotts in *The Three Perils of Man*" (170). And Valentina Bold claims, "Unusually, Hogg had adopted an attitude of total belief with respect to the supernatural in *Three Perils of Man*, but the poor reception of this work explains why he reverted to his

Meiko O'Halloran. She claims, "The two works are far closer thematically than has been recognised previously...when studied in relation to one another the two novels foreground the continuing emergence of some of Hogg's most enduring concerns" (41). I share O'Halloran's argument that *The Three Perils of Man* and *The Three Perils of Woman* should be read as companion pieces.¹¹

I will argue that Hogg's depiction of the supernatural in *The Three Perils of Man* provides important metaphors for understanding *The Three Perils of Woman*. In each book, the rational explanation of events offered by the narrator is undermined by a subtext, in which forces beyond the comprehension of humans dictate the development of events. This subtext includes and extends beyond Hogg's depiction of God and argues that true faith cannot be systemized and controlled by humans; it suggests, instead, a porous receptivity to the presence of the supernatural.

Initially, the Aikwood episode in *The Three Perils of Man* appears to be a struggle between good and evil and between the Christian and the occult. The primary conflict in the text takes place between the friar, who represents a Christian framework, and Michael Scott, whose use of the elements and demons represents an occult system. The two have a competition in which they display their powers, and it appears that the Friar wins, for the novel ends with the friar and his companions freed and Michael Scott dead and buried. Representing this conclusion, Barbara Bloedé writes: "Hogg seems to be saying here that supernatural terror will always be vanquished by true faith" (84). However, I

usual cautious practice in *The Three Perils of Woman*, neither accepting nor rejecting traditional values" (54). Bold suggests that the reception of the first novel influenced Hogg's generic decisions in the second.

¹¹ O'Halloran lists the common themes in the books as "veracity, identity, and corporeality" and explains that in *The Three Perils of Man* Hogg "raises implicitly questions which become more prominent and insistent in the sequel novel" (41).

argue that a closer look at Hogg's subtly undermining subtext reveals that the purpose of the story is not to portray the triumph of spiritual good over spiritual evil but rather to assert an aspect of the spiritual that stretches beyond the controlling schemes of Christian and non-Christian alike.

On one level, the friar's spiritual power is a means to protect his friends, battle Michael Scott's demonic agents, and dispel illusions. After they first arrive at Aikwood, the travelers encounter an evil witch. They interrupt her while she is in the midst of dark magic, and when she realizes they are not products of her conjuration, she throws boiling liquid on them all. Everyone retreats in fear except for the friar. He runs toward the witch, holds her down, and uncovers the cross he is wearing. When the witch sees this, Hogg writes that she "uttered the most horrified howlings, and appeared to be falling into convulsions" (187). From that point, the friar has control over her, and she is submissively led to the dungeon and locked in a cell. It is not clear in this passage whether the friar's cross has a supernatural effect over the witch or whether she is merely psychologically effected by it, but regardless, the friar has a source of power connected to his faith that allows him to vanquish evil agents.

In a later passage, Hogg does make it clear that the friar has a supernatural power that allows him to battle demonic forces. In this scene, the friar interrupts Michael Scott and his three imps before they kill Charlie Scott, one of the friar's traveling companions. The imps quickly tie up everyone else in the group, but when they approach the friar, Hogg writes, "They skipped about and about him, but they had not power even to touch his frock" (192). Something about the friar's essence makes him immune to demonic interference. Then, the friar takes out his cross and pronounces "the words from holy

writ against which no demon of false spirit's power could prevail." In response, the imps "fled yelling from the apartment" (192). Here, the friar's power is clearly a supernatural one that allows him to conquer demonic forces.

Beyond battling evil forces, the friar can also dispel illusion and trickery. After the initial conflict with the friar, Michael Scott rethinks his strategy and invites the travelers to a meal. His steward prepares delicious-smelling beef and gravy, and just before he is about to eat it, the friar blesses the food in the name of Jesus. Hogg writes, "Never had blessing a more dolorous effect. When the friar opened his eyes, the beef was gone. There was nothing left on the great wooden plate before him but a small insignificant thing resembling the joint of a frog's leg" (200). At first, the friar supposes someone has stolen his food and is angry, but it soon becomes apparent that the food has been enchanted to never satisfy or fulfill appetite (202). While his companions eat and eat under the illusion that they will be satisfied, the friar's prayer has revealed the real condition of the food. In this situation, his reliance on an external power invoked by the name of Jesus lends him a true sight that those who do not invoke this power lack.

Yet, in contrast to this depiction of the friar as the hero of the story who vanquishes the powers of evil, Hogg includes a subtext in which the friar is subtly undermined and criticized through his language, his dilution of Christianity to a series of talismans, and his reliance on science. The sum total of these criticisms is that the friar's system of power is not one of true faith but rather one of calculated control. Because the friar is disconnected from true faith and his power fails at several key points in the text, I argue that Hogg's implicit conclusion is that true faith must include an element that admits the spiritual to be outside of a controlled system.

As critics have noted, Hogg's linguistic choices are intentional and nearly always play a crucial role in the development of his plots (Letley 47). Situated in Enlightenment Edinburgh where the contrast between "coarse" Scots and "educated" English was distinct, Hogg was particularly aware of the political connotations of dialects. Because of this, Hogg's dialect choices for his characters are almost always a meaningful way to interpret those characters. Hogg's friar speaks neither Scots nor Standard English but speaks primarily in biblical allusion and in a pretentiously learned register. The friar is the only character to speak in this style, and the contrast between his language and the more straightforward Scots often paints the friar as ludicrous and out of touch with the common-sense perspective. The contrast is most clear between the friar and the character Charlie Scott, who is probably the most admirable character in the story; he acts heroically and sincerely and speaks a simple Scots. In an early episode, the friar and Charlie Scott must fight off marauders and have the following exchange: "The frair [sic] gave a glance back, and he said, 'Lo, thou art a mighty man of valour, and behold there is but one; do thou fall upon him and smite him; why should one pursue two?' 'I hae heard waur advices frae mair warlike men,' said Charlie; 'Ride ye on, father, an' lose nae time. Gude faith! I sal gie this ane his breakfast'" (135). The friar's construction and diction—"Lo" and "smite"—evoke biblical language and seem particularly absurd in contrast to Charlie's straightforward Scots: "I sal gie this ane his breakfast." In this passage, the friar uses his language to conceal a cowardly purpose—out of self-protection, he wants Charlie to fight the marauder by himself while he, the friar, rides on to safety.

Hogg draws particular attention to the rhetorical force of the friar's language, and the other characters frequently make note of it. Delany, a beautiful girl who is taken as a bartering tool to Michael Scott, comments about the friar: "his speech has a strain of grandeur which I love. Where did he acquire that speech?" (143). Tam responds, "He gets it frae some auld-fashioned beuk...that he has pored on a' his days, an' translatit out o' other tongues, till he was nearly hanged for it" (143). While Delany is impressed by the friar's language, it is clear that the other characters are not. In fact, the young Delany is the only one who cannot perceive the friar's lecherous innuendo in his use of biblical language towards her. Upon instructing Delany about the Christian life, the friar says, "behold the fruits of our labours shall spring up into life" and "if thou wilt suffer me to instil these truths into thee, thou shalt both blossom and bring forth fruit abundantly" (155-6). The other characters hear the friar's speech to Delany and are outraged. To them, and to the readers, the innuendo is clear. Gillian Hughes, commenting on Hogg's revisions of *The Three Perils of Man*, notes that this aspect of the friar's character was even more prominent in the first draft: "His language to the beautiful Delany had been much more amorous and, to use the expression of the day, indelicate" (113). Jill Rubenstein's comment confirms that Hogg's friar uses his biblical language to manipulate and seduce Delany; it is likely that Hogg toned down the innuendo to avoid offending his audience. Overall, the friar's pretention and his innuendo towards Delany serve to undermine his "spiritual" language.

Beyond the grotesque absurdity of the friar's language, Hogg also criticizes his system of power through his almost occult use of Christian talismans. A "talisman" is typically defined as an object imbued with magical powers, and the Friar treats the Bible

and his cross as if they are talismans, to be used for the his own purposes and to accomplish a particular, calculated result. The friar's commentary on the Bible nears worship of the book itself: "But I learned it [his language] from one little book; a book that is of more value to the children of men than all the gold of Ophir" (152). The friar's treatment of the Bible as a talisman is demonstrated in his advice to Delany as he gives it to her: "Here, take thou this, and keep it in thy bosom; and, by the blessing of the Holy Virgin, it shall shield thee from all malevolent spirits, all enchantments, and all dangers of the wicked one" (163). So, the book itself, separate from anything that is written in it, has the power to protect Delany. What is particularly interesting is the reaction of the onlookers to this interchange: "As he said this, he put into her hand a small gilded copy of the Four Evangelists, which she kissed and put into her bosom. All the rest saw this, and took it for a book of the Black Art" (163). The onlookers believe the Bible is a book of the Black Art because of the way the friar treats it is as a talisman. Hogg's construction of this scene causes the reader to question the way that the friar is using the Bible.

Probably the most telling undermining of the friar's spirituality are Hogg's references to the friar's "book of the arts." While it is only mentioned a few times in the text, this "book of the arts" appears to be a book of chemistry that the friar has written. In addition to his religious learning, the friar is also the "greatest philosopher and chemist of the age" (175). When Michael Scott first realizes the friar's identity, he asks, "'What? Primate of Douay in France, and author of the Book of Arts?'" (204). The Book of Arts represents the friar's scientific learning, and it is this learning that he uses in his battle against Michael Scott. It is interesting that while the friar has seen the great power of the

Bible and his other religious talismans, he chooses to battle Michael Scott using complicated chemistry experiments. The characters' frequent confusion between the Book of Arts and the Bible indicates a conflation in the way the friar uses the two books. For the friar, they are two separate but equally valid systems for controlling the world around him.

Later in the text, a third book is mentioned—Michael Scott's black book of fate. What I would like to suggest is that the friar's use of the Bible and the book of the arts is not so different from Michael Scott's use of "the black book of fate." By drawing this parallel, Hogg implicitly criticizes both systems of power and the way in which each, in its way, attempts to manipulate the elements. He is not arguing that the Christian and the occult systems are equally bad but rather that each can be manipulated in equally bad ways.

The friar's Bible has power simply through its material presence, and so does Michael Scott's book. When Michael Scott opens the book of fate, he says to the traveling companions: "Before I open this awful book, it is meet that every one of you be blindfolded. I ask this for your own sakes. If any one of you were to look but on one character of this book, his brain would be seared to a cinder, his eyes would fly out of their sockets, and perhaps his whole frame might be changed into something unspeakable and monstrous" (389-90). In due course, when Michael Scott opens the book, screaming imps fly out of it, and it is clear that he is accessing a terrible power.

Michael Scott views the book's presence as so potent, that at the end of the narrative, he refuses to part with it and views it as an essential means to his power. In an interesting plot twist, Michael Scott defies the devil himself and declares, "This black

book and this divining-rod are mine. They were consigned to my hands by thyself and the four viceroys of the elements, and part with them shall I never, either in life or in death” (529). Hogg continues the narration of this final episode by explaining that Michael Scott had attached the black book to himself “with bands of steel, that were hammered in the forge of hell” (529) and that he placed one hand on the book and the other on the divining rod and dared the devil to combat. It seems that these two magical objects—these talismans—are what enable him to battle the devil.

A notable parallel to this episode occurs with the friar’s talismans. When the friar and Michael Scott are trapped on top of the tower together, a demon comes to carry away Michael Scott. The friar intervenes, “laying the rood on the Master’s forehead with the one hand, and the open Book of the Gospels on his breast with the other” (228). This action repels the demon. It is the use of these objects, parallel to Michael’s Scott’s rod and black book that allows the friar to save Michael Scott’s life. Highlighting the parallel, both books are described as “black books,” and “rod” and “rood” sound remarkably similar.

While at the end of the story, the friar appears to be victorious, there are dark hints that Michael Scott’s power is greater and that he is the real champion in the duel of the wizards. The friar seems to have the power to dispel demons, but during the actual duel, he relies on cheap tricks rather than truly supernatural power. In contrast, Michael Scott’s power is a genuine manipulation of the laws of nature. During their first competition, the friar uses an elaborate contraption to cast strange shadows on the wall. In response, Michael Scott creates identical counterparts of three of the friar’s companions. The counterparts look and sound exactly like the originals, and it is clear

that Michael Scott's display is truly supernatural where the friar's is merely an optical illusion.

The second display of power reinforces this distinction in power. The friar claims that he can split a mountain into three parts. Instead of actually splitting the mountain, he places a warped piece of glass over the window, which creates the illusion that the mountain has been split. In response, Michael Scott commands his demons to split a neighboring mountain, and, in this case, the mountain is actually split. In both cases, Michael Scott's power is greater, and the friar relies on visual deception rather than on a genuine supernatural power.

In the third challenge, the friar's pride gets the best of him, and he traps himself and his friends in a potentially deadly situation. After he has failed to impress with the first two displays, the friar declares that he will make a lead box fly with Michael Scott's servant on top of it. He places gunpowder beneath it, lights a match, and to all appearances, the box and the servant fly into the air and disappear. Michael Scott is impressed, but the problem is that the servant had the only keys to the tower door, and now the party is locked on top of the remote Aikwood castle with no provisions. The narrator comments that the friar was "guilty of a manifest oversight; one that had well nigh proved fatal to the whole party in its consequences" and alludes to the fact that the friar's pride induced him to bring and use the dynamite: "The friar had brought his huge wallet full of the strongest gunpowder he had been able to make, to shew of his wonderful feats, and astonish the great Master" (220). After the party realizes that they have no food and that no one is coming to their rescue, they agree to have a story-telling contest. The loser will be eaten by everyone else. The friar is utterly helpless—by means

supernatural or natural—to rescue his friends. The characters spend a significant portion of the story trapped in the tower, and it is entirely due to the friar’s arrogance and failed power. This plot development is a significant criticism of his motives and his abilities.

Finally, while Hogg concludes *The Three Perils of Man* with Michael Scott’s fall to his death from his tower, there is still a hint that his power will persist. A witness to his death reports that when he attempted to take Michael Scott’s rod, “the dead man turned his eyes toward me with a fierceness that chilled me to the heart” (535). So, while Michael Scott is dead, there seems to be an aspect of his existence that is undead. In the final scene of the novel, others attempt to remove Michael Scott’s rod and book but cannot. Eventually, he is buried with them in an iron chest, and this seems to be the end of Michael Scott.

Although Hogg criticizes the friar’s system of belief, he certainly does not paint Michael Scott’s favorably. Throughout the text, Hogg explains that Michael Scott’s tremendous power over nature has come at the cost of his own freedom. As deGroot notes, it has transformed him in a way that he cannot control (124). While Michael Scott can rule over many others, ultimately, he is a slave to the devil and to his own lust for power over the elements. At the end of the story, both Michael Scott and the friar are thwarted in their attempts to gain power over others. Hogg parallels them so closely not because he thought Christianity and the occult were closely connected but because it is possible to approach each in an occult way, in which the attempt to systematize and control higher powers is ultimately corrupting.

This episode provides important metaphors for understanding Hogg’s portrayal of the supernatural throughout his works and, in particular, the supernatural episode in *The*

Three Perils of Woman. It provides an interpretive lens for the pivotal scene regarding Gatty's death and resurrection. As in *The Three Perils of Man*, one of Hogg's purposes in *The Three Perils of Woman* is to show that the attempt to harness and control the supernatural—whether Christian or occult—will end badly. However, in *The Three Perils of Woman*, Hogg complicates this argument through undermining not only religious didacticism and the scientific perspective, but also his own narrator's attempt to coherently interpret the events. Hogg does this through his references to “the power of sympathy,” a supernatural force that is beyond the understanding of humans.

The critical interpretations of Gatty's death and resurrection vary widely. It is important to survey them here, for this episode is the crux of the book, and the interpretations are shaped by the critical assumptions about Hogg's view of the supernatural. Regarding Gatty's death, most critics admit the possibility that her death is due to hysteria, meaning that Gatty convinces herself that she is going to die and then does so. In contrast to this theory, David Groves suggests that Gatty is actually dying of venereal disease, explaining that the disease, which is mentioned in vague terms, only affects M'Ion (Gatty's husband), Gatty, and M'Ion's supposed mistress Cherry (83). Both theories are interesting and both seem to be possible readings of the text. However, I contend that the nature of Gatty's illness is not as important as the fact that she predicts her own death. Gatty predicts the exact day and hour of her death, and despite the sleeping medicine her husband gives her, dies at the time that she predicts (195-6). The circumstances are similar to Hogg's story “George Dobb's Expedition to Hell,” in which George is convinced he will die at midnight, and despite the doctor's attempt to deceive him about the time, George dies precisely at midnight. Whatever the causes of her

illness, Gatty has some kind of supernatural revelation about the time of her death that is verified. There is some speculation over whether Gatty actually dies or whether she is merely in a deep coma, but many critics read it as an actual death (Barrell; Mack). Even if Gatty only enters a deep coma, the fact that she predicted the moment is still remarkable and is evidence for supernatural intervention.

The critical interpretation that is most helpful is Antony Hasler's observation that Gatty's death is a "staged performance...directed, with a great deal of zest, by Gatty herself" (36). Before and throughout her deathbed scene, Gatty scripts every detail, including the verses of the hymns she wants sung as she dies. As Gatty becomes more "spiritual" she adopts more pretentious language that apes biblical constructions and diction. Though it is not as pronounced as the friar's, a natural parallel can be drawn between the two. Just as Hogg uses the friar's language to subtly undermine his faith, he uses Gatty's language to subtly undermine the sincerity of her piety. For example, when Gatty is on her deathbed, M'Ion gives her a cordial to ease her anxiety. She asks for more of it: "'Give me fulness of it,' said she, 'for I long exceedingly to drink of it, feeling as it were to me the water of life'" (193). The diction is reminiscent of King James English, and the "water of life" is an allusion to a biblical theme. An even more direct allusion occurs when M'Ion prays that God would spare Gatty's life. Hearing the prayer, Gatty responds, "'Oh! don't, my love! don't!—Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he is saying!" (194). The phrase is quite similar to the words of Jesus in the New Testament as he prays for his persecutors. Of course, Gatty is not Jesus, and her presumption to be a Christ-figure is undermined by the language in which she speaks, for

Hogg takes the pathos to such a pitch that Gatty cannot be read straight. One senses that Hogg is having fun parodying the style of a sentimental novel.

When Gatty's speech is read against the simple, honest Scots of her father, Daniel Bell, Hogg's criticism of Gatty becomes even clearer. The contrast is similar to the one Hogg creates between the friar and Charlie Scott. Indeed, it is Daniel Bell's long prayer for his daughter (183-5) that has the most dignity and rhetorical force out of any of the speeches in the book:

An' now, O my gracious an' kind Father, dinna tak my bit favourite lamb frae me sae soon...an' if thou wants a prop for ony o' the sheds in the suburbs o' Heaven, I ken whae will stand thee in as good stead, an' whae winna grudge yielding up his life for her, but will willingly lay down his gray hairs in the grave in the place o' thae bonny gouden locks. (184-5)

Daniel's humble offer to give up his life for his daughter's and the unpretentious diction of his Scots dialect gives this prayer a sincerity that Gatty's spiritual language lacks. It is fitting that while Gatty claims spiritual superiority to all around her, the readers never hear her pray, and while Daniel Bell claims spiritual superiority to no one, he gives several humble, eloquent prayers.

Critics also disagree about how to interpret Gatty's resurrection. Richard Jackson reads it as a psychological reaction to the sound of her father's voice praying and cites experiments in galvanism as evidence for reading the event in a non-supernatural way. Jackson also allows that Hogg intended to create some ambiguity surrounding Gatty's resurrection, but, in this case, the emphasis is on a non-supernatural interpretation. In contrast, Mack sees a direct link between Daniel Bell's prayers and Gatty's resurrection: "Gatty's unexpected and disconcerting recovery from the point of death is a divine response to *her* father's faith and prayers [emphasis Mack's]" (135). Mack also

comments, “the possibility of divine intervention is to be taken very seriously in the fictional world of James Hogg” (133). A close look at the text reveals that Mack’s interpretation of the events has credence. What is at stake with this interpretation is a concomitant understanding about how Hogg approaches the supernatural in his fiction. If Hogg explains away the supernatural, he is in the same category as Scott and other novelists who believed that all supernatural events had natural causes. If Hogg allows for ambiguity about the supernatural, he writes what Todorov terms “fantastic” literature but makes no conclusions about the reality of supernatural forces. However, as I suggest, if Hogg juxtaposes supernatural and natural events in the same sphere of reality, then he is writing what I have termed supernatural realism. I argue that *The Three Perils of Woman* is just such an instance of supernatural realism and that Hogg links Daniel Bell’s prayer to Gatty’s resurrection to show the danger of attempting to harness and control supernatural forces—similar to the theme in *The Three Perils of Man*.

One critical observation frequently made about Hogg is that the Enlightenment perspective in his writing is often subtly undermined by the events in the text. In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, for example, most critics believe the Editor’s narrative is Hogg’s subtle criticism of an Enlightenment narrator. In *The Three Perils of Woman*, Gatty’s husband M’Ion represents the scientific Enlightenment perspective. He is a medical student in Edinburgh and stands calm and assured on the certainty of his medical knowledge. While he has extensive theological knowledge, he seems wary of any spiritual perspective that allows for the supernatural. When Gatty first becomes ill—and simultaneously very spiritual—she attempts to draw her family members into religious conversation. Hogg writes that M’Ion “waived it as a study

detrimental to her spirits” (174) and that later “he still waived the subject by acquiescing in all her sentiments; and she found, that when he was disposed to make any remark, he was much more capable of teaching her, than she was of teaching him” (176). So while M’Ion has theological knowledge, he is skeptical of Gatty’s spirituality and sees it only in the context of her hysteria. This extends both to the fervency of Gatty’s beliefs and their content. In one of her final discussions with her husband, Gatty reminds her husband that it is “decreed” that she will die before dawn. He responds, “You are raving, my love...and have mistaken the dreams of a morbid fancy for the revelation of heaven. Let me hear no more of such fantasy.” Gatty asks him in return, “Sure you will not deny that there is still a possibility of a communication between God and man?” And, M’Ion skeptically replies, “Yes I deny it,—positively I deny it...or if there were, what right have you or I to presume on being those favoured individuals, out of so many millions wiser and better than we?” (192). M’Ion’s perspective, revealed in this interchange, is one of strong skepticism about supernatural communication between God and man. He explains Gatty’s conviction that she will die as the result of “morbid fancy” and blames Gatty for letting this “fancy” fester into hysteria.

M’Ion’s perspective is revealed most fully in his response at Gatty’s deathbed. While Gatty has requested that no medicine be given to her, M’Ion secretly gives her a sleeping draught and expects that she will sleep through the time appointed for her death and wake up, still alive, and with a renewed perspective on life. While the family is gathered around Gatty’s deathbed, M’Ion prays for her life to be spared in what the narrator terms “a manner too absolute, and altogether incompatible with human submission” (194). The narrator goes on to explain that all are in deep sorrow except for

M'Ion, who believes his scheme will save Gatty's life: "[M'Ion] never doubted the success of his potion; and perhaps on that ground asked too unqualifiedly of the Almighty, what he believed his own ingenuity had provided for, in a way altogether natural" (194-5). The criticism here is not that M'Ion is asking for God to perform a miracle and save Gatty's life but that his prayer is not a humble request; it is a declaration of what M'Ion believes the case to be. Despite the sleeping draught, Gatty dies, or appears to die, exactly when she says she will. Long after everyone else knows that she is dead and her body is turning stiff and cold, M'Ion insists that she is not dead (197). M'Ion is finally convinced to leave Gatty's body, and Hogg's commentary on his thoughts is telling: "[H]aving no dread on account of his potion, he could discover no *natural* [emphasis Hogg's] cause whatever for his loved lady's hasty dissolution, and he was no believer in prodigies" (198). The emphasis on the word "natural" highlights the limited perspective of M'Ion's scientific Enlightenment viewpoint. Of course, Gatty does return to life as M'Ion predicts, but the way in which she returns is so utterly horrifying that it is a direct blow to M'Ion's scientific confidence. He has no way to account for her soulless but apparently healthful existence—Gatty even gives birth to a son while she is in this coma-like state—and his medical understanding is utterly confounded. This circumstance is one of many critiques Hogg makes against Enlightenment scientists and their purported "knowledge."

What makes the *The Three Perils of Woman* a more sophisticated version of the argument in *The Three Perils of Man* is the way that Hogg uses his narrative voice. Whereas in *The Three Perils of Man*, the narrator works in a simple and reliable manner, relying primarily on the characters' dialogue to tell the story, the narrator in *The Three*

Perils of Woman has a complex presence and is not always reliable. This is, I believe, an early example of Hogg's layered narrative presence, which would reach its fruition in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. In *The Three Perils of Man*, in addition to undermining Gatty's false piety and M'Ion's exclusive reliance on science and medicine, Hogg also undermines the moral didacticism of the narrator. This has the cumulative effect, I argue, of showing the supernatural to be outside the bounds of any controlling scheme: religious, scientific, or otherwise.

When Gatty first enters a death-like state, the narrator comments:

In what state she then was, it will never be in the power of man to decide. The issue turned out so terrible, that the whole matter has always appeared to me as much above human agency as human capacity; if any can comprehend it from a plain narration of the incidents as they succeeded one another, the definition shall be put in their power; but farther I take not on me to decide. (197)

This narrative commentary is particularly interesting, for it directly contradicts the narrator's later remarks. While he claims that the event is "above human agency and capacity" and claims not to impose any explanations, he shortly thereafter proceeds to interpret the events. When Daniel Bell prays over Gatty's body, the narrator comments, "Poor man! He neither knew for what he asked, nor in what manner his prayer was to be answered. Let the issue be a warning to all the human race, cautioning them to bow with humble submission to the awards of the Most High" (199). The narrator's sudden didacticism and interpretation of the events is out of place considering his earlier comments. I believe this is one of many instances in Hogg's fiction of an unreliable narrator. Critics have commented at length—notably, Mack—on Hogg's undermining of his Enlightenment narrator, but, in this case, Hogg undermines his *religiously* didactic narrator by showing him to be contradictory. This is not necessarily to say that the

narrator's interpretation of the events is incorrect, only that his interpretation is questionable because it contradicts his earlier assertion not to interpret the events.

Beyond the narrator's contradictory presence, his attempt to control and understand the events in the story is subverted by the mention of "the power of sympathy," a force that he can neither understand nor control. The narrator first mentions "the power of sympathy" when M'Ion is taking Gatty's pulse immediately after she dies.

Hogg writes:

[I]t so happened, that by a certain power of sympathy which has often been noted to exist between the living and the newly dead, but has never been thoroughly explained, whenever he moved either of his hands there was a palpable muscular motion took place that shook her whole frame. Not adverting in the least to this phenomenon, M'Ion still took it for the nervous shiver of a disturbed sleeper, and maintained his point that she was not dead, but fallen into a deep sleep, or rather a trance. (196)

M'Ion dismisses Gatty's movements as a "nervous shiver" of someone who is still alive, but since he represents the narrow, scientific perspective, his opinion is not to be trusted. Yet "the power of sympathy" is a force not easily incorporated into a standard Christian framework, either; it seems to access an a-Christian and more elemental power structure. The narrator comments that this force exists but "has never been thoroughly explained (196)," and he is not able to offer a satisfactory explanation in the text of Hogg's novel.

The narrator makes it clear that this "power of sympathy" is influential in the horrific development of events surrounding Gatty's resurrection. After Gatty is dead and her mother is preparing her body for burial, M'Ion insists on seeing her body one last time. As he enters the room, Hogg mentions the power of sympathy again: "[S]o mighty was that undefined power of sympathy between his frame and the body of the deceased, that the latter started with a muscular motion so violent that it seemed like one attempting

to rise” (199). The references to “frame” and “body” in this passage cast the event as one that can be explained through natural means, but the fact that the power of sympathy remains “undefined” implies that the narrator is stretching after a pseudo-scientific explanation that is ultimately unsatisfactory. While it is arguably Daniel Bell’s final prayer (199) that fully resurrects Gatty, the mysterious and powerful connection between Gatty and M’Ion cannot be denied as an influence in the event. The narrator perhaps too simplistically states Daniel Bell’s prayer as the cause of the horrific resurrection, ignoring “the power of sympathy.” This is another example of a subtle undermining of Hogg’s narrator. Not only is he contradictory, but the text makes it clear that certain elements leak out of his tightly crafted narrative.

At the end of the story, Hogg has undermined Gatty’s religious didacticism, M’Ion’s Enlightenment skepticism, and his own narrator’s simplistic and moralizing interpretation. The only voice that is honest and reliable is that of Daniel Bell, with his simple and straightforward Scots dialect. On the last page of the novel, Daniel Bell summarizes, “[T]he very weest turning o’ his hand is far aboon a’ our comprehensions...But I hae learned this: That it’s wrang in fo’k to be ower misleard [unmannerly] and importunate in their requests to their Maker” (224). Daniel’s character and dialect give rhetorical force to his conclusion; essentially, he argues that the workings of supernatural forces are beyond the understanding of humans and that our attempts to harness and control them will not end well. While Daniel’s statement seems to align closely with commonly accepted Calvinist doctrine, Hogg’s mention of the “power of sympathy” leaves a question hanging in the air about the ability of any system to completely and systematically understand the supernatural.

In both *The Three Perils of Woman* and *The Three Perils of Man*, the characters who speak Scots are also the characters to whom we should listen to understand the narratives. In both novels, Hogg undermines Enlightenment perspectives, but he also undermines people who use pretentious religious didacticism. Indeed, by placing themselves above the supernatural and seeking to systemize and control it for their own purposes, both groups assume a buffered position and are making the same mistake about the supernatural. The answer, it seems, is to accept the presence of the supernatural but to admit one's own limited abilities to understand and control it—like Charlie Scott and Daniel Bell.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Look for the Cloven Foot”: The Buffered Self in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) has received far more critical attention than any of Hogg's other works. After its initially poor critical reception and subsequent bowdlerization by Victorian editors, the novel faded into obscurity until André Gide's edition (1947) asserted the novel's importance. Gide cited Hogg's sophisticated psychological perspective in the character of Robert Wringhim as one of the primary merits of the work. Since Gide's edition appeared, *Justified Sinner* has continued to rise in prominence. Like Gide, many critics have focused on psychological aspects of the novel. Joel Faflak, for example, looks at the phenomenon of mesmerism, which was popular during Hogg's time (95), and Scott Brewster sees “borderline” psychology in the novel as a metaphor for Hogg's national concerns (80). Other recent criticism has emphasized the textual aspects of the novel, focusing on Hogg's relationship with Blackwood and his interaction with the print culture in Edinburgh.¹² In contrast to these approaches, P. D. Garside asserts, “It should not be forgotten, however, that the root cause of the disturbance is the interpretation of a theological position. . . . [T]here has also been a school of thought which points to an engagement primarily on a theological level” (Introduction, xxiii). With Garside, I also assert that the theology of *Justified Sinner* plays a key role in the development of events

¹² Karen Fang examines how “Hogg's discourse of French Egyptology reconciles orality and print” (163), and Garside looks particularly at how Blackwood's preferences shaped the themes in *Justified Sinner*. Most significantly, Ian Duncan provides an interesting reading of “the authenticating apparatus of documentation and editorial commentary” in Hogg's novel (96).

and should be referenced in any interpretation of the novel. As Crawford Gribben also notes, the theology underlying the novel is essential to its meaning but has been largely underrepresented in Hogg scholarship (11).

Another important level of interpretation is whether to read the events in the novel as supernatural realism—the purposeful juxtaposition of the supernatural alongside the natural—or as symptoms of Robert Wringhim’s disturbed psyche. Many of the events in the novel seem to allow for either reading, and several critics have suggested that it is part of Hogg’s goal to leave this question unanswered. While events in the story are certainly ambiguous, I argue that the clues Hogg provides shift the weight of emphasis towards a supernatural interpretation. This has been well established by previous criticism,¹³ and a supernatural reading is most compatible with the trends in Hogg’s other fiction, which I have examined in the other chapters of this thesis. I begin this chapter with the premise that *Justified Sinner* is the story of an encounter with supernatural evil. Certainly, Hogg shows the psychological effects of that evil, so psychological readings of the novel are not invalid, but they do not satisfactorily establish the source of that evil within the context of the novel.

In offering an interpretation of *Justified Sinner*, one must also consider the complex strands of narration in the novel. *Justified Sinner* is essentially the same story told twice—once from the perspective of an Enlightenment Editor, who claims scientific

¹³ In the introduction to the Stirling/South Carolina research edition, Garside writes, “[A]t one distinct level the rest of the story is interpretable as a supernatural intervention aimed at securing Robert’s damnation” (xxii-xxiii), and Nelson Smith argues convincingly for a supernatural interpretation: there can be little doubt that Hogg does not wish to explain away Gil-Martin’s physical reality. Though he certainly seems a part of Robert and serves later as a visible reminder of his fratricidal guilt, Gil-Martin nevertheless functions as a being in his own right” (155). Additionally, David Groves comments: “Gil-Martin remains a mysterious figure throughout the *Confessions*, but his statements and behaviour suggest that he is a demon” (62).

objectivity and writes in an antiquarian style similar to a narrator from one of Walter Scott's novels, and once from the perspective of Robert Wringhim, the religious radical who is Hogg's protagonist. As critics have also shown, neither perspective is reliable. Hogg undermines the Editor by showing how his controlling, empirical perspective cannot adequately account for the events. But Hogg also undermines Robert Wringhim by hinting at his possible insanity, showing gaps in Robert's knowledge of events, and showing the inconsistency between the Editor's account and Robert's account. The readers cannot trust Robert's perspective either, for he could be crazy, lying, or demonically deceived at any moment.

In this chapter, I will first show that Hogg undermines the Editor and Robert Wringhim for a similar reason: each seeks to impose an order on the world that cannot account for the supernatural. The Editor ascribes to scientific materialism and cannot admit the possibility of supernatural occurrences, so his understanding of the events is undermined. Robert holds to a narrow religious determinism and cannot comprehend real supernatural evil when he encounters it. Robert's "religious determinism" is a systematic understanding of God's will to which Robert claims exclusive access. In each system there is an emphasis on removal of mystery. Then I will argue that the sub-text of Hogg's novel can be found in the characters who see through Robert Wringhim and Gil-Martin's deceit and through the Editor's posturing. It is through these characters that Hogg responds to the folly of both the Editor and Robert Wringhim.

To shape this discussion, I will borrow the term "buffered self" from Charles Taylor; this term provides an important link between Hogg's undermining of the Editor's scientific materialism and Robert's religious determinism. Taylor writes that for the

buffered self, “the possibility exists of taking a distance from, disengaging from everything outside the mind” and that this self “can see itself as invulnerable, as master of the meanings of things for it” (38). For the buffered self, there is a sense of being outside of and above circumstances and able to impose a system on them. This can develop into a world stripped of its mystery and into a systematic, exceptionless accounting for events. Taylor further explains that for buffered selves:

We feel a new freedom in a world shorn of the sacred, and the limits it set for us, to re-order things as seems best. We are not deterred by the older tabus, or supposedly sacred orderings. So we can rationalise the world, expel the mystery from it (because it is all now concentrated in the will of God). (80)

In this passage, Taylor refers specifically to the effects of certain strains of Calvinist theology, but a similar statement might be applied to the way in which the scientific revolution allowed people to impose order on nature. While the scientific materialism and religious determinism in Hogg’s novel are not to be equated with the buffered self or with a disenchanting perspective, they are both made possible for a buffered self.

In *Justified Sinner*, Hogg questions both religious determinism and scientific materialism and in so doing questions the security of the thick emotional boundary of the buffered self. He does so through showing the unreliability of the Editor, the unreliability of Robert Wringhim, and through including characters who question both the Editor and Wringhim. Hogg is not using this book to critique science or the Reformation, per se, but rather to critique a certain small-minded determinism that can be found in each. This small-mindedness can arise from something akin to what Taylor terms the “buffered self.”

The Editor's perspective can be roughly aligned with scientific materialism. Taylor writes, "Partly as a result of the scientific revolution, the cosmos idea faded, and we find ourselves in a universe. This has its own kind of order, that exhibited in exceptionless natural laws" (60). Taylor distinguishes between "cosmos" and "universe" by using "cosmos" for "our forbears' idea of the totality of existence because it contains the sense of ordered whole...in the cosmos the order of things was a humanly meaningful one" (60). In contrast, while the "universe" still consists of a kind of order, those "principles of order are not related to human meaning, at any rate not immediately or evidently" (60). This conception of the universe as a "great clockwork-like order" (61) fits the Editor's orderly manner of understanding and constructing the events in his telling of the story. The inscription on the title page of the book first establishes the Editor's narrative trajectory, similar to the openings in Scott's novels: "With a detail of curious traditionary facts, and other evidence, by the editor" (2). The adjectives "curious" and "traditionary" place the editor at a controlling distance to the events in the story, and the mention of "facts" and "evidence" cast the story as an empirical study.

The Editor begins his version of the story by grounding the events in the context of the Colwan family history, incorporating general facts he has supposedly gleaned from parish registers and history. He then writes that he must look to "tradition" to provide the remainder of the story but carefully establishes the reliability of this tradition by noting that it has been "handed down to the world in unlimited abundance" (3). This initial framing of the story makes it clear that the Editor is concerned with verifiable "facts" in his retelling of the story. Throughout the rest of his version, he seeks to control the events by evaluating their reliability according to an objective and empirical viewpoint.

For example, when Robert's brother George climbs Arthur's seat for an early morning walk, the Editor describes his encounter with nature in distinctly scientific terms:

[H]e beheld, to his astonishment, a bright halo in the cloud of haze, that rose in a semi-circle over his head like a pale rainbow. He was struck motionless at the view of the lovely vision; for it so chanced that he had never seen the same appearance before, though common at early morn. But he soon perceived the cause of the phenomenon, and that it proceeded from the rays of the sun from a pure unclouded morning sky striking upon this dense vapour which refracted them. But the better all the works of nature are understood, the more they will be ever admired. That was a scene that would have entranced the man of science with delight, but which the uninitiated and sordid man would have regarded less than the mole rearing up his hill in silence and in darkness. (29)

In this passage, the Editor exhibits the characteristics of a buffered self who affirms scientific materialism. First, he attempts to strip the occasion of its mystery by explaining the meaning of the phenomenon in purely mechanical, scientific terms. The Editor describes George as initially "struck motionless" with wonder but then adds, "But he soon perceived the cause of the phenomenon." The conjunction "but" suggests a contrast between George's initial acknowledgement of the mystery and beauty of the encounter and his subsequent scientific dissection of it. Understanding the mechanics of nature does not by necessity lead to a loss of wonder, of course, but the wonder involved in admitting a mystery and the wonder at understanding a complex design are different. In the first case, a person's position to the phenomenon in question is beneath it—the mystery is "above" their understanding. In the second case, that person's position is above the phenomenon and presumes a total understanding of it.

Secondly, the Editor uses his scientific control over the event to place himself arrogantly above other humans. He explains that the scene would have "entranced a man of science with delight" but that "the uninitiated and sordid man would have regarded [it]

less than the mole rearing up his hill in silence and darkness.” The Editor presumes a total and exclusive understanding of the event because of his scientific knowledge.

Those who do not have similar scientific knowledge can have no true appreciation of the event.

While the Editor claims to provide an objective account based on oral tradition, it should not be forgotten that he shapes and selects the events in his story for his own purposes. In oral tradition, there is no meta-text. Multiple and often contradictory versions exist together, and the longer the story is told, the more versions are created. I argue that it is the Editor’s shaping of the story that allows for natural explanations for the phenomena. For example, just following George’s demonic vision of his brother on Arthur’s seat, the Editor includes an incidental conversation between George and his friend, Adam Gordon, in which a natural explanation for the event is proffered. Gordon tells George that “if he would go with him to a mountain of his father’s, which he named, in Aberdeenshire, he would show him a giant spirit of the same dimensions, any morning at the rising of the sun, provided he shone on that spot” (34). The Editor’s inclusion of this brief conversation provides for a possibly natural explanation of events and allows him to maintain a narrative control over the supernatural elements in the story.

A few pages later, the Editor does make a deistical nod towards “the controller of Nature.” He writes that “the ways of heaven are altogether inscrutable...It is the controller of Nature alone, that can bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion...[He] can make the most abject of his creatures instrumental in bringing the most hidden truths to light” (40). This description immediately precedes the section in the book in which Mrs. Logan uncovers the mystery behind George’s death: “[S]he had

hopes of having discovered a clue, which, if she could keep hold of the thread, would lead her through darkness to the light of truth” (41). While the Editor calls the ways of heaven “inscrutable,” he still presumes that humans can discover and control hidden truths through pursuing clues and using reason and logic to impose order.

While the Editor attempts to impose his own order and understanding on the events, Hogg constructs the final section of the book to undermine the Editor’s control. In his final commentary on Robert’s memoir, the Editor is unable to understand or interpret the events:

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. Attend to the sequel: which is a thing so extraordinary, so unprecedented, and so far out of the common course of human events, that if there were not hundreds of living witnesses to attest to the truth of it, I would not bid any rational being believe it. (165)

The irony is that according to one of his own scientific criteria, the reliability of eyewitnesses, the Editor is faced with a story that he cannot control or adequately explain by scientific means. The Editor concludes the entire book with a final dismissal of any supernatural events as described in Robert’s memoir:

It is certainly impossible that these scenes could ever have occurred, that he describes as having himself transacted. I think it *may be* possible that he had some hand in the death of his brother, and yet I am disposed greatly to doubt it; and the numerous distorted traditions, &c. which remain of that event, may be attributable to the work having been printed and burnt, and of course the story known to all the printers, with their families and gossips...Were the relation at all consistent with reason, it corresponds so minutely with traditionary facts, that it could scarcely have missed to have been received as authentic; but in this day, and with the present generation, it will not go down, that a man should be daily tempted by the devil, in the semblance of a fellow-creature; and at length lured to self-destruction...In short, we must either conceive him not only the greatest fool, but the greatest wretch, on whom was ever stamped the form of humanity” (174-5).

In this passage, the Editor's references to the reliability of tradition stands in marked contrast to his initial reliance on tradition in the first pages of his narrative, where he wrote that he had no reason to complain because tradition had provided an "unlimited abundance" of information. However, Hogg makes it clear that the Editor is selective about which traditions are valid and which ones are not. The Editor refers to all traditions that disagree with his interpretation as "distorted" and explained by the initial burning of Robert's manuscript and "gossip." The Editor then reveals that the real reason for his rejection of a supernatural explanation is not that Robert's account disagrees with tradition, for the Editor admits that it "corresponds so minutely with traditionary facts." Rather, the reason to dismiss Robert's supernatural account is that it is inconsistent with "reason" and that "in this day, and with the present generation, it will not go down, that a man should be daily tempted by the devil." So the Editor flatly dismisses a supernatural interpretation because it does not align with his conception of "reason" and because he believes his scientific, educated society has evolved beyond the folk belief of an incarnate, supernatural evil. With these concluding comments, the Editor embodies several key characteristics of Taylor's conception of a buffered self, which maintains a safe, controlling distance from the supernatural.

The final irony of this passage is that the Editor is left completely undermined and unable to account satisfactorily for the events or draw any conclusions regarding Robert's memoir. The Editor is clearly a selective and unreliable narrator, and Hogg ends the book by emphasizing that it is because of his narrative selectiveness and limited, buffered perspective that he is unable to comprehend adequately Robert's memoir or the traditions surrounding it.

The second narrative of the story is told from Robert Wringhim's perspective. As the Editor explains, the version printed is based on the manuscript found with Robert's body. At various points in Robert's narrative, Hogg makes it clear that Robert's version is no more reliable than the Editor's. I argue that the two narratives are flawed and unreliable for similar reasons—both writers work from the narrow position of the totally buffered self and are, therefore, unable to comprehend supernatural evil when it faces them. The idea is not only that the universe and all of its parts and events are a part of grand order but also that this order can be systematically and totally understood and controlled by humans. Whether this argument is made from a perspective of scientific materialism or from religious determinism, the end result is a world stripped of its mystery, in which humans place themselves outside of and above the created order.

Robert's understanding of Providence is marked by a perfectly logical framework, in which one's salvation can be known by other humans. He writes, for example, that his father, Reverend Wringhim "knew the elect as it were by instinct, and could have told you of all those in his own, and some neighbouring parishes, who were born within the boundaries of the covenant of promise, and who were not" (70). The idea that it is possible for one human to know with certainty the state of someone else's salvation is indicative of Robert's completely buffered self. The state of someone's salvation can be ordered, controlled, and measured by other humans. Robert's Calvinism is, of course, a grotesque version of actual Calvinism doctrine, but it is Hogg's depiction of what can happen when certain tenets of Calvinism are isolated and taken to their logical extension. The final product is something like determinism. This attitude is further demonstrated in Reverend Wringhim's declaration of Robert's salvation. He tells Robert that "he had

wrestled with God, as the patriarch of old had done, not for a night, but for days and years, and that in bitterness and anguish of spirit, on my [Robert's] account; but that *he* had at last prevailed" (79). Reverend Wringhim's prevailing over God places himself as the primary locus of authority at this juncture of the story, and it is this perspective in Robert that provides an entry point for supernatural evil.

Robert's absorption of this perspective is evident in his response to the assurance of salvation. He writes: "An exaltation of spirit lifted me, as it were, far above the earth, and the sinful creatures crawling on its surface; and I deemed myself as an eagle among the children of men, soaring on high, and looking down with pity and contempt on the grovelling creatures below" (80). This passage provides an interesting parallel to the Editor's earlier comments, in which he asserts that his scientific knowledge places him above the "uninitiated and sordid man" (29). The presumed control and understanding over the world that each perspective offers leads to both the Editor and Robert arrogantly placing themselves over the rest of humanity who do not share the perspective.

Notably, it is at this juncture in Robert's life that Gil-Martin appears and attaches himself to Robert. As previous critics have frequently noted, Gil-Martin drops various hints throughout the narrative that he is actually the devil. Whether he has a physical presence is ambiguous, but that he is an external form of supernatural evil is less so. In both Robert's and the Editor's account, there are multiple eyewitnesses to the presence of Robert's "friend" (88), and Hogg makes it clear that this "friend" is directly linked to Robert's perverse theology.

Upon his first meeting with Gil-Martin, Robert comments: "I had been diverted from the worship of God, by attending to the quibbles and dogmas of this singular and

unaccountable being, who seemed to have more knowledge and information than all the persons I had ever known put together” (82). Robert’s observation alludes to the perversity of Gil-Martin’s agenda, and it is through Robert’s fascination with a perfectly logical theology that Gil-Martin will distract him from true worship of God. Gil-Martin uses the emphasis on orderly, systematic theology often associated with Calvinism as a basis for Robert’s perverse conclusions.

The chilling implications of Robert’s new theology are soon evident. He writes that his understanding of God’s predestination of humans “made the economy of the Christian world appear to me as an absolute contradiction. How much more wise would it be, thought I, to begin and cut sinners off with the sword! for till that is effected, the saints can never inherit the earth in peace” (85). As disturbing as this implication is, it is a logical extension of his perverse and narrow theological assumptions.

Because of the narrow scope of his system, Robert cannot face a truly supernatural evil when he encounters it—the evil springs from and attaches itself to his theology, and it is through theological argument that Gil-Martin convinces Robert to murder. Robert’s first victim is Mr. Blanchard, a popular preacher in Edinburgh. Gil-Martin calmly tells Robert to kill Mr. Blanchard and smoothly argues him out of his hesitation. Robert writes, “[W]hen I saw and was convinced, that here was an individual who was doing more detriment to the church of Christ on earth, than tens of thousands of warriors were capable of doing, was it not my duty to cut him off, and save the elect?” (92). Gil-Martin’s logic prevails, and Robert murders Mr. Blanchard.

This is the first of many and increasingly horrible crimes that Robert commits, including the murder of his own brother. The more that Robert surrenders to Gil-

Martin's logic, the less control he has over his own actions. Concomitant to his descent into evil is a fracturing of self and an increasingly limited perception. Shortly before he murders his brother, Robert writes that he was "seized with a strange distemper," and explains:

[It] occasioned a confusion in all my words and ideas that utterly astounded my friends, who all declared, that instead of being deranged in my intellect, they had never heard my conversation manifest so much energy or sublimity of conception; but for all that, over the singular delusion that I was two persons, my reasoning faculties had no power. The most perverse part of it was, that I rarely conceived *myself* to be any of the two persons. (106)

It is unclear whether to read this as an instance of demonic interference by Gil-Martin or a symptom of insanity, but either way, Hogg makes the trade-off evident: for a "sublimity of conception," Robert loses a coherent sense of personal identity and is led to commit acts of violence and evil. The irony is that in asserting his unique superiority over other humans, Robert loses a sense of individuality.

Hogg further illustrates Robert's loss of identity and perception in a subsequent passage, which is also a hint at his narrative unreliability. When Robert murders his brother George, the Editor explains that the eyewitnesses to the murder watched a man (presumably Gil-Martin) corner George while another (identified as Robert) stabs him in the back. When Robert relates this account, he casts it as an honorable fight in which he openly challenges his brother and wins through fair combat (118). After relating the encounter, he adds:

I will not deny, that my own immediate impressions of this affair in some degree differed from this statement. But this is precisely as my illustrious friend described it to me afterwards, and I can rely implicitly on his information, as he was at that time a looker-on, and my senses all in a state of agitation, and he could have no motive for saying what was not the positive truth. (118)

Robert gives authority to another, external authority over his own senses, and in this passage, readers see a hint of how Gil-Martin skews and distorts Robert's perception of reality. Because Robert has total assurance that he is one of the elect and is immune to the spiritual deception, he cannot conceive of Gil-Martin's supernatural evil.

Robert further reflects on his incomplete consciousness towards the end of his narrative, when Gil-Martin's control is at its apex. He writes:

I was a being incomprehensible to myself. Either I had a second self, who transacted business in my likeness, or else my body was at times possessed by a spirit over which it had no controul, and of whose actions my own soul was wholly unconscious. This was an anomaly not to be accounted for by any philosophy of mine...to be in a state of consciousness and unconsciousness, at the same time, in the same body and same spirit, was impossible. (125)

Robert's "philosophy" is that he is one of the "elect" and is totally immune to demonic interference, and this assumption renders him unable to comprehend his own evil actions. Because he cannot understand them, he cannot counter them, and he is left prey to Gil-Martin's devices. While Robert's perspective of the events is far distant from the Editor's, both are susceptible to the same folly. Because both buffer themselves into a world that is stripped of the mysterious, neither one can comprehend true supernatural evil when he encounters it. Hogg subtly undermines the narrative of each writer by revealing how each is an incomplete and narrow understanding.

Many critics comment on the fact that both of Hogg's narrators are unreliable¹⁴ and that Hogg leaves them locked in ambiguity, never asserting a coherent story against their versions. While Hogg does not present a consistent and reliable narrative, he does include several characters who penetrate the deceptions and posturing of Gil-Martin,

¹⁴ Most notably, Douglas Mack.

Robert, and the Editor. Through the subtext in *Justified Sinner*, Hogg further undermines the buffers of both the Editor and Robert by showing that the characters who can comprehend deception and evil are those who humbly allow for unsystematic mystery.

The first character who is a part of Hogg's subtext is John Barnet. John Barnet is the caretaker of Reverend Wringhim's church. Although Robert's parents and teachers are impressed by his early intellectual prowess, John Barnet sees Robert for the arrogant and deceitful person that he is: "I'm feared he turn out to be a conceited gowk [fool]" (68). John Barnet sees through Robert's deception and he does so, significantly, in Scots dialect. As I have shown in the other chapters of this thesis, Hogg often privileges the folk perspective through his strategic use of Scots dialect; many times, the sincere, humble characters who see through deceit are also those who speak in Scots. As John Barnet is one of the few characters in *Justified Sinner* who speaks in Scots, his voice is set in relief against the anglicized and often pretentious speech of other characters, like the Wringhims.

In contrast to the Wringhims' narrow, buffered ordering of the world, John Barnet lives by a standard that cannot be so legalistically parsed. In all of his encounters with the Wringhims, Hogg shows John Barnet to be the clear victor. Robert writes that John Barnet "[told] me I was a selfish and conceited blackguard, who made great pretences towards religious devotion to cloak a disposition tainted with deceit, and that it would not much astonish him if I brought myself to the gallows" (70). Barnet's comment is penetrating for two reasons. First, Hogg has made it clear to the readers that Robert is deceitful and manipulative, and John Barnet seems to be the only character to be aware of this. Secondly, Barnet's comment about Robert bringing himself to the gallows is

prophetic, for Robert is found hung at the end of the story. For both of these reasons, Barnet's comment is a part of a subtext that penetrates the deception of Robert's narrative as presented to the readers.

In response to Barnet's conclusion, Robert frames the following rebuke: "Who made thee a judge of the actions or dispositions of the Almighty's creatures—thou who art a worm, and no man in his sight?...Hath he not made one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour, as in the case with myself and thee?" (70). Robert's response is indicative of his narrow perspective as one of God's "elect." He assumes to know not only his own salvation status but also Barnet's.

Barnet's reply, however, undermines and dismantles Robert's rebuke: "There he goes! sickan sublime and ridiculous sophistry I never heard come out of another mouth but ane... You made to honour and me to dishonour! Dirty bow-kail [cabbage-like] thing that thou be'st" (70). The combination of Barnet's understanding of Robert's deceit and his straightforward Scots undermine Robert within the text. Barnet is the only character who can identify Robert's speech accurately as "sophistry."

Hogg uses Barnet's interaction with Reverend Wringhim to further develop his sub-textual undermining of Robert's narrative. Robert reports to his father what Barnet has said, and Wringhim confronts Barnet, first asking him, "Are you thankful in your heart, John, for such temporal mercies as these?" Barnet responds, "Aw doubt we're a' ower little thankfu', sir, baith for temporal an' speeritual mercies; but it isna aye the maist thankfu' heart that maks the greatest fraze wi' the tongue" (71). Barnet's response is an implicit criticism of the Wringhims' religious pedantry, and Hogg's casting it in Scots dialect contrasts Barnet's humble gratitude with the Wringhims' proud oratorical

displays. Barnet's attitude in these passages defies both the narrow, systematic Calvinism of the Wringhims' and the arrogance that comes with it.

Hogg's criticism of the Wringhims' arrogance is made particularly pointed in the final conversation between John Barnet and Reverend Wringhim. John Barnet states that Wringhim's character is "a Scripture character" and explains to him, "'Ye are the just Pharisee, sir, that gaed up wi' the poor publican to pray in the Temple; an' ye're acting the very same pairt at this time, an' saying i' your heart, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, an' in nae way like this poor misbelieving unregenerate sinner, John Barnet'" (72). The irony of this passage is that Wringhim responds by agreeing with Barnet and missing the very obvious point that, in the New Testament, Jesus rebukes the Pharisee for his pride. The irony is perhaps not evident to Robert, the writer of the memoir, but Hogg makes it evident to his readers that Barnet sees the truth about the Wringhims and has a superior understanding of the Bible.

The next character who is a part of Hogg's sub-text is Reverend Blanchard. At Gil-Martin's prompting, Robert will eventually murder Blanchard, but before he does so, Hogg privies his readers to an interesting conversation between Blanchard and Robert. After Robert and Gil-Martin meet Blanchard, Blanchard comments:

He, indeed, pretends great strictness of orthodoxy regarding some of the points of doctrine embraced by the reformed church; but you do not seem to perceive, that both you and he are carrying these points to a dangerous extremity. Religion is a sublime and glorious thing, the bond of society on earth, and the connector of humanity with the Divine nature; but there is nothing so dangerous to man as the wresting of any of its principles, or forcing them beyond their due bounds: this is of all others the readiest way to destruction. Neither is there any thing so easily done. There is not an error into which a man can fall, which he may not press Scripture into his service as proof of the probity of, and though your boasted theologian shunned the full discussion of the subject before me, while you pressed it, I can easily see that both you and he are carrying your ideas of absolute

predestination, and its concomitant appendages, to an extent that overthrows all religion and revelation together; or, at least, jumbles them into a chaos, out of which human capacity can never select what is good. Believe me, Mr. Robert, the less you associate with that illustrious stranger the better, for it appears to me that your creed and his carries damnation on the very front of it.' (91)

This passage is perhaps the most concise and insightful criticism of Robert that appears in the entire book. Several facets of it are interesting, and Hogg uses Blanchard's words to provide a direct response to the arrogance and narrowness of Robert's perspective. First, Blanchard comments on the "dangerous extremity" of Gil-Martin's theology, explaining that one can use Scripture to support any sort of behavior. Gil-Martin and Robert are able to do this because they have separated themselves from all Christians and have placed their understanding above everyone else's. Robert assumes that his status as one of the "elect" provides him with immunity from theological error.

Blanchard also makes an important observation about the "sublime" nature of religion. The sublime is not something that can be systemically captured or defined—it is above humans and, in some aspects, beyond their comprehension. Yet, as Blanchard explains, it is an important part of religious experience and one that Robert misses when he attempts to force theology "beyond its due bounds" and into total explanation.

Finally, Blanchard makes clear the consequences of Robert's manipulation of theology. He claims that it is "the readiest way to destruction" and that overthrowing religion and revelation will lead to a state "out of which human capacity can never select what is good." This, indeed, is that state in which Robert finds himself in his narrative. Because he gives Gil-Martin license to manipulate theology and scripture "out of its due bounds," he finds himself committing crimes and no longer able to distinguish between good and evil.

John Barnet and Reverend Blanchard both interact directly with Robert, and it is through Hogg's inclusion of their comments that we see a sub-text emerge in which the precise error of Robert's theology is revealed. Namely, Robert narrows his theology to the point that he places himself above the sublime, stripping the world of the mysterious. The concomitant attitude is one of arrogance, in which Robert also assumes his separation from and superiority over other humans. In the Editor's narrative, Hogg presents an interesting metaphor to describe this perspective. He refers to Lady Dalcastle's [Robert's mother] "wire-drawn degrees of faith, hope, and repentance" (9). The phrase "wire-drawn" is important, for it is particularly evocative of the mindset Hogg creates in the characters of Lady Dalcastle, Reverend Wringhim, and Robert Wringhim throughout his novel. "Wire drawing" is a metalworking process in which a wire is pulled through a hole slightly smaller than the wire. The end result of the process is to shrink the diameter of the wire, and wires can be pulled through gradually smaller holes almost indefinitely, shaving off progressively more metal. Robert Wringhim draws his theology through holes, creating thinner and thinner strands of thought; eventually, he creates such fine "wires" that he "shaves off" everyone but himself and Gil-Martin. Hogg uses this grotesque portrayal of Robert's theology to highlight the subjective ordering that is possible for a completely buffered self.

In a third significant piece to his sub-text, Hogg includes a folk tale about the town of Auchtermuchty. Towards the end of Robert's narrative, his servant Penpunt tells him a story that has direct application to Robert's own life. While the Auchtermuchty episode is not in direct response to Robert's theology, as Barnet's and Blanchard's

comments are, the story functions in the same way—to provide a coherent response to the folly of Robert’s doctrine.

In the story, the residents of the town of Auchtermuchty are overcome with intense spiritual fervor, reading the Bible constantly, praying, and speaking to each other using biblical language. Hogg writes that the “deils in the farrest nooks o’ hell were alarmed” (137). In a counterattack, the devil appears one day disguised as a minister and preaches a profound sermon, in which he informs the entire town that they are subject to eternal damnation. Rather than responding with fear, the people of Auchtermuchty “were in perfect raptures with the preacher...and spoke of his sermon with admiration” (138). The only one aware that the devil is present is Robin Ruthven. Hogg explains that Robin was a “cunning man, an’ had rather mae wits than his ain, for he had been in the land o’ the fairies when he was young, an’ a’ kinds o’ spirits were visible to his een, an’ their language was as familiar to him as his ain mother tongue” (137). Because he has this special kind of knowledge, Robin is able to overhear a conversation of crows, in which they discuss the devil’s planned attack and how the people of Auchtermuchty will be their prey. Robin attempts to warn the people of Auchtermuchty, but they “laughed him to scorn, and kicked him out of their assemblies, as a one who spoke evil of dignities; and they called him a warlock, an’ a daft body, to think to mak language out o’ the crouping o’ crows” (139). At the preacher’s next meeting, the townspeople still will not listen to Robin, so he approaches the preacher and simply lifts up his gown, revealing a pair of cloven feet, which is a clear sign of the devil. After this discovery, the devil leaves, and it is only due to Robin Ruthven’s intervention that the town is saved.

Several aspects of this story are relevant to the idea of the buffered self that I have outlined in this chapter. First, Robin is aware of the devil's deceit because he has spent time with the fairies and has access to a different kind of knowledge; he has not separated or "buffered" himself from the supernatural world. The other people neither have access to this knowledge, nor, significantly do they think that this kind of knowledge is possible. Hogg writes that they mocked Robin for thinking he can hear the crows speak. But, like the Scots voices elsewhere in Hogg's fiction, these marginal, largely discounted voices seem to hold an interpretive key to the story. Because the people of Auchtermuchty are completely buffered from most things supernatural or mysterious, their only categories for understanding Robin are to see him as crazy or as a warlock. Actually, Robin has access to different kind of knowledge that allows him to defeat the devil.

Another interesting feature of the Auchtermuchty episode is the way that Hogg contrasts Robin's narrative style with the devil's. The "eloquent and impressive preacher of Christianity" is contrasted with "honest Robin Ruthven," and where the preacher offers "a true, sterling, gospel sermon" that is "striking, sublime, and awful in the extreme," Robin tells a "plain and unsophisticated tale of the black corbies" (138-9). This contrast further highlights Hogg's implication that the voice we should listen to is not the masterful voice of rhetorical potency that claims a total understanding of events but the often-marginalized voice that humbly accepts the presence of the supernatural.

Robert's reaction to the story explains how the inset tale connects to his own experience. He writes that the story made him "sick at heart," explaining that it is not "because I thought my illustrious friend was the devil, or that I took a fool's idle tale as a counterbalance to divine revelation, that had assured me of my justification in the sight of

God before the existence of time” (140) but that the tale reminded him of his own fallen state. This reaction aligns Robert with the people of Auchtermuchty and makes the tale a parable with direct application to Robert’s own situation. Just as the people of Auchtermuchty dismiss the possibility of their supernatural deception, Robert dismisses the possibility of his own. Just as in the story, the folk voices in Robert’s life are speaking the truth. Instead of learning from the tale and confronting Gil-Martin for what he really is, Robert continues to accept his manipulative rhetoric. Because Robert is a totally buffered self, he is unequipped to comprehend supernatural evil and dismisses the parable holding the truth about his own life as “a fool’s idle tale.”

The final piece in Hogg’s subtext occurs in the second part of the Editor’s narrative. The Editor begins this final section of the novel by quoting a letter he received from James Hogg. The letter describes James Hogg’s digging up the Robert’s corpse, about a hundred years after Robert’s suicide. Hogg writes that he found the corpse in an almost perfect state of preservation but that when one of the men tried to pull on the rope around its neck, “the old enchantment of the devil remained,—it would not break” (168). The Hogg who writes the letter clearly believes in the possibility of supernatural evil and ascribes the unnatural preservation of the body to it. After quoting the letter, the Editor asks a friend about both the letter and the suicide, and the friend responds, “For my part I never doubted the thing, having been told that there has been a deal of talking about it in the Forest for some time past. But, God knows! Hogg has imposed as ingenious lies on the public ere now” (169). The Editor’s including this description of Hogg allows him to treat both Hogg and Robert as objects of curiosity. He refers to them as “the Shepherd and the Scots mummy” (169). One can sense the author Hogg teasing his readers here,

but the subtle irony only adds to the undermining of the Editor's serious-minded archaeological expedition. There is a joke being told that the Editor misses.

When the Editor meets the character Hogg, however, Hogg is suspicious and evasive and seems perfectly aware of the Editor's intentions. The Editor asks Hogg to guide him to Robert's grave, but Hogg simply replies, "I hae mair ado than I can manage the day, foreby ganging to houk up hunder-year-auld banes" (170). Hogg, the character, sees through the Editor's purposes and will have no part in them. The implication is not so much that Hogg condemns the profanity of grave-digging, for he had participated in the previous unearthing of Robert's corpse, but that he sees the Editor's venture will lead to a limited kind of empirical knowledge. In the letter, Hogg allows for the possibility of supernatural evil in the suicide, but he knows that, for the Editor, digging up the corpse will simply be examining "hunder-year-auld banes." By including himself as a character who sees through and thwarts the Editor, Hogg makes it clear that he is undermining the Editor's perspective. To what extent we can identify Hogg with the character he creates of himself is uncertain, but the character Hogg seems to opaquely and smilingly undercut the Editor's agenda.

When he wrote *Justified Sinner*, Hogg certainly did not have in mind Taylor's conception of the buffered self. However, Taylor's terminology provides a concise way of synthesizing Hogg's simultaneous criticism of religious determinism and scientific materialism in *Justified Sinner*. Because each perspective involves a narrow, systematic, and perfectly logical way of ordering the world that excludes the sacred and the mysterious, each perspective also leads to dangerous kind of arrogance. In *Justified Sinner*, Hogg undermines both the Editor's narrative and Robert's narrative by showing

how each is an incomplete understanding of the world. In contrast, Hogg presents subtextual characters who identify the folly of each narrator's perspective and assert the importance of humility in the face of the sacred.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

In the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, which were fictional dialogues written by Hogg and his friends and published regularly in *Blackwood's*, Hogg's character "The Ettrick Shepherd" has the following dialogue with one of his friends, North:

North: Do you think, my dear James, that there is less religion now than of old in Scotland?

Shepherd: I really canna say, sir. At times, I think there is even less sunshine; at least, that a' that intensely bricht kind o' heavenly licht that used to wauken me in the mornings when a boy, by dancing on my face, is extinct, or withdrawn to anither planet; and yet reason serves to convince me that the sun canna be muckle the waur o' ha'in been shining these forty last years o' his life, and that the faut maun lie in the pupil o' the iris o' my twa auld hazy een.... Auld folk, I remember in my youth, were aye complainin o' some great loss—some total taking away—some dim eclipse....then I lauched to hear them, but now I could amaist weep... (Wilson 198-199)

This passage highlights that the lack of "vision" that the Shepherd identifies in the perspectives of his Edinburgh audiences. The Shepherd explains that the dissipation of "heavenly light" is not because it is going extinct but because the ability to see it is fading. The result is a "great loss." The Shepherd's words in this passage poignantly identify the loss of vision that Hogg identifies in his poem "Superstition," against which he seeks to create an open space for opening one's eyes to the "heavenly light."

Rather than simply deconstructing the various narrow visions to which his Enlightenment readers subscribed, Hogg also at times suggests the appropriate orientation towards the supernatural. He hints at it in the successive passage in the *Noctes*:

North: I fear Christianity, James, is too often taught merely as a system of morals.

Shepherd: That's the root o' the evil, sir, where there is evil in Scotland. Such ministers deaden, by their plain, practical preaching, the sublimest aspects of the soul—and thus is the Bible in the poor man's house often 'shorn of its beams.' There is mair sleepin in kirks noo than of old—though the sermons are shorter—and the private worship throughout a' the parish insensibly loses its unction aneath a cauldribe moral preacher. Many fountains are shut up in men's hearts that used to flow perennially to the touch' fear. It's a salutary state aye to feel ane's sel, when left to ane's sel, an helpless sinner. How pride hardens a' the heart! and how humility saftens it! till life a meadow it is owerrun wi' thousands o' bonny wee modest flowers—flock succeeding flock, and aye some visible, peepin ever through the winter snaws! (Wilson 199-200)

It is not coincidental that Hogg lets his Shepherd, in his earthy Scots dialect, identify the weakened spiritual lives of the Scottish people and suggest the appropriate response. He identifies “pride” as the source of a dull, moralistic Christianity—that exemplified by a buffered self—that is so insipid that Christians cannot even stay awake during sermons. In response, the Shepherd explains that Christians should be softened by “humility.” This humility is most clearly exhibited in Hogg's between-the-lines characters in his fiction, which are typically simple, rural people who often speak in Scots dialect. Almost invariably, these characters maintain a perspective of humility towards the supernatural. While they acknowledge its pervasive existence, they admit that it is above them and is not to be systematized and controlled.

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