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The Figure of the Devil:  
Demonic Representation in Scottish Literature,  
1785-1999  
with special reference to selected works  
by five major authors  
in the Scottish tradition:  
Burns, Hogg, Stevenson, Spark and Morgan

Gillian Welsh Reid

Submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy  
at the University of Glasgow

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Illustration: Medina, J.B., "The Temptation" in John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Miles Flesher, 1688). Extracted from Ernest W Sullivan II's essay, "Illustration as Interpretation: *Paradise Lost* from 1688 to 1807" in *Milton's Legacy in the Arts* edited by Albert C. Labriola and E. Sichi Jr (University Park; London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988) p.69

**The Figure of the Devil: Demonic Representation in Scottish Literature,  
1785 – 1999, with special reference to works by five major authors in the  
Scottish tradition: Burns, Hogg, Stevenson, Spark and Morgan.**

**Gillian Welsh Reid**

*To the memory of my Gran and Aunt Jean  
with love*

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## Introduction: The Devil in Modern Scottish Literature

The Devil is a complex creature. He shifts shape through time and his appearance alters in different contexts. His very existence is a question. There is no denying the existence of evil. It is a concept recognised universally whether 'demonised' into absolute 'otherness' or recognised as part of what makes us human. The figure of the Devil with which we are most familiar however, has emerged from the personification of evil in Christian iconography. There are and will continue to be many attempted explanations of the Devil's existence historically, theologically and psychologically. None of these provide any simple or indeed consistent explanations to help illuminate the meaning of the phenomenon. Theological debate over the nature of evil seems unending. As Ian Johnston points out it is:

an external logical puzzle endemic to monotheistic religions: we all know that evil exists in the world; if we believe there is only one God, the creator of everything, then He must have created that evil. How can we reconcile this with a belief that God is partly evil or that the entire business is a mystery which cannot be accounted for rationally.<sup>1</sup>

This statement offers a basic definition of the theological contention concerning the figure of the Devil. The explanations of why evil, and subsequently the Devil are allowed to exist are extensive. The Devil's existence as an ontological entity is based on continual speculation. Although inseparable from their historical, social, cultural, or religious contexts, it seems that only the Arts and literature provide a realm that substantiates diabolical existence, but even this is enveloped in an air of obscurity.

The Devil is an old character in literature. Perhaps he is as old as literature itself. He is encountered in the story of the paradisiacal sojourn of our first ancestors; and from that day on, he has appeared unfailingly, in various forms and with various functions in all the literature in all the world.<sup>2</sup>

Maximilian Rudwin's study *The Devil in Legend and Literature* provides an extensive commentary on the evolution of the figure of the Devil from the theological speculation derived from mythology, to popular modern conceptions of the Devil. Despite Satan's status as a Christian icon, he is an amalgamation of other divinity's

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<sup>1</sup> Johnston, Ian, *Lecture on Milton's Paradise Lost*, <http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/Eng200/milton.html> (downloaded on 27/01/03)

<sup>2</sup> Rudwin, Maximilian, *The Devil in Legend and Literature* (La Salle, The Open Court Publishing Co, 1959) p.274

gods, as well as characters belonging to mythology and folklore. His metamorphoses into any animalistic form stems from the literal interpretations early Christians made of the Bible. The figurative representation of the Devil has been subjected to endless variations and transmutations throughout the centuries. With the passing of time the Devil has assumed many forms, from the 'compound of all the contortions and distortions known to exist among living things on earth'<sup>3</sup> to a quasi-humanistic form and the present perception of the Fiend as a gallant and gentlemanly figure. This is best explained in the words of Rudwin. His study touches on practically all the forms of the Devil that have been encountered. For example:

The Devil inherited his bull-horns and bull-foot from Dionysus, his horse-foot from Loki and his goat-foot from Pan. He borrowed his snaky *coiffure* from the Erinyes and his bat wings from the Lemures...The Devil also appears to us in flaming red colours...portrayed in popular imagination as a sort of eternal salamander. He was described already in the New Testament as a fiery fiend...the Devil [has] now added charm to his exterior, already conferred upon him by Milton, a corresponding dignity of bearing and nobility of sentiment. Marie Corelli, in her novel *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), describes the Devil as of extraordinary physical beauty, fascination of manner, perfect health, and splendid intellectually. In fact, he is represented as 'a perfect impersonation of perfect man hood.'<sup>4</sup>

Rudwin's extensive and conclusive work provides an in-depth look at the continually changing representation of the figure of the Devil.

It is undeniable that the influence of Milton's *Paradise Lost*<sup>5</sup> on the evolution of the figure of the Devil was seminal in literary history. This central, epic poem is responsible for the inception of the image of the Devil as a:

well-bred, cultivated man of the world...a tall handsome figure...[who can] boast of an abundant means and a handsome wardrobe. His brilliant powers of conversation, his adroit flattery, courteous gallantry, and elegant, though wayward, flights of imagination, soon render him the delight of the company in every *salon*.<sup>6</sup>

The representation of the Devil before the emergence of *Paradise Lost* was an amalgam of all the grotesque animalistic features designed to instil terror in the

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<sup>3</sup> Rudwin, *op cit.*, p.36

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp 45-52

<sup>5</sup> Milton, John, *Paradise Lost* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996)

<sup>6</sup> Rudwin, *op cit.*, p.52

viewer. However with Milton's Satan, demonic representation takes on a new dimension. He becomes worldly, seductive, identifiably human, deceptively sympathetic - more of a human mask than an animal intrusion.

There is no way of knowing how Milton envisioned the physical appearance of his Satan. In the course of *Paradise Lost*, Satan's form changes from that of a newly fallen angel, still of a bright and attractive hue, to a devilish representation and finally that of a serpent. Milton's Satan is impressive from the onset of the poem. In the opening book of *Paradise Lost* we are witness to the Arch Fiend's movement and eloquent speeches. These are directed at his fallen legions in order to rouse them after falling for nine days from Heaven to Chaos.

Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool  
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames,  
Driven backward, slope their pointing spires, and, rolled  
In billows, leave i' the midst a horrid vale.  
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight  
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,  
That felt unusual weight...

(I. 221-227)

Despite very little physical detail about Satan's appearance, Milton portrays him as a grand and powerful figure, who is elegant in his movements as he leaves the burning lake. He is not grotesque or animalistic although he is winged. He has an ethereal air and is presented with a divine splendour. This is emphasised further as a similar picture is painted when Satan prepares to speak to his followers.

...The broad circumference  
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb  
Through optic the Tuscan artist views  
At evening, from the top of Fesole  
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,  
Rivers, or mountains, in her spotty globe.  
His spear, to equal which the tallest pine  
Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast  
Of some great admiral were but a wand,  
He walked with, to support uneasy steps  
Over the burning marl, not like the steps  
On Heaven's azure; and the torrid clime  
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire.  
Nathless he so endured till on the beach  
Of the inflamed sea he stood and called  
His legions....

(I.286-301)

The Arch Fiend is presented in gigantic terms. His heroic dimensions are alluded to by Milton's comparison of his stature to the moon. This creates an immense and impressive figure of the Devil, which is emphasised further by Milton's choice of imagery. Milton's 'Tuscan artist' who views the world from the top of Fesole with his 'optic glass' is Galileo and his telescope: a significantly grand figure with whom to compare an icon of evil. Again Milton emphasises Satan's stature as he reports his careful movements over the red-hot lava. He does this with remarkable endurance till he reaches the shore. Satan relies only on his spear which, according to Milton, dwarfs even the tallest Norwegian pine. This massive and powerfully depicted figure becomes even more admirable when he addresses his legions.

Satan's first speech demonstrates his immense passion and energy as he rouses his troops:

That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,  
And the fierce contention brought along  
Innumerable force of Spirits armed  
That durst dislike his reign, and me, preferring,  
His utmost power with adverse power opposed  
Indubious battle on the plains of Heaven  
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost – the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never shall his wrath or might  
Exort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
With suppliant knee, and deify his power  
Who, from the terror of this arm, so late  
Doubted his empire – that were low indeed;  
This downfall; since by fate the strength of Gods  
And this empyreal substance cannot fail;  
Since, through experience of the great event  
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,  
We may with more successful hope resolve  
To wage by force or guile eternal war  
Irreconcilable, to out grand Foe,  
Who now triumphs, and in excess of joy  
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven. (1.99-124)

Milton portrays Satan as a skilled rhetorician. Satan's speech denotes a sense of bravery, courage and splendour despite his defeat. 'All is not lost', he tells his followers. They may have fallen from Heaven, but the Arch Fiend and his legions will

not lie in submission. Satan exudes a sense of pride and defiance in his claims that he will never submit to God's glory, but will strive to cause eternal war as a means of revenge. This is a courageous speech for one so newly defeated. Fundamentally, it is a plan for revenge after a sore defeat, but the eloquence and rhetoric with which it is expressed conveys Satan as a powerful, passionate and charismatic leader.

Satan's early speeches in Books I and II are provocative, courageous and even instil a sense of sympathy in the reader. Putting aside the theological context of *Paradise Lost*, Satan, as a character, is standing opposed to and seeking revenge from a force that he perceives to be a tyranny. Milton's approach to the depiction of the characters of Satan and his legions, and God and the Angels, has created a dichotomy in his poetical representation. As Johnston highlights: 'the most astonishingly powerful poetry consistently emerge[s] from the mouths of those people defying God: Satan, various rebel angels, Adam and Eve. By contrast, the poetry describing God, the angels, and the heavenly host is consistently uninspired, flat, Parnassian.'<sup>7</sup> A comparison of Satan's speeches with those delivered by God, reveals a striking difference. Milton's God is presented as a 'harsh egoist'.<sup>8</sup> For example, when the reader first encounters God at the beginning of Book III, he is informing Jesus of how man will fall by the temptation of the Devil, and it is no-one's fault but their own:

For Man will hearken to his glozing lies,  
And easily transgress the sole command,  
Sole pledge of his obedience: so will fall  
He and his faithless progeny. Whose fault?  
Whose but his own? Ingrate. He had me  
All he could have; I made him and right,  
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

(III.93-99)

Compared to Satan's speeches cited above, God does not portray the same sense of valour, or indeed enthusiasm. Satan is presented as a skilled rhetorician who is valiant and brave in his defiance, conjuring up some admirable sentiment on behalf of the reader. God is portrayed as a harsh character who is satisfied even, perhaps, resentful and disappointed by the knowledge that man will be conquered by the Devil, instead of passionate about protecting his Heavenly creations. The poetic delineation used by

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<sup>7</sup> Johnston, *op cit.*, (27/01/03)

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, (27/01/03)

Milton in God's speeches lacks the rhetoric and passionate drive associated with Satan. It is doubtful that this was Milton's intended representation of the relationship between God and Satan. Satan is presented as an admirable and heroic character for much of the text. Satan's soliloquy on mount Niphates (IV.32-113) creates a complex character with psychological depth and conflicting emotions similar to 'the most memorable tragic protagonists and heroes of the Renaissance stage.'<sup>9</sup>

Milton presents Satan as a character of heroic dimensions and dramatic appeal. This is made apparent by the strength of his emotions, behaviour and rhetoric as opposed to any extensive physical description. However, what should not be overlooked is the prolific number of illustrations which emerged with, and after, the publication of *Paradise Lost*. It is crucial to note that 'Milton's avoidance of verbal delineation has thrown the problem [of depicting Satan] to his illustrators, and the artists are generally a stubbornly self-sufficient and pragmatic lot.'<sup>10</sup> Hence artistic impressions of Milton's vague descriptions of Satan play a significant part in the evolution of the visual representation of the Devil. *Milton's Legacy in the Arts*<sup>11</sup> is a collection of essays which provides an extensive insight into the range of artistic impressions provoked by Milton's poetic delineation of his Arch Fiend. The illustrations reproduced in this collection clearly demonstrate the evolution of the demonic figure from the horned anthropomorphic Devil to an anatomically correct and attractive male specimen.

As we have noted, Satan's form changes dramatically during the course of Milton's poem, from angel to devil to serpent. An accurate depiction of the evolution of the figure of the Devil based on artistic impressions demands a consistent study. Illustrations I and II both depict the scene, 'Satan Summons His Legions'.<sup>12</sup> The first anonymous depiction is closer to the descriptions provided by Milton in *Paradise*

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<sup>9</sup> Loewenstein, David, *Milton: Paradise Lost* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.64

<sup>10</sup> Schoenberg, Estella, 'Picturing Satan for the 1688 *Paradise Lost*' in *Milton's Legacy in the Arts* edited by Albert C. Labriola and Edward Sichi, Jr (Pennsylvania University State Press, 1988) p. 1

<sup>11</sup> Labriola, Albert & Sichi Jr, Edward *Milton's Legacy in the Arts* (University Park; London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988)

<sup>12</sup> Illustration I: Anon., 'Satan Summons His Legions,' from John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Milles Fleisher, 1688), extracted from Ernest W Sullivan II's essay, 'Illustration as Interpretation: *Paradise Lost* from 1688 to 1807 in *Milton's Legacy in the Arts* p.63

Illustration II: W Blake, 'Satan Summons His Legions' extracted from the same source. p.82



Illustration I: Anon., 'Satan Summons His Legions'



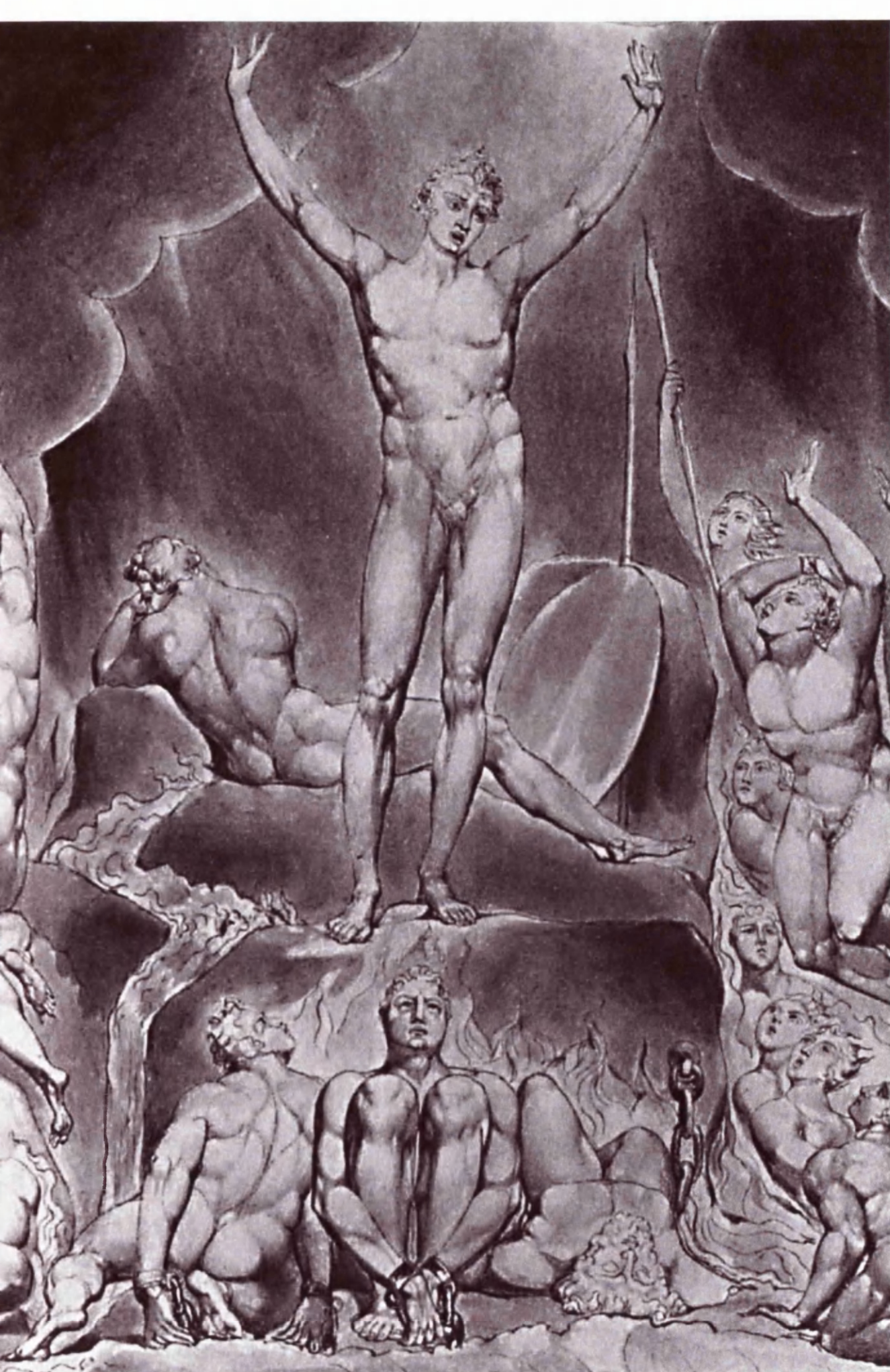


Illustration II: W Blake, 'Satan Summons His Legions'

*Lost*. We see Satan's fallen legions, 'Angel forms, who lay entranced' and a colossal and slightly grotesque Satan holding 'his spear, to equal which the tallest pine... were but a wand.' The central figure is instantly recognisable as Satan. However, Blake's impression moves away from the dark infernal representation of the earlier depiction. Satan has become a fully human figure and has lost his spear. He is presented as an attractive figure, as are his legions, and Chaos has become less sinister. Blake's Satan may display a sorrowful visage, but his stance exudes a sense of pride, confidence and grace. There is no doubt that the poetic representation and evolving visual depiction of Milton's Arch Fiend has made a significant impact on the popular conception of Satan in modern literature.

The Devil is a constantly recurring figure in the Scottish Literary canon and yet he has received relatively little literary critical commentary. As Douglas Percy Bliss in one of the few sustained studies of the subject points out:

It is not to be wondered at that Scotland should prove so fruitful a field to the student of demonology. It is only natural that the bleak, harsh North with its long winters and flickering summers, its dreary rains and mists over shores and isles, its wild mountains, impassable moors and 'dowdie' dales, should be haunted by grimmer superstitions, peopled by phantoms more malevolent than the richer, more fertile plains of the South. The old kindly folk of Southern folklore are seldom met with in the North. Fell Goblins, gruesome Brownies, Spunkies that mean hurt not mischief, Kelpies that lurk by the ford to seize the unwary passenger, Banshees, May Moulachs and others haunt the treeless hills and lochsides. These are not like the Elves and Fairies of gentler climes a race apart, distinct from the Devils of Hell and from God and His angels, and interfering in the affairs of mortal men more to tease them than destroy. In Scotland they are definitely allied to the legions of Satan. Satan is their lord and Elfland is but one of his realms.<sup>13</sup>

Almost certainly, every bookshop in Scotland, or tourist attraction gift shop, offers for sale copies of Lily Seafield's *Scottish Ghosts*<sup>14</sup> and *Scottish Witches and Wizards*<sup>15</sup> or a 'quick' guide to *Supernatural Scotland*<sup>16</sup> by Harry Campbell - to mention but a few. Scotland boasts a rich and ancient folkloric culture which thrived upon tales of the supernatural: fairies, giants, banshees, selkies, kelpies and of course the Devil. Yet the

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<sup>13</sup> Bliss, Douglas Percy, *The Devil in Scotland Being Four Great Scottish Stories of Diablerie* (London: MacLehose, 1934) p.2

<sup>14</sup> Seafield, Lily, *Scottish Ghosts* (Lanark: Geddes&Grosset, 2003)

<sup>15</sup> Seafield, Lily, *Scottish Witches and Wizards* (Lanark: Geddes&Grosset, 2002)

<sup>16</sup> Campbell, Harry, *Supernatural Scotland* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1999)

Devil in Scotland is a fickle being. He is reported to haunt old ruins and churches, a virile individual who lures men and women, an expert on the fiddle and at playing the bagpipes, and a polymorphic genius. His aim seems to be more to ridicule than condemn. His presence has haunted the North and South alike, from Scottish folktale and ballads, as well as the works of Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson (to name only a few), through to the works of contemporary Scottish writers such as Muriel Spark and Edwin Morgan.

Yet the Scottish fascination with the Devil does not only stem from popular mythology and folklore. Scotland has a dark and complex religious history which fundamentally revolves around Catholicism, Protestantism and particularly Calvinism. Calvinism not only instilled fear in many Scots who believed they were predestined to burn in agony for an eternity in the fires of Hell, but was also associated with Devil worship. Witches were believed to be the Devil's followers on Earth, hence, 'in Scotland the witch-fires [began] to blaze after the triumph of John Knox and the Reformation.'<sup>17</sup> Witchcraft became an offence punishable by death and it was believed that no one, regardless of age, sex or social status was exempt from the lure of the Devil's temptation. This is a turbulent history which is represented in much of Scotland's literature such as Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*<sup>18</sup>, *Witchwood*<sup>19</sup> by John Buchan and many other texts.

The realm of the supernatural and the figure of the Devil has had a significant impact on Scotland's history and culture, yet the representation of the Devil throughout Scottish literature is an area that remains relatively unexplored. It is my aim to investigate the changing representation of the Devil in Scottish literature with particular reference to several of its major writers and specific works. My chosen texts provide a wide range of diablerie from the late eighteenth century through to contemporary treatments of the figure of the Devil. Using these texts as the basis of my thesis, it is my intention to analyse how, over the centuries, the treatment of the Devil has changed and what continuities there are in that treatment.

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<sup>17</sup> Bliss, *op cit.*, p.4

<sup>18</sup> Scott, Sir Walter, *The Heart of Midlothian* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994)

<sup>19</sup> Buchan, John, *Witchwood* (London, Edinburgh, New York, Toronto; Paris: Nelson and Sons, 1929)

In the era of Burns, Britain was possessed by rumours of the bloodshed during the French Revolution and the hysterical fear of the massacres instigated by the Reign of Terror. This was a situation that might have influenced the British peasantry and led to the same dire consequences. The ‘Satanic year’ of 1789 left a resonance in the imaginations of poets and writers. Its circumstances, combined with Scotland’s devilish and superstitious popular mythology and folklore, meant that the Scottish air was full of demons. Burns’s poems ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ (1790)<sup>20</sup> and ‘Address to the Deil’ (1785)<sup>21</sup> reflect such intense feelings, as well as the popular mythology of the Devil and the legends and superstitions which people have created. Burns also comments on the nature of Calvinism in ‘Holy Willie’s Prayer’ (1785).<sup>22</sup> Calvinism in Scotland has many Devilish connotations as Burns demonstrates and James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824)<sup>23</sup> stresses. From the work of Burns to Hogg, we are witness to a changing representation of the figure of the Devil. His grotesque bodily form in Burns has evolved into a similarly grotesque Scottish diabolism in Hogg’s *Confessions*, but one which is contained within and concealed behind a gentlemanly and seductive visage.

Robert Wringham, and Hogg’s Gil-Martin present to the reader respectively the demonic amongst humanity and the ontological entity that is the Devil. Robert Louis Stevenson’s ‘diabolos’, James Durie, in *The Master of Ballantrae* (1888)<sup>24</sup> is a combination of Wringham and Gil-Martin. He is human and fallible, but he also manifests himself as a well-bred and cultivated man of the world. Yet what is most significant in the evolution of the demonic is James’s status of ‘hero as villain’. There is no doubt that he does evil things compulsively - he is a truly evil man - but his gentlemanly stature has created an irresistible and attractive antagonist who stands apart from the rest of the characters in the novel.

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<sup>20</sup> Burns, Robert, *The Works of Robert Burns* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1994) pp1-6

<sup>21</sup> Burns, *op cit.*, pp 71-75

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp 86-89

<sup>23</sup> Hogg, James, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1999)

<sup>24</sup> Stevenson, RL., *The Master of Ballantrae: A Winter's Tale* (London: The Reader's Digest Association Ltd, 1995)

Muriel Spark appears to follow in Stevenson's footsteps as far as the protagonist of her novel *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960)<sup>25</sup> is concerned. Dougal Douglas combines the traits of Gil-Martin and James with an innate absurdity which recalls the ridicule associated with the older Devil of Scottish folklore. This is an element not found in the character of either James or Gil-Martin. Dougal's character is surrounded by moral ambiguity as to the actual reasons behind his presence in Peckham. Contrary to the demonic representation in the work of Burns, Hogg and Stevenson, Spark's Catholic perspective creates a theological subtext in the narrative which depicts Dougal as an agent of God, despite his demonic status.

Christopher MacLachlan's article, 'Muriel Spark and Gothic'<sup>26</sup> offers a significant insight into Spark's manipulation of her religious beliefs and the peculiar aspects of Scottish popular mythology and folklore which she employs. MacLachlan explains that '[t]he actual effect of the dogmatic foundation to Spark's fiction is not simple reassurance of the reader but rather a reminder of the mystery of meaning in her novels. Gothic has a similar effect and the comments of critics may help us to explain Spark.'<sup>27</sup> In the context of my research, I believe that this is a revelation that cannot be confined to the 'mystery of meaning in Spark's novels'.<sup>28</sup> Central to the works of Burns, Hogg, Stevenson, Spark and Morgan is a thread of ambiguity which MacLachlan's claims may not fully explain, but might help us to see more clearly. MacLachlan's article is an extensive study structured around the views of various critics of the Gothic in literature such as Punter, Modelski, Aguirre et al. They provide definitions and descriptions of the concepts of 'paranoiac fiction', the notion of the barbaric, the nature of taboo, the 'numinous', and being haunted by the Other. These various aspects of MacLachlan's research strongly suggest ways in which we might consider the depiction of the demonic in the works of Burns, Hogg, Stevenson, Spark and Morgan.

Edwin Morgan's *Demon* (1999) presents an evolutionary escalation in the representation of the demonic figure in Scottish literature. Morgan's work generally

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<sup>25</sup> Spark, Muriel, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1999)

<sup>26</sup> MacLachlan, Christopher, 'Muriel Spark and Gothic' in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* edited by Susanne Hagemann (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 1996)

<sup>27</sup> MacLachlan, *op cit.*, p. 126

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 126

lacks the traits of the traditional 'diabolos' and the theological subtext familiar to Burns, Hogg, Stevenson and Spark. But *Demon* combines Morgan's Glaswegian outlook with an older and more mythological sense of devilishness. His demons recall Rudwin's summary:

The dragon is a frequent diabolical figure in medieval literature. The basis for the conception of the Devil as a dragon is in the Book of Revelation (xii. 3, 7, 9). The Devil appears as a dragon in Michelet's story 'Madeleine Bavent.' In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), the devil Apollyon is a winged dragon covered with scales, and belching fire and smoke. The Devil appears in the form of a dragon in the pictorial representations of the combat between St. Michael and the leader of the rebel angels by Raphael in the Louvre.<sup>29</sup>

Morgan may not rigidly follow Scottish folklore or orthodox Christian belief, but *Demon* shows that the Devil – or at least something distinctively demonic - is still a 'living' recognisable spirit in contemporary Scottish literature.

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<sup>29</sup> Rudwin, *op cit.*, p.42

## Robert Burns's Devil

Robert Burns is one of Scotland's national heroes. He is a Scottish icon who has an established worldwide reputation as a 'heaven-taught ploughman', 'poet of the people' and 'a hopeless romantic' and 'womaniser'. His fame is on a par with the controversy that surrounds his life and works. Burns was not 'heaven-taught' (in Henry Mackenzie's phrase): he was not even an autodidact. As a child he was tutored by John Murdoch who introduced him to writers of the English canon such as Shenstone, Gay and Prior. It is significant to note however, that he did acquaint himself with the works of Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, thus 'Burns in a sense had to "unlearn" this anglicised education in order to rediscover authentic Scottish tradition.'<sup>1</sup> Yet, Burns's poetry is open to multiple and often contradictory interpretations that have cast continual doubts on his actual religious beliefs and social position. 'There is pride and integrity about his own statements regarding his humble origins; but also, frequently, an assertion of social sophistication upheld on the terms of the very aristocratic ideals he often claims to despise.'<sup>2</sup> Such controversy should be side-stepped in the context of this study however, and a focus concentrated on his poetic achievement with particular reference to his fascination with the figure of the Devil, and the influence of Scottish legends and superstition upon his work.

Burns's widely read and scrutinised correspondence provides a detailed insight into the major influences in his life and his poetic achievement. It seems that his humble roots and upbringing, his extensive knowledge of Scottish and English literary traditions, and a fascination with Milton's *Paradise Lost* - particularly the figure of Satan - prove crucial to understanding the ambivalent religiosity and innate supernaturalism which permeate his works. There is a famous letter which Burns sent to Dr Moore describing his earliest influences:

I owed much to an old maid of my mother's, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity and superstition. – She had I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts... [This] had so lasting an

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<sup>1</sup> Gifford, D et al., 'Robert Burns' in *Scottish Literature in English and Scots* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002) pp 147-148

<sup>2</sup> Gifford, *op cit.*, p.148

effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look out in suspicious places, and though nobody can be more sceptical in these matters than I, yet it often takes an effort of Philosophy to shake off idle terrors...<sup>3</sup>

The letter reveals how this old woman made an undeniable impression on him with her folktales and ballads. There is no doubt that this influence made a significant impact on Burns when such poems as ‘Tam o’ Shanter’, ‘Halloween’<sup>4</sup> and ‘Address to the Deil’ are considered. It is also crucial to note that:

[t]he rural Ayrshire into which Burns was born might be described as a modified peasant society: it was rurally based and dominated by agriculture; its people were relatively homogeneous and shared a body of knowledge, mostly oral; it was a society in many respects characterised by a preference for the old ways, for what had always been, the ‘tried and true’. This society often provided the background and informing principle for Burns’ writing; and the oral artistry found in such a society shaped the form, content, style and process of much of his work.<sup>5</sup>

Burns was writing for a local audience. His poetry, such as those works mentioned above, contain sights and landmarks of social significance to his readers, but more importantly these were also associated with local legend and folklore. The oral balladry that ‘Tam o’ Shanter’, for example, attempts to preserve, focuses on these particular aspects as well as utilising devices characteristically associated with the Scottish oral tradition. ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ and ‘Address to the Deil’ both describe customs, beliefs and superstitions which were familiar in Burns’s community. Tam, on his journey home, is haunted by images which were fashioned by accepted local belief and tales of folklore. This is confirmed by the letter Burns sent to Captain Francis Grose<sup>6</sup> which contains a summary of his knowledge of local ‘witch stories’ upon which he based ‘Tam o’ Shanter’. These superstitions are established by his wife’s warnings in the opening of the poem. Kate informs Tam:

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<sup>3</sup> Ferguson, J De Lancey & Roy, G Ross (eds), *The Letters of Robert Burns*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 1: 106, no.125

<sup>4</sup> Burns, *op cit.*, pp 18-25

<sup>5</sup> Brown, Mary Ellen, *Burns and Tradition* (London: MacMillan, 1984) p.2

<sup>6</sup> Ferguson, J De Lancey *op cit.*, 2: 29-31, no. 401



... that late or soon,  
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;  
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,  
By *Alloway's* auld haunted Kirk. (29-32)

Contrary to Kate's prophesy, Tam barely escapes with his life, and trusty Meg loses her tail to the witches who had been cavorting with the Devil in Alloway's haunted kirk. On his drunken journey home, Tam rides in the forest where he sees, or imagines, the places where various local legends have taken place:

By this time he was cross the ford,  
Whare, in the snaw, the chapman smoor'd;  
And past the birks and meikle stane,  
Whare drunken *Charlie* brak's neck-bane;  
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,  
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;  
And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
Whare *Mungo's* mither hang'd hersel -  
(89-96)

This reference to local belief and superstition exemplifies Burns's identification with his roots and humble upbringing. However, it is his presentation of the figure of the Devil which proves most significant for our study. Tam's encounter with Satan and the demonic representation in Burns's 'Address to a Deil' exemplify the dichotomies which are endemic to the popular conception of the Devil in Scottish legend, superstition and literature.

As we have seen in the introduction, the Devil in Scotland is a complex but dynamic figure. He is a long-established Christian icon who has consequently made a significant impact in the world of literature. Milton's presentation of the Arch Fiend in *Paradise Lost* created a valiant figure who was admired by Burns and his contemporaries alike as a 'symbol of rebellion against unreasonable authority.'<sup>7</sup> Yet despite this undeniable admiration provoked by the splendour with which Milton creates his Satan, the figure of the Devil takes on further diverse personae that have been culturally and religiously contextualised by the people of Scotland. With the establishment of the religious tyranny of Calvinism, the Devil was very much feared by many of the ordinary Scottish people. As Calvinism swept the country, those orthodox believers were terrified by the concepts of 'the elect' and 'predestination'.

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<sup>7</sup> Bentman, Raymond, *Robert Burns* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987) p.45

The majority vehemently believed that they were condemned before birth to spend an eternity in Hell after death. Contrary to this, is the figure of the Devil who is evoked by superstition and folklore. The Devil in this context, is an entertainer. There is still an associated element of terror, but this representation of Satan tends to be either admired for his courage or ridiculed for his absurdity. The poems ‘Tam o’ Shanter’, ‘Address to the Deil’ and ‘Holy Willie’s Prayer’<sup>8</sup> expertly convey the multifaceted nature of Scotland’s, and Burns’s Devil.

The representation of the demonic and the figure of the Devil in ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ is familiar from Scottish legend and superstition. Kate’s warning and Tam’s drunken ride through the woods have set a humorous but sinister scene. Kate’s prophecy has instilled a sense of terror which leads to Tam’s encounter with the Devil, despite the comic undertones of the poem’s narrative. The Devil is presented as a grotesque figure, ‘in the shape o’ beast; /A towzie tyke, black, grim and large’. This description is typical of the popular conception of the Devil’s form as animalistic in Scottish folklore and superstition. Yet this apparently terrifying figure is introduced on familiar terms as ‘Auld Nick’, who willingly provides the music for his witches and warlocks to dance to. Burns depicts a fascinating scene with the Devil as an entertainer, typically playing the bagpipes. ‘Auld Nick’ is presented as a sexual being who, like Tam, finds Nannie’s dancing and scantily-clad figure very appealing. Burns also highlights the popular conception of Devil worship as taking place in the open air, often in church grounds with members of the parish congregating at the traditional witching hour of midnight to perform some kind of Satanic ritual. This is a scene which is familiar to later works such as John Buchan’s *Witchwood* where the parish minister, David Sempill is witness to highly sexual and frenzied satanic rites practised in the woods at midnight.

The draped altar was hidden by figures – human or infernal – moving round it in a slow dance. Beyond this circle sat another who played on some instrument... as he watched the dance he saw that the figures were indeed human, men and women both – the women half-naked, but the men with strange headpieces like animals. What he had taken for demons from the Pit were masked mortals – one with the snout of a pig, one with a goat’s horns, and the piper a gaping black hound... As they passed, the alter was for a moment uncovered, and he saw that food and drink were set on it for some infernal sacrament... The dance was slow

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<sup>8</sup> Burns, *op cit.*, pp 86-89

and curiously arranged, for each woman was held close from behind by her partner. And they danced widdershins, against the sun. To one accustomed to the open movement of country jigs and reels the thing seemed the uttermost evil - the grinning masks, the white tranced female faces, the obscene postures, above all that witch-music as horrid as a moan of terror.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the undeniable similarities between Burns and Buchan's representation of the covenant of Devil worship in Scotland, Tam's experience proves to be slightly more light-hearted and clearly less ominous. However there is a sense of ambivalence created by the tension between the comic aspect of the poem and its underlying sinister atmosphere. 'Auld Nick', despite the sense of familiarity that surrounds his figure, is still cunningly deceptive. The frenzied dancing of the witches and Tam's involuntary cry 'weel done Cutty Sark!' result from the drive and the passion of the Devil's piping. Music is the Devil's allure. Tam finds himself involuntarily crying out under its power, just as David Sempill finds himself 'in a dream and under the spell of the piping'.<sup>10</sup>

In 'Tam o' Shanter', Burns establishes one particular aspect of Scotland's Devilish obsession. 'Address to the Deil' is an evocative poem in which Burns comments on 'popular mythology about the Devil; the prevailing legends and strange relationship he holds with the peasantry.'<sup>11</sup> The opening stanza establishes a sense of familiarity with the figure of the Devil, and highlights the popular conception of Satan's reliance on multiple guises. Burns addresses him as 'O Thou! Whatever title suit thee-/ Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick or C'lootie'. This is a trait which is familiar to the devils and demons who haunt later characters in Scottish literature such as Gil-Martin, James Durie and Dougal Douglas. Burns acknowledges Satan's power and infamous reputation: 'Great is thy pow'r, an' great thy fame;/ Far ken'd an' noted is thy name'. In the following stanza Burns expands on this statement by establishing in which contexts Satan's infamy lies:

Whyles, ranging like a roaring lion,  
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin;  
Whyles, on the strong-wind'd Tempest flyin',  
Tirlan the *kirks*;  
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin,  
Unseen thou lurks. (19-24)

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<sup>9</sup> Buchan, *op cit.*, p.133

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p.196

<sup>11</sup> Gifford, *op cit.*, p.154

As Raymond Bentman explains: ‘the first line is a straightforward biblical description of the Devil (1 Peter 5); the third line refers to the common superstition that Satan rides the storms; and the fifth and sixth lines are psychological, accepting the doctrine of Original Sin, that the Devil lurks “unseen” in human bosoms.’<sup>12</sup> Despite the humorous tone of ‘Address to the Deil,’ Burns has created a complex poem by voicing the various diverse beliefs and superstitions that surround the figure of the Devil.

Burns describes the Devil’s position in the realm of folklore as his narrator recalls various demonic tales and superstitions. These stories have been passed down from generation to generation by means of Scotland’s oral tradition:

I’ve heard my rev’rend *Graunie* say,  
In lanely glens ye like to stray;  
Or where auld, ruin’d castles, gray,  
    Nod to the moon,  
Ye fright the nightly wand’rer’s way  
    Wi’ eldritch croon.

(25-30)

This stanza presents a grotesque kind of diabolism which Scottish folklore associates with the figure of Satan. A picture is painted here of the Devil as a wanderer who haunts old ruins, and his cries to the moon put the fear of death into passers-by. The Devil’s ‘eldritch croon’ suggests a supernaturalism akin to the realm of Scotland’s brownies, spunkies, banshees, wraiths and so on. This is continued in the following stanzas, particularly when the narrator begins to recall his own experiences of the Devil. An irrational fear has been instilled in him by his grandmother’s stories. These would typically be set on a dark, dreich night with some kind of storm brewing, much like the setting for Tam’s journey home. Hence on this particular occasion, as the darkness sets in on a stormy winter night, his imagination is set racing by the thought of these tales:

Ae dreary, windy winter night,  
The stars shot down wi’ sklentan light,  
Wi’ you, *mysel*, I gat a fright  
    Ayont the lough;  
Ye, like a *rash-buss*, stood in sight,  
Wi’ wavin’ sough.

(37-42)

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<sup>12</sup> Bentman, *op cit.*, pp 46-47

Not only do these stanzas depict the legends and superstitions that have been fashioned by the Scottish people and their customs and folklore, but they also highlight the absurdity which surrounds them. For example, as the narrator ventures into the night to confront the Devil with his cudgel that in his 'neive did shake', he comes across a drake who happens to be causing all the commotion. However, the narrator denies the laws of common sense when he immediately assumes that the drake is the Devil in disguise:

When wi' an eldritch, stoor *quaick, quaick*,  
Amang the springs,  
Awa ye squatter'd like a *drake*,  
On whistling wings.

(45-48)

This is continued as the Devil is blamed for various mishaps that have taken place, such as the soured butter in the kirk, the travellers who wander into danger and are drowned or frozen to death, and the untimely accidental death of a drunkard in the subsequent stanzas. There is no doubt that these particularly absurd depictions are reductive of Satan's mighty and terrifying mien. This is emphasised by the peasantry's lack of common sense when trying to explain the true cause of certain mishaps and tragic events through ridiculous demonic tales. Burns's depiction clearly mocks the Devil and his close relationship with the less educated lower classes. This reductive idiom does not reject the sinister, demonic aspect of the Devil, but locates it in a human, social context. 'Address to the Deil' demonstrates simultaneously Burns's acceptance and fascination with Satan's varying role.

In the ensuing stanzas Burns goes on to consider the biblical tales of Satan. 'Address to the Deil' does not contain a complex theological subtext. Burns merely provides a commentary on Satan's infamous intervention in the Genesis story and his role as instigator in the tale of Job. The account of the Fall of Man maybe biblical in its source, but Burns's fascination with Milton's Satan suggests that his summary of the events in Eden maybe more akin to those found in *Paradise Lost*. The figure of the Devil is certainly central to Burns's portrayal:

Then you, ye auld, snick-drawing dog!  
 Ye cam to Paradise incog,  
 An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,  
                                     (Black be your fa'!)  
 An' gied the infant warld a shog,  
                                     'Maist ruin'd a'.

(91-96)

Despite the narrator's reprimand and recrimination that he "Maist ruin'd a'", there is still a sense of joking familiarity, almost camaraderie between the two. The narrator goes on to ask the Devil:

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz,  
 Wi' reeket duds, an' reestet gizz,  
 Ye did present your smoutie phiz  
                                     'Mang better folk,  
 An' sklented on the *man* of Uzz  
                                     Your spitefu' joke?

(97-102)

Satan's spiteful joke aimed at Job and his fortune, resulted in the death of Job's children, the ruin of his land and crops, the destruction of his livestock through freak accidents and Job himself being stricken down by leprosy. Yet these dire events, provoked by the interference of the Devil, are discussed as if in a jovial 'trip down memory lane' type of conversation that is sparked off by the question 'D'ye mind that day...?' The narrator goes on to remind Satan in an almost boastful rant of:

... how ye gat him i' your thrall,  
 An' brak him out o' house an' hal'  
 While scabs an' botches did him gall,  
                                     Wi' bitter claw,  
 An' lows'd his ill-tongu'd wicked scawl'  
                                     Was warst ava?

(103-108)

Despite the narrator's jovial familiarity when depicting his actions, Satan's extremely powerful position and relentless cruelty are clearly established. This particular section of the poem demonstrates the Christian perception of the figure of the Devil, which contrary to his status in the realm of Scottish folklore, is darkly sinister.

It is crucial to remember that the Devil in this context is nothing more than a character - a fictional representation. Burns himself confirms this when he claims that Satan was his 'favourite hero'.<sup>13</sup> Yet Burns's attitude towards the figure of the Devil, particularly in the context of this poem, remains ambivalent. Burns's utilisation of multiple voices or personae confuses this issue further. Hence a 'true representation' of Burns's theological views, or indeed his social position, cannot be deduced from his narrator's beliefs and opinions. What can be clearly established, however, is the claim that the figure of the Devil resides, and is substantiated, in the world of the arts and literature.

An' now, auld *Cloots*, I ken ye're thinkian,  
A certain *Bardie's* rantin', drinkin',  
Some luckless hour will send him linking  
                    To your black pit;  
But faith! He'll turn a corner jinkan,  
                    An' cheat you yet.

(115-120)

The narrator continues to address the Devil in the same jocular tone that is familiar to the rest of the poem. However, this stanza seems to offer multiple interpretations. The narrator appears to confirm the claims made above. It is not clear at this stage (nor has it been throughout the poem) whether it is a persona created by Burns that is talking, or indeed Burns himself. If we assume that the first-person singular is a persona, as we have done throughout our commentary on this poem, then it becomes clear that the 'bardie's rantin' and ravin'' will inevitably result in the same tragic consequences as the traveller and drunkard before him. However, these events, and indeed the reference to biblical tales, are confined to the world of superstition and literature. These, in turn, are contained within the limits of Burns's poetic fiction; thus the narrator (and subsequently Burns), as the creator of the text, can indeed outwit the Devil.

Bentman offers a different but equally significant perspective when he claims that this particular stanza 'denies the Calvinist doctrine of predestination because Burns has control over his own destiny and his own hope for salvation. But it also accepts the idea of the Devil as a part of human psychology, as a motive in

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<sup>13</sup> Crawford, Thomas *Burns: A Study of the Poems and Songs* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965) p. 218

behaviour.’ The poem does touch on the Devil’s psychological manipulation of the superstitious peasant, as well as his effect on the religious mind who believes that Satan, ‘in the human bosom pryin’, / Unseen thou lurks.’ Bentman also takes this opportunity to highlight Burns’s discontent with the doctrine of Calvin, as the poet promises to outsmart Satan’s damning reach. Whether we decide the poem is conveyed through a narrator or spoken literally from Burns’s own personal point of view, it evidently addresses the perennial internal conflict between the world of reason and the realm of the supernatural:

The subtle alternation between probable and imaginative events establishes the point of view of the poem. We cannot be sure whether the Devil interferes in our lives or whether we imagine him. And the poet has maintained an ironic, teasing distance, satirising credulity at one moment, accepting popular superstitions at another.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the long-standing relationship between Satan and the peasantry, the infiltration of Calvinism into Scottish society marked a distinct change in the perception of the Devil. This epoch in Scotland’s history is persistently reflected in the literary canon. In Iain Crichton Smith’s *Consider the Lilies*,<sup>15</sup> Mrs Scott’s life has been dominated by the narrowness of this religion. In her memory the reader is taken back to the time of her mother’s death, who, as she becomes elderly was inconsolable<sup>16</sup> and prone to hallucinations that she is already in Hell’s fire burning. Consequently she tries to drown herself in the local loch.<sup>17</sup> Mrs Scott exemplifies how the orthodox followers of Calvinism frowned upon any display of emotion, dancing, singing, story telling, playing games and so on.<sup>18</sup> Crichton Smith’s poem ‘Old Woman’ (‘Your thorned back’),<sup>19</sup> is about his mother, who was subjected to this type of upbringing. This piece aptly summarises the effects of the rigidities of orthodox Calvinism upon its followers. Amongst others, Burns and James Hogg also comment on the rigours of Calvinism. However their condemnation is approached from a different perspective.

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<sup>14</sup> Bentman., *op cit*, p.47

<sup>15</sup> Smith, Iain Crichton, *Consider the Lilies* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998)

<sup>16</sup> Smith *op cit.*, p.14

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p.78

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p.14

<sup>19</sup> Smith, Iain Crichton *Iain Crichton Smith: Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1985) p.18



'Holy Willie's Prayer' by Burns, and Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* provide comment on those who perceived themselves to be part of God's elect and hence predestined, regardless of their actions while on Earth, to spend an eternity in the glory of Heaven. Burns's Holy Willie is one such character. Burns's poem is a concise but effective dramatic monologue in which Holy Willie unwittingly condemns himself from his own mouth. 'Holy Willie's Prayer' is cleverly constructed. The poem has been deliberately structured to express simultaneously Holy Willie's warped theological perspective of life and death, and Burns's abhorrence at Calvin's doctrine. The opening stanza clearly establishes this:

O THOU that in the heavens dost dwell!  
Wha, as it pleases best thysel,  
Sends ane to heaven and ten to h-ll,  
                                  A' for thy glory!  
An no' for onie gude or ill  
                                  They've done before Thee. -

(1-6)

There is a distinct sense of Burns's contempt in this stanza, towards the absurdity of those who believe their Earthly actions to be irrelevant in the eyes of God. However, Willie, with an arrogant exuberance, firmly believes himself to be one of the chosen few and an unerring example to the religious community:

Yet I am here, a chosen sample,  
To shew thy grace is great and ample.  
I'm here, a pillar o' thy temple  
                                  Strong as a rock,  
A guide, a buckler and example  
                                  To a' thy flock.

(25-30)

Yet as the subsequent stanzas reveal, Willie's prayer is full of nothing but contradictions as he condemns others for the acts he commits in excess.

Crichton Smith's poem, 'Old Woman' ('Your thorned back') clearly establishes the particular aspects of humanity upon which followers of Calvinism frowned. For example, the old lady in this poem (undoubtedly Crichton Smith's mother) does not tolerate any display of beauty as she 'stamp[s] the rising daffodil', and in her youth, contained her flowing blond locks in a grey headscarf. She worked

hard all her life, but much to her regret and sincere disapproval, her 'grained hands dandled full and sinful cradles.' Her hands are literally grained from her relentless hard work, but it is the implication that they are stained by the birth of her children which is significant. There is no doubt that this is a reference to Original Sin, but more importantly, in her eyes and God's, any display of sexual contact, pleasure, or lust is strictly forbidden. Initially Willie seems to be a proud expositor of these particular restraints, as he informs God:

O L—d, thou kens what zeal I bear,  
When drinkers drink and swearers swear,  
And singin' there and dancin' here  
                    Wi' great an' sma';  
For I am keepet by thy fear,  
                    Free frae them a'. - ]

(31-36)

Clearly he perceives himself to be an outstanding and unerring moral example to the community. Yet Willie vehemently participates in the illicit behaviour he claims to be free of, and more.

He confesses his sins to God, telling him about his temptations and the acts of lust he pursued with Meg, as well as his attempts to seduce 'Leezie's lass'. However he dismisses these acts as insignificant, blaming the fact that he was drunk on that particular Friday. It also becomes evident that he is entirely ignorant of his dishonest and hypocritical behaviour, and that his Calvinist beliefs are a 'source of weakness rather than strength because he uses the doctrine of Original Sin to excuse his transgressions'.<sup>20</sup> 'But Thou remembers we are dust, / Defil'd wi' sin.' As the poem progresses it becomes evident that Willie manipulates his Calvinist beliefs in order to justify his own sinful acts, while simultaneously condemning the same behaviour in others. For example he tells God to 'mind Gaw'n Hamilton's deserts;/ He drinks and swears an' plays at cartes.' Yet it seems when Willie condemned Hamilton for his actions, he subsequently retaliated by mocking Willie's own behaviour and that of his colleagues. Willie's reaction to the outcome of these particular events exposes his faith for what it really is. He does not follow the Christian example of forgiveness, but instead nurses a wrath for Hamilton that provokes him into telling God to:

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<sup>20</sup> Bentman, *op cit.*, p.36

...in thy day o' vengeance try him!  
Lord, visit him that did employ him!  
And pass not in thy mercy by them,  
Nor hear their prayer,  
But for thy people's sake destroy them,  
And dinna spare!

(91-96)

Holy Willie is a perfect example of moral arrogance. His warped theological views have left him unable to distinguish between what he perceives to be unreasonable and unacceptable behaviour, and his own dishonesty and hypocrisy. Willie's deplorable actions, his ignorance and arrogance culminate to depict a figure who is clearly worse than those he feels morally superior to. He is evidently quite ridiculous. The character of Robert Wringham in Hogg's *Confessions* follows the same suit. Wringham and Holy Willie both exemplify what Gifford and McGillivray term 'the bane of society with their self-justification and self-approbation, together with their blindness to their own personal spectrum of sin, and their effective fusion of spiritual exaltation with personal material profit.'<sup>21</sup>

'Holy Willie's Prayer' does not appear to contain any direct demonic representation. However, Burns's presentation of Holy Willie does in fact pre-empt the demeanour of Hogg's Robert Wringham: a strict follower of the doctrine of Calvin. Hogg takes this concept further than Burns by suggesting that Calvinism is in fact a form of Devil worship. In this context, Burns's poem has established the religious irony that is central to both 'Holy Willie's Prayer' and Hogg's *Confessions*. Ultimately Holy Willie and Robert Wringham serve Satan and not God. Therefore, perhaps, Holy Willie is not self-deceived on an earthly plane, but is completely warped by a cosmic replacement. If this is the case, then worship itself becomes a Devilish act. As we shall see in the next chapter, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* presents Wringham unwittingly condemned by his warped religious fanaticism to an eternity in Hell by Satan himself. Much to Gil-Martin's delight, "the possession of such a man [as Robert]... is worth kingdoms;

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<sup>21</sup> Gifford, *op cit.*, p.164

because every deed that he performs, he does it with perfect safety and honour to me.”<sup>22</sup>

Through the poetic masterpieces, ‘Tam o’ Shanter’, ‘Address to the Deil’ and ‘Holy Willie’s Prayer’, Burns skilfully conveys the remarkable complexity with which the figure of the Devil is perceived in Scottish life, legend and literature. ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ and ‘Address to the Deil’ reveal how deep-set Auld Nick, or Cloutie, is, in the minds and imaginations of the peasantry. He is accepted as a figure that both terrifies and entertains. Yet along with this familiar and sometimes absurd presentation, Burns’s poetry also expresses a particular admiration and sympathy for the Devil. Milton’s Satan evidently contributed to Burns’s understanding here, as did his fraternity with agriculture workers and small farmers’ communities, where oral culture preserved and animated familiarity with the Devil. Satan, for Burns and Hogg was both a literary invention and a near neighbour in daily life and imagination. It is evident that Burns’s extreme disgust at the Calvinist doctrine of predestination resulted in the creation of ‘Holy Willie’s Prayer’, a poem seminal to the numerous literary attacks on the rigour of Calvinism. Burns has brought together in these works, the sociological, religious and psychological impact the figure of the Devil has undoubtedly made. However, what remains beyond this is the ambiguity which surrounds the realm that substantiates Satan’s existence: reason or religion?

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<sup>22</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, p.118

James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

James Hogg follows in the footsteps of Burns. In many respects his biography shows parallel developments with that of Burns. He too has a reputation as an autodidact. Likewise Hogg's rural upbringing was steeped in a combination of Scotland's popular mythology and folklore, as well as strict Bible learning. The nature of Hogg's upbringing is reflected in his work, which explores the supernatural and comments on the rigidities of Calvinism. In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) Hogg continues the critique of Calvinism found in Robert Burns's 'Holy Willie's Prayer'. Both poem and novel are similar in their psychological portrayal of those who believed they belong to the 'elect' and thus become the 'justified' upon Earth. The character of Robert Wringham is tainted with the same brush of Calvinist fanaticism as Burns's Holy Willie. The representation of the demonic is evident in the characterisation and narrative of both poem and novel. Beyond that, however, Burns and Hogg reveal aspects of the demonic through their literary technique and style. Representation of the demonic in Hogg's novel is pervasive and suggests that '[p]erhaps there is something in Calvinism that makes for a quicker sense of the diabolical...that religion which Theologians call Calvinism and Christians Devil Worship.'<sup>23</sup>

Representation of the demonic in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is multifaceted and explored on several levels. The diabolical is initially revealed through basic literary techniques, such as word choice and imagery. On an elementary level, the demonic is presented through narrative and characterisation. Thus the reader is made aware of the shocking unexplained contexts that surround the cold-blooded murders committed by a religious maniac, apparently prompted by the Devil. However, Hogg's novel is complex and enigmatic, steeped in Christian orthodoxy, Scottish popular mythology and folklore. All of these are intertwined and tangle the novel's ambiguities and contradictions.

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<sup>23</sup> Bliss, *op. cit* p.4

The unfolding narrative and its cryptic characters allow the reader to slowly comprehend the demonic aspects of Hogg's story. The reader's initial reaction to Robert's early circumstances is rather sympathetic. The Laird of Dalcastle 'refused to acknowledge him...nor take the baptismal vows on him in the child's name.'<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the Reverend Wringham adopts Robert, inflicting on him the most strict and severe upbringing in 'all the sternness and severity of his pastor's arbitrary and unyielding creed.'<sup>25</sup> This produces a mentally warped adolescent, who becomes intolerable to most people, with the exception of his mother and reverend father. Ultimately, it is this strict religious upbringing that leads him to the relentless predicament in which he finds himself. The reader's sympathy does not last long, as we become increasingly aware of Robert's religious pride, dishonesty, cowardliness and tendency to violence. Yet initially, the reader is unaware of Robert Wringham's association with, and eventual possession by, the Devil. This is suggested continually through the language of the 'Editor's Narrative'.

The young George Colwan's initial encounter with Robert, when he is unaware that the 'impertinent student of divinity'<sup>26</sup> who continually harasses him during his games of tennis is in fact his brother, clearly demonstrates the infiltration of the demonic. The uninformed George, at first

... perceive[s] a lad with black clothes and a methodistical face, whose countenance and eye he disliked exceedingly...the next day and every succeeding one, the same devilish-looking youth attended him as constantly as his shadow; was always in his way with intent to impede him, and ever and anon his deep malignant eye met those of his elder brother with a glance so fierce that it sometimes startled him.<sup>27</sup>

This example is typical of the descriptions of Robert that permeate the first section of Hogg's narrative. Robert's demonic aspect is aptly described. That 'devilish-looking youth' with his 'malignant eye' are signs that Robert is being subverted by some form of 'diabolos'. George attempts reconciliation with his brother but is constantly refuted: "Robert...I erred you through ignorance, not knowing you were my brother...through a momentary irritation...I pray you, therefore, to pardon me, and

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<sup>24</sup> Hogg, *op. cit* p.15

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p.15

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p.18

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p.18

give me your hand”<sup>28</sup>. His ‘polluted brother’<sup>29</sup> defiantly shuns him. Here, and throughout the text, it is the language that suggests Robert is not himself. Hogg has in the ‘Editor’s Narrative’, and the examples given above, consistently employed adjectives which imply some kind of demonic possession and deterioration of character to describe Robert Wringham. However, the Devil’s infiltration at this stage is only suggested and the reader will become increasingly aware of this. Inevitably, as the Devil gains greater possession of Robert’s soul, his visits to George become more frequent and hostile.

The attendance of that brother was now become like the attendance of a demon on some devoted being that had sold himself to destruction; his approaches as undiscerned, and his looks as fraught with hideous malignity.<sup>30</sup>

As the narrative proceeds, the descriptions become more suggestive of demonic possession to the extent that during the events that take place on Arthur’s Seat, George goes so far as to tell Robert that “[if] thou art not a limb of Satan, I never saw one.”<sup>31</sup> However, the most striking and condemning of these textual suggestions is made in the ‘Editor’s Narrative’ when Robert is tied and bound by Mrs Logan and Arabella Calvert. Mrs Calvert describes Robert in terms of being fully possessed.

‘I never in my life saw any human being,’ said Mrs Calvert, ‘whom I thought so like a fiend. If a demon could inherit flesh and blood, that youth is precisely such a being as I could conceive that demon to be. The depth and malignity of his eye is hideous. His breath is like the airs of a charnel house, and his skin seems fading from his bones, as if the worm that never dies were gnawing away already.’<sup>32</sup>

This suggestive and indicative language has dominated the Editor’s Narrative. However the demonic influence is not only confined to the manipulation of Robert. To successfully condemn Robert, the Devil cleverly, but simply, impersonates others. There are obvious cases such as those involving Thomas Drummond, and the innocent minister who is accused of murdering Mr Blanchard. Yet the reader is never fully made aware of who the number of ‘young sparks’ are that conveniently appear at crucial moments in the text. A close examination of these particular incidents reveals

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.20

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.20

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.31

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p.37

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p.74

that their actions are responsible for directing the outcome of events in Robert and Gil-Martin's favour. It is 'someone or other' who directs the attention of the mob by shouting: "A plot, a plot, Treason, treason! Down with the bloody incendiaries at the Black Bull!"<sup>33</sup> This exclamation conveniently leads the mob to the spot where George Colwan and his friends are feasting. Yet despite the appearance of this massive and unruly crowd, they disperse as if by magic when challenged by the well-armed party from the Black Bull who,

fled with great expedition, both to the east and west, and the conquerors, separating themselves as chance directed, pursued impetuously wounding and maiming as they flew. But, it so changed that before either of the wings had followed the flying squadrons of their enemies for the space of a hundred yards each way, the devil an enemy they had to pursue! The multitude had vanished like so many thousands of phantoms!<sup>34</sup>

Evidently the Devil and his legions have been at work.

The most significant of these phantom calls comes on the night of George's murder. During the celebrations after court 'it was imprudently proposed by a wild inebriated spark... that the whole party should adjourn to a bagnio for the remainder of the night!'<sup>35</sup> This then raises the question as to whether this spark is the same one who caused the argument between George and Thomas Drummond, who provoked the latter into leaving and thus conveniently creating a scapegoat for Robert and Gil-Martin to murder George. The Devil is at work in many different ways.

Gil-Martin's appearance is skilfully deceptive. Hogg has granted him a kind of sinister pervasiveness. Hogg has moved away from the physicalities of appearance that are seminal to Burns's 'Tam o' Shanter' and other popular conceptions of the Devil as a grotesque animalistic form with horns and cloven hooves. To describe the appearance of the Devil is an impossibility in Hogg's story. Hogg's conception of the Devil follows that of the demonic figure that has emerged from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The figure of Gil-Martin is one of a powerful and wilful leader, a skilled rhetorician of god-like stature who has no apparent physical deformity. As in so many stories of folklore, Gil-Martin is a polymorphous individual who continually changes his appearance throughout the novel.

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p.22

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p.24

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.42



Scottish myth and folklore are explored through the attitudes and instincts of the lower characters. Bessie Gillies and Wringham's servant auld John rely only on their common sense. John, in regard to Robert's parentage, defends himself against an irate reverend Wringham, when he says that he makes all his judgement on "'nae particular pairt, sir; I draw a' my conclusions frae the haill of a man's character; an' I'm no' that aften far wrang.'"<sup>36</sup> As Douglas Jones points out:

Hogg's fiction is filled with such Scots characters, who display an intuitive grasp of the truth behind appearances. Robin Ruthven, in the *Auchtermuchty* episode, has 'rather mare wits than his ain' because the fairies have made 'a' kinds o' spirits... visible to his een' – thus he sees past the stranger's disguise and with 'the greatest readiness and simplicity' reveals the Devil's cloven foot. Bell Calvert, too, relies upon 'impressions,' arguing that, 'we have nothing on earth but our senses to depend on; if these deceive us, what are we to do?'"<sup>37</sup>

However, folkloric traditions are off-set in the main narrative, as Gil-Martin does not readily appear as a black dog, bull, or indeed a cloven hoofed beast. To be effective in his work of temptation, Gil-Martin manipulates his appearance to entice his victim in the most fascinating form he can command. He is '[r]ather a gentlemanly personage – Green Circassian hunting coat and turban – Like a foreigner'.<sup>38</sup> Hogg takes the demonic representation in his novel from the Miltonesque representation of the outcast angel, a skilled rhetorician and figure of wretched but valiant defiance of the Law, to a gentlemanly stature, a social being who embodies the same qualities. The popular conception of his form has changed.

The Devil's presence and intentions present themselves inconspicuously. There are tortuous relationships between the majority of the novel's characters, but most of all between George Colwan, Robert Wringham and Gil-Martin. The Reverend Wringham unwittingly instigates the intricate interchange of these characters through the curse he pronounces upon George.

And upon his right hand  
Give thou his greatest enemy,  
Even Satan, leave to stand<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p.85

<sup>37</sup> Jones, D., 'Double Jeopardy and the Chameleon Art in James Hogg's *Justified Sinner*' in *Studies in Scottish Literature XXIII* (University of South Carolina Press: 1988) p172

<sup>38</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, p.183

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p.27

This psalm, 'adverse to all [Christianity's] mild and benevolent principles'<sup>40</sup> dictates that the wicked should be set over the sinner. Consequently Robert, the wicked, continually and relentlessly appears at George's right hand side. Robert is undoubtedly George's greatest enemy. Yet the interaction of these characters becomes confused as their relationship is 'expressed in terms of doubles, of affinities and antipathies.'<sup>41</sup> The Devil's intentions, in this respect, are never fully made clear. As Jeffrey Burton Russell explains:

the Devil has some purpose in the cosmos that we cannot grasp; the Devil is God's enemy and our enemy and must be resisted with all our strength. This is true whether the Devil is an ontological entity or the personification of the 'demonic' in humanity.<sup>42</sup>

This statement aptly describes and defines the questions and issues raised within the narrative. It is clear that Gil-Martin is the Devil, the 'ontological entity'. Subsequently Robert becomes the personification of the 'demonic' in humanity. This adds another aspect to the diabolic within the narrative.

However, Hogg's novel is not as straightforward as this. *Confessions* offers a dual interpretation. The work is pre-eminently both psychological and supernatural. The ambiguous nature of the novel means that either interpretation can be exclusively or totally supported by the events of the narrative (perhaps with exception of the closing pages). André Gide highlights this in his introduction to the 1947 publication of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by Cresset in London. As a foreigner he declares his ignorance of the influence of Scottish culture when he admits that Dorothy Bussy informed him that *Confessions* 'is Scotch to its marrow; no Englishman could possibly have written it. Its whole atmosphere, the very form and substance of its Puritanism, is essentially Scottish. You will find its counterpart and predecessor in Burns.'<sup>43</sup> Gide acknowledges the supernatural elements of Hogg's novel, but he eventually lays this interpretation aside after explaining that:

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p.27

<sup>41</sup> Parsons, CO., *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction: With chapters on the Supernatural in Scottish Literature* (Oliver&Boyd: 1964) p.294

<sup>42</sup> Russell, JB., *Satan and the Early Tradition* (Ithaca, New York; London, Cornell University Press: 1981) p.230

<sup>43</sup> Gide, André, 'Introduction' to *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (London: Cresset, 1947) p.X

The personification of the Demon in Hogg's book is among the most ingenious ever invented, for the power that sets him in action is always of a psychological nature; in other words always admissible, even by unbelievers. It is the exteriorised development of our own desires, of our pride, of our most secret thoughts. It consists throughout in the indulgence we accord to our own selves. Hence the profound teaching of this strange book, the fantastic part of which (except in the last pages) is always psychologically explicable, without having to recourse to the supernatural.<sup>44</sup>

*Confessions* presents two narratives, ambiguously connected and intertwined. One is the story of Robert's tragic fate, as he is seduced by the Devil into 'self-justified' sinning; the other is the story of Calvinism itself as a religious practice of Devil worship. Hogg exploits Christian belief, as well as popular Scottish mythology and folklore as a method of allusion to the diabolic seduction of Robert, and the consequences of his fanatical religiosity. The reader is provoked into questioning the ambiguity of the narrative with respect to who the Devil is, why he has become involved with Robert Wringham, what his intentions are, and how he might or should have been resisted.

Common sense and simple faith are the true weapons of resistance against the infiltration of the Devil. This is dictated by the folkloric aspect of the novel which gives sound advice on how to avoid the lure of demonic manifestations. Contrary to the works of Burns, the less educated, economically deprived classes are more aware of Satan, and realise that appearances can be deceptive. It is their intuition that serves as a successful means of recognising evil. The 'simple folk' of the novel, John Barnet, Bessie Gillies and particularly Samuel Scrape are examples of unerring moral instinct. Samuel Scrape provides Robert with the necessary 'food for thought' in the tale he tells of the Devil's presence in Auchtermuchty. Robert's awareness is heightened to the extent that he checks Gil-Martin's feet but is only left looking at a pair of shoes. Robert's condemnation of himself has gone too far. The demonic signifiers have been evident since Robert and Gil-Martin's initial encounter but Robert's immense pride and religious bigotry have clouded his judgement and common sense. Even his faith is far from simple.

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<sup>44</sup> Gide, *op cit.*, p.XV

From the beginning Robert should have been acutely aware of the Devil's presence. Gil-Martin's polymorphic abilities and supernatural powers are a clear indication. And Gil-Martin provides numerous clues to his true identity. The book Gil-Martin is intent on reading at their second meeting, which Robert is drawn into by the forces of enchantment, is evidence that his mysterious acquaintance is the Devil himself. The book is described as 'having columns, chapters, and verses, but it was in a language of which [Robert is] wholly ignorant, and all intersected with red lines and verses.'<sup>45</sup> The events of Robert's childhood, which surround the sacking of Old Barnet, inform the reader of Robert's prior knowledge of this book. He admits that it was a 'dreadful... thought, that [he] had been going daily in company and fellowship with one [Old Barnet] whose name is written in the red-letter side of the book of life.'<sup>46</sup> Robert is therefore subconsciously aware of its meaning, which is why the book has such a terrifying effect upon him. It is full of the names of those condemned to an eternity in Hell.

Gil-Martin's name provides Robert, (and the reader) with another clue to his true identity. Despite the Devil's powers, he is subject to rules and boundaries. The Devil's infiltration into one's life is bound by circumstance. Essentially Robert's illegitimacy and beliefs allow Satan's entrance, but he can only manipulate situations in his favour to direct Robert's condemnation of himself. Likewise, he is restricted to working within the boundaries of the truth. It should be noted that Hogg's approach to demonic representation through the means of Christian doctrine and Scottish folklore and mythology relies on reader response. This presents problems for the modern day reader who will not be as familiar as the novel's contemporary audience with the Bible and the traditions of folklore. Once the reader is aware of Hogg's approach and the connotations of his intricate narrative, it is realised that essentially the information Gil-Martin provides Robert with is the truth, but he is selective in the process. This is nowhere more evident in the novel than when Robert asks Gil-Martin about his name and parentage. He tells Robert one of his many names to go with his many faces. The name Gil-Martin has several connotations. Textually it will remind the reader of Robert's childhood enemy M'Gill, whom Robert detested so much that 'to ensure his rival's expulsion from school, Robert steals his algebra book and decorates it with

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<sup>45</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, p.101

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p.83

caricatures of the master.<sup>47</sup> In other words, he has taken M’Gill’s place in the hope of having him punished, just as later Gil-Martin will take *his* place in the *knowledge* he will be punished.<sup>48</sup>

However, the connotations of Gil-Martin’s name are overlooked by Robert. These are fully explained by Philip Rogers.<sup>49</sup> For example, ‘Gil’ means ‘servant or disciple of’. Gil-Martin then means, quite literally, ‘disciple of St Martin’. This connection in Gil-Martin’s name refers to the ‘most common legends about the saint[‘s] concern [with] his exorcisms and personal struggles with Satan.’ Rogers goes on to say: ‘Paul Monceaux explains that what most intrigued the popular imagination was his alleged personal acquaintance with the Arch Fiend.’ However Satan’s intentions are the opposite of service; they are an attempt to condemn St Martin to eternal damnation in the pits of Hell. However, Satan did not succeed with St Martin who could resist his lure and temptation, unlike Robert Wringham.

Robert is unable to solve the riddle of Gil-Martin’s name because his own is in doubt. His clouded judgement also prevents him from deciphering many aspects of Gil-Martin’s identity: his name, his parentage and his remarks that are laced with double entendres. This is exemplified by the numerous comments Gil-Martin makes in conversation with Robert. For example, he tells Robert

‘Do you think that the gaining of *you* to my service, is not an attainment worthy of being envied by the greatest potentate in Christendom? Before I had missed such a prize as the attainment of your services...For a man who is not only dedicated to the King of Heaven, in the most solemn manner, soul, body, and spirit, but also chosen of him from the beginning, justified, sanctified, and received into a communion that never shall be broken, and from which no act of his shall ever remove him, - the possession of such a man, I tell you, is worth kingdoms; because every deed that he performs, he does it with perfect safety to himself and honour to me.’<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bloede, Barbara, ‘*The Confessions of A Justified Sinner: the Paranoiac Nucleus*’ in *Papers Given at the First James Hogg Society Conference*’ edited by Gillian Hughes (Stirling: James Hogg Society 1983) p.16

<sup>48</sup> Bloede, *op cit.*, p.16

<sup>49</sup> Rogers, P., “‘A name which may serve your turn’: James Hogg’s Gil-Martin’ in *Studies in Scottish Literature XXI* (University of South Carolina Press: 1986) p.91

<sup>50</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, p.118

It is emphatically pressed upon the reader that Gil-Martin's inherent flattery of Robert is clear admission that he has come under the service of Satan, and that his religious beliefs serve only to condemn him. Robert is unable to see through this verbose cajolery. Just as he is unable to unravel Gil-Martin's reluctant explanation of his parentage: "I have no parents save one, whom I do not acknowledge," said he proudly; "therefore, pray drop that subject, for it is a disagreeable one."<sup>51</sup> In all Gil-Martin tells Robert he continually reveals the truth, but Robert's clouded judgement prevents him from seeing Gil-Martin for who he really is.

Evidently the demonic representation within Hogg's novel is pervasive, and not all of it is entirely definitive. The diablerie works on many different and subtle levels. Hogg's Devil moves away from what F.R. Hart suggests, and Douglas Jones agrees, is 'significantly different from the repressed sadist sublimity of the Miltonic... [to a] distinctively "Scottish Gothic", a mixture of a "terrible theological monomania with a grotesque folk diabolism."<sup>52</sup> The reader will be aware of many of the diabolic signs and Gil-Martin's use of his supernatural abilities to precipitate circumstances. However, Gil-Martin's ultimate seductive technique is the direct appeal to, and manipulation of, Robert's psyche and ideologies. Clearly the Devil already had 'his foot in the door,' so to speak, as far as Robert is concerned. From the information provided in the Editor's Narrative, the reader will be aware of Robert's illegitimacy. After his birth, Robert lived a year and a day without being baptized. Illegitimacy then, allows the Devil to gain entrance into, but not control over Robert's life. The Laird Dalcastle confirms this later when he informs his son George that 'the young spark was the third in a direct line who had all been children of adultery; and it was well known that such were born half deils themselves.'<sup>53</sup> Gil-Martin ensures the eternal damnation of his unwitting victim, by accessing his subconscious: "by assuming your likeness... I became acquainted with your character"<sup>54</sup> The advantage of having intimate knowledge of Robert's thoughts and feelings allows Gil-Martin to utilise these and his supernatural abilities to recreate Robert's ideologies. Thus Satan, in order to fully condemn him, appeals directly to Robert's religious pride and vanity.

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p.106

<sup>52</sup> Jones, D., 'Double Jeopardy and the Chameleon Art in James Hogg's *Justified Sinner*' in *Studies in Scottish Literature XXIII* (University of South Carolina Press: 1988) p.167

<sup>53</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, p.106

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p.102

Gil-Martin tells Robert that in assuming his likeness the previous day, he has been able to acquaint himself intimately with his character. Gil-Martin takes this opportunity to inform Robert that “he was no less astonished at the profundity of and range of [his] thoughts, than at the heroic magnanimity, with which these were combined.”<sup>55</sup> Undoubtedly Satan knows Robert’s psyche in every detail and uses this to manipulate him. He allows Robert to assume a position of superiority, through continual flattery, but soon reverses this causing Robert to feel inadequate. He also appeals directly to Robert’s sense of religiosity by questioning the doctrine of predestination, and throwing Robert’s senses into a state of relative confusion. Gil-Martin argues:

Depend on it, the advice of the greater preacher [Jesus] is genuine: ‘What thine hand findeth to do, with all thy might, for none of us knows what a day may bring forth?’ That is none of us knows what is preordained, but whatever is preordained we must do, and none of these things will be laid to our charge.<sup>56</sup>

Robert is instinctively wary of Gil-Martin. He does not fully believe such claims made by his mysterious acquaintance, but feels that ‘instead of being a humble disciple of mine, [Gil-Martin] was to be my guide and director, all under the humble guise of one stooping at my feet to learn the right.’<sup>57</sup> This type of communion is exactly what Robert desired in his earlier thoughts: ‘O that I had an host at my command, then would I be as a devouring fires among the workers of iniquity!’<sup>58</sup> Gil-Martin has truly answered his prayer, but only as a means to his own end. Robert’s instincts, rightly, make him suspicious. On their first encounter Robert ‘stood in a sort of awe of him, which [he] could not account for, and several times was seized with an involuntary inclination to escape his presence by making a sudden retreat.’<sup>59</sup> Robert instinctively feels opposed to Gil-Martin. Yet to prevent Robert from taking to his heels Gil-Martin keeps his mind in a state of constant agitation through the means of flattery, manipulation and mental degradation:

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<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p.102

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p.103

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p.103

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p.100

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p.101

...he either forced me to acquiesce in his measures, and assent to the truth of his positions, or he put me so completely down, that I had not a word left to advance against them.<sup>60</sup>

Gil-Martin's appearance is also a form of manipulation aimed at Robert's assumptions and sympathies. He presents himself to Robert as a gentleman of a distinct mould, who is mysterious, darkly attractive and of a fascinating intellect. Gil-Martin's grand appearance appeals directly to Robert's frame of mind. He believes Gil-Martin to be the Czar Peter of Russia. 'Robert is attracted to Gil-Martin, whose characteristic dress is a "green frockcoat, buff belt, and a sort of a turban...somewhere resembling a Bishop's mitre.'" The turban nicely combines suggestions of absolute oriental despotism and ecclesiastical power, and Robert longs for power.'<sup>61</sup> The advantage of having accessed Robert's subconscious allows Gil-Martin intimate knowledge of his thoughts and feelings. Thus, he preys relentlessly on Robert's susceptibility to fanaticism.

This type of approach has been utilised by Satan from the very beginning of his physical appearance. At their initial meeting, Gil-Martin dictates events in order to meet his needs. Consequently Robert's innocent ramble is imposed upon by supernatural forces:

As I thus wended my way, I beheld a young man of a mysterious appearance coming towards me. I tried to shun him, being bent on my own contemplations; but he cast himself in my way, so that I could not well avoid him; and more than that, I felt a sort of invisible power that drew me towards him, something like the force of enchantment, which I could not resist.<sup>62</sup>

The word choice used within this passage clearly denotes an intentionally sinister purpose on the intruder's part. Gil-Martin and Robert's first encounter, supposedly by chance, has clear intent as far as Gil-Martin is concerned. Despite Robert's desire to be alone, a meeting with this 'mysterious' young man is inevitable and supernaturally unavoidable. The words 'mysterious', 'invisible', and 'enchantment' subtly suggest a superhuman, preternatural presence and determines that this encounter was in no way

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p.104

<sup>61</sup> Oakleaf, D., ' "Not the Truth": The Doubleness of Hogg's *Confessions* and the Eighteenth-Century Tradition' in *Studies in Scottish Literature XVIII* edited by G Ross Roy (University of South Carolina Press, 1983) p67

<sup>62</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, p.94



coincidental. It soon becomes apparent to the reader that there is a greater force at work: a situation that becomes increasingly out of Robert's control. Gil-Martin does pull Robert into his destructive path by means of 'a sort of invisible power... like the force of enchantment'<sup>63</sup> and typically uses his grand appearance to attract and deceive Robert further.

...he was the same being as myself! The clothes were the same to the smallest item. The form was the same; the apparent age; the colour of the hair; the eyes; and, as far as recollection could serve me from viewing my own features in a glass, the features too were the very same. I conceived at first, that I saw a vision, and that my guardian angel had appeared to me in this very important era of my life.<sup>64</sup>

Gil-Martin presents himself to Robert in his own image. In doing this, he has appealed directly to Robert's religious vanity. To create such an illusion, with its underlying connotation, the Devil has delved deep. As Philip Rogers explains in his essay, 'A Name which May Serve Your Turn': James Hogg's Gil-Martin',

[I]n what is perhaps the best known of his [the Devil's] temptations of Saint Martin, Satan attempts to appeal to the saint's religious vanity by appearing to him in the form of the glorified Christ. Of course the saint is not taken in by special effects – the jewelled crown and blinding light – and forces the devil to vanish ignominiously in a cloud of malodorous smoke. The episode of the devil's first appearance to Robert reveals an identical strategy; Gil-Martin appears as 'an angel of light,' an ideal, flattering image of himself: Robert glorified.<sup>65</sup>

To Robert, this is a sign of power, a quality he ultimately desires. It is Lady Dalcastle who confirms the grand delusional nature of this vision. On his return from this first encounter with Satan, Robert's mother and reverend father are shocked by his altered appearance, and fear that the devil has been at work with their beloved son and ward. Robert informs them that the only stranger he conversed with today was one he "took rather for an angel of light."<sup>66</sup> His mother replies, "It is one of the devil's most profound wiles to appear like one"<sup>67</sup>. Despite the truth of this comment, it is emphatically dismissed by the mighty Reverend Wringham, who trusting to *his* knowledge and wisdom, informs Robert that if the stranger had agreed with Robert's

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p.94

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p.95

<sup>65</sup> Rogers, *op cit.*, p. 92

<sup>66</sup> Hogg., *op cit.*, p.99

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p.99

religious principles, then he was no Devil. But Robert's religious principles are devilish. He does after all follow a religion that has been deemed Devil worship.

Hogg's double narrative - Robert's seduction by Satan and the story of Calvinism - creates a sense of obscurity regarding the Devil's involvement in Robert's life. Gil-Martin tells Robert at their initial meeting: "I am indeed your brother, not according to the flesh, but in my belief of the same truths, and my assurance in the same mode of redemption, than which, I hold nothing so great or so glorious on earth."<sup>68</sup> This passage is crucial to understanding the implications of Hogg's novel. If Calvinism is to be denoted as Devil worship, then Satan is illustrating his adherence to his own doctrine, and Robert is his disciple. Robert is indeed his devoted follower, but the Devil is more cunning than this. To ensure Robert's eventual downfall, Satan will adhere to any principle to manipulate and eventually possess his intended victim. This is ultimately what Gil-Martin does. However, the ambiguity of the novel connects the fate of the individual and the demonic aspect of the whole religion or religious ideology of Calvinism.

Robert's illegitimacy may have allowed the Devil access, but essentially Robert's parents are in the eyes of Christianity Devil worshippers, who have borne and moulded an innocent child into a psychology that embraces the cold religiosity of Calvinism. Consequently, Robert's bastardry and warped religious fanaticism have opened the door to the Devil's infiltration, but it is the Reverend Wringham who grants him full access to Robert's existence. It is he who 'wrestled with God, as the patriarch of old had done, not for a night, but for days and years,' to ensure Robert's acceptance 'into the community of the just upon earth.'<sup>69</sup> It is no coincidence that Robert encounters the mysterious youth that very day, after which his countenance has been changed for the worst. His reverend father, fearing that the Devil has been at work with him, condemns Robert further, in an attempt to relieve him, by dedicating him 'unto Thee only, to Thee wholly, and to Thee forever...as a two-edged weapon, and a spear...to destroy and overcome.'<sup>70</sup> This statement clearly reflects the subsequent actions within the narrative concerning George's death and the fate of

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p.95

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p.93

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p.99

Robert himself. The consequential meeting with Gil-Martin stresses the religious irony that Robert serves Satan and not God. However, the reverend Wringham may have allowed Satan to enter into Robert's life, but it is Robert who fully condemns himself to eternal damnation in Hell. This is sealed by his religious bigotry and zeal. Robert's psychology is nowhere else best revealed in the entire narrative than this crucial passage which comes before his second encounter with Gil-Martin:

From that moment, I conceived it decreed, not that I should be a minister of the gospel, but a champion of it, to cut off the enemies of the Lord from the face of the earth; and I rejoiced in the commission, finding it more congenial to my nature to be cutting sinners off with the sword, than to be haranguing them from the pulpit...I saw of the folly and inconsistency of ministers, in spending their lives, striving and remonstrating with sinners, in order to induce them to do that which they had it not in their power to do. Seeing that God had from all eternity decided the fate of every individual that was born of woman, how vain was it in man to endeavour to save those whom their Maker had, by an unchangeable decree, doomed to destruction. I could not disbelieve the doctrine which the best of men had taught me, and toward which he made the whole of the Scriptures to bear, and yet it made the economy of the Christian world appear to me an absolute contradiction. How much more wise would it be, thought I, to begin and cut sinners off with the sword! in peace. Should I be honoured as an instrument to begin this great work of purification, I should rejoice in it. But, then, where had I the means, or under what direction was I to begin? There was one thing clear, I was now the Lord's and it behoved me to bestir myself in his service. O that I had an host at my command, then would I be as a devouring fire among the workers of iniquity!<sup>71</sup>

The concept of Robert's religious ideology is extremely disturbing, and his warped fanaticism is clearly evident. In his mind, annihilation of the unjustified, those not privileged to the status of the elect, is easily dealt with as a form of social cleansing. This takes the already extremist views which have been instilled in him by his mother and reverend father, to a different and dangerous level. The Reverend Wringham and Lady Dalcastle are proud religious bigots with extremist views; Robert, however, becomes a victim of this cause as his fanaticism turns to genocide. Robert states, 'he cannot disbelieve the doctrine which the best of men had taught me,'<sup>72</sup> but he finds the Christian dogma contradictory in its principles and an insufficient tool to enforce its cause. Subsequently, these extreme views place him in the Devil's grasp. However, it is his desire to have a mentor in order to practise what he, at this point, deems to be appropriate doctrinal conduct, which essentially calls Satan into action.

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<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p.100

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p.100

Robert does not have the courage to carry out his convictions. His desire to be ‘cutting sinners off with the sword, than to be haranguing them from the pulpit’<sup>73</sup> effectively seals Robert’s Hellish fate. However, he is reluctant to carry out any murderous deeds when he is put under pressure by Gil-Martin. The Devil utilises Robert’s extremist views to counteract his doubts. Gil-Martin continually reminds Robert that the elect are above the moral law, and are incapable of falling from their justified state through any sinful act:

Wringham was disputing the boundlessness of the true Christian’s freedom, and expressing doubts, that, chosen as he knew he was from all eternity, still it might be possible for him to commit acts that would exclude him from the limits of the covenant. The other [Gil-Martin] argued, with mighty fluency, that the thing was utterly impossible, and altogether inconsistent with eternal predestination.<sup>74</sup>

Gil-Martin is consistent in this argument and continually forces Robert to acquiesce on the pretext that he is working for the greater good of God. This argument is employed time and again. For example, to convince Robert of the necessity to kill Mr Blanchard as an act of morality he uses Robert’s faith to convince him:

That supposing me [Robert] placed at the head of an army of Christian soldiers, all bent on putting down the enemies of the church, would I have any hesitation in destroying and rooting out these enemies? – None surely – Well then, when I saw and was convinced, that here was an individual who was doing more detriment to the church of Christ on earth, than the tens of thousands of such warriors were capable of doing, was it not my duty to cut him off, and save the elect? ‘He, who would be a champion in the cause of Christ and his Church, my brave young friend,’ added he, ‘must begin early, and no man can calculate what an illustrious eminence small beginnings may lead. If the man Blanchard is worthy, he is only changing his situation for a better one; and if unworthy, it is better that one fall, than a thousand souls perish.’<sup>75</sup>

However, it is never entirely clear whether the Devil adheres to the principles he preaches to Robert, or just employs them as a successful means to condemn his victim.

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<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p.100

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p.71

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p.108

It is the holistic folk wisdom of the lower characters which provides the reader with a sense of the Devil's methods of condemnation. Samuel Scrape informs Robert that the 'auld wives o' the clachan' say that:

'the deil's often seen gaun sidie for sidie w'ye, whiles in aë shape, and whiles in another. An' they say that he whiles takes your ain shape, or else enters into you, and then you turn a deil yourself.'<sup>76</sup>

This is an accurate perception of the interaction between Robert and Gil-Martin. However the Devil's infiltration into Robert's life is never made fully explicit; it is only implied. Hogg's text and Robert's psyche continually imply a second self. However, in line with the ambiguity of the novel, this is never fully confirmed. Robert openly admits, to the lady whose daughter he had seduced, that, "[i]t is impossible that I can have been doing a thing, and not doing it at the same time [b]ut... there are several incidents occurred to me... which persuade me I have a second self"<sup>77</sup>. This is dismissed by Gil-Martin. It is the wisdom and common sense of the 'simple folk' who verify Robert's dual nature.

What is most significant about the auld wives' knowledge, is their awareness of Satan's religious principles:

...he was the firmest believer in a' the truths of Christianity that was out o' heaven; an' that, sin' the Revolution that the gospel had turned sae rife, he had often been driven to the shift o' preaching it himself, for the purpose o' getting some wrang tenets introduced into it, and thereby turning it into blasphemy and ridicule.<sup>78</sup>

This is clearly the doctrine followed by the Wringhams. Their name aptly describes their attitude to religion; that they wring their beliefs out of the mild and benevolent principles of Christianity. This is exemplified by the Reverend Wringham and Lady Dalcastle's 'making distinctions in religion where none existed' that would make 'a true Christian... blush to hear mentioned, and the infidel and profane make a handle of them to turn our religion to scorn.'<sup>79</sup> Like Satan, the Wringham family have taken the word of God and corrupted it to accommodate their convictions. This blasphemy and

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p.161

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p.145

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p.161

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, pp13-14

ridicule is the basis for Robert's condemnation to an eternity in Hell. Gil-Martin becomes a projection of Robert's idealism. Gil-Martin embodies the hypocrisy of Calvinist fanaticism, Robert's ideologies and desires in the dynamism of the Devil. Ultimately, '[m]an has always created his gods, rather than his gods creating him'.<sup>80</sup> So the realities of religion, the supernatural and psychological worlds are all coordinated and interconnected in Hogg's world.

André Gide's famous contention that Hogg had produced the first great psychological thriller should be qualified and endorsed by this understanding. The psychological truths embodied by the novel bring together the two great ideological structures of Hogg's society: religious orthodoxy and supernatural belief. Only by confirming ancient pagan with hypocritical Christian and prophetic psychological interpretations of reality could he have achieved such a profoundly disturbing work.

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<sup>80</sup> LaVey, AS., *The Satanic Bible* (New York: Avon Books, 1969) p.40

R.L. Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*

The diablerie in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae: A Winter's Tale*<sup>81</sup> is manifest in the psychology of the fraternal relationship between James and Henry Durie. The novel explores the idea of the dual nature of man, particularly the concept that good and evil cannot be separated and rely on each other to exist. This is clearly demonstrated in Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. In both texts the delicate balance of good and evil is upset. Jekyll splits himself in two, only to discover that each part cannot exist without the other; in *The Master of Ballantrae*, the good in Henry is replaced with a hatred and intolerance of James that creates two evils which burn each other out. The ambivalence of human character is already suggested by the title, for once we have read the unfolding tale the question (of to whom it refers) becomes increasingly difficult to resolve.

The dynamic of the Devil takes shape at first in the character of James Durie. The Master of Ballantrae is not the ontological entity embodied by Hogg's Gil-Martin. James is human and fallible. But it is continually suggested in the language of the text that he is a demonic manifestation. James is 'immortal' in his supposed deaths and resurrections and spectral in the theatricality that allows him to change his demeanour to suit the occasion. James represents the demonic in humanity. He manipulates his brother to the extent that he corrupts Henry's state of mind, but he does not reflect the cowardliness and decayed character of Robert Wringham. The Master of Ballantrae is a combination of Gil-Martin and Robert: 'James is the incubus, the descendant of Hogg's Gil-Martin, who haunts his brother as George Dalcastle was haunted in *The Justified Sinner*.'<sup>82</sup> However, what is most significant about the character of James Durie is his status of hero as villain. David Daiches claims, '[t]he Master himself is one of the most effective studies of the hero as villain

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<sup>81</sup> Stevenson, *op cit.*, p.53

<sup>82</sup> Gifford, Douglas, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: The Importance of *The Master of Ballantrae*' in *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland* edited by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981) p.75

that English literature has produced.’<sup>83</sup> This change in direction is central to the evolution of the demonic figure in Scottish literature.

As in Hogg’s *Confessions*, *The Master of Ballantrae* presents a connectedness between the psychological and supernatural aspects of the novel. This is most evident in the strained relationship of the brothers James and Henry Durie. As Hogg’s Gil-Martin appeals to Robert Wringham’s religious assumptions and flourishes in the context of the religious ideology to which Robert is accustomed, James directs his energies towards the corruption of Henry’s social and familial ties, and consequently his mental state. Gil-Martin and James force their way into their victims’ minds in order to manipulate and corrupt events to their advantage. It is never clear what designs Gil-Martin has on Robert once he is in complete possession of him. However the reader is aware from the onset of MacKellar’s narrative that *The Master of Ballantrae* is a tragic story of fomented hatred and intolerance in the heart of both brothers. James’s insidious devilishness is implied from the beginning of the novel, and it is made clear that he will have vengeance upon Henry for the impoverished circumstances he finds himself in:

‘He shall pay me for this...he sits in my place, he bears my name, he courts my wife; and I am here alone with a damned Irishman in this tooth-chattering desert! O, I have been a common gull!’<sup>84</sup>

Subsequently, James makes Henry’s life a living nightmare.

Despite James’s devilish traits and evil doings, his charismatic and endearing personality outshines Henry from the beginning of the narrative. Lord Durrisindeer admits that he likes James better than Henry, and the reader cannot dispute the faithful and loving countenance Miss Graeme carries for the Master despite his awful treatment of her before, and after, he leaves for Culloden:

All these years passed, never a sight of the man, little enough kindness to remember (by all accounts) even while she had him, the notion of his death intervening, his heartless rapacity laid bare to her; that all should not do, and she must still keep the best place in her heart for this accursed fellow, is a thing to make a plain man rage. I had never much natural sympathy for the passion of

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<sup>83</sup> Daiches, David, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1947) p.81

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p.53



love; but this unreason is my patron's wife disgusted me outright with the whole matter.<sup>85</sup>

The circumstances of his supposed death at Culloden places Henry in the eyes of Miss Graeme as a deserter to James. She informs Henry that: ““ There is none but me to know one thing – that you were a traitor to him in your heart.””<sup>86</sup> This view is not confined to Henry's family. The local peasantry have their part to play in degrading Henry's reputation. They pass crude judgment on the integrity of Henry's character. Henry is forced to face demeaning insults and humiliation while the memory of the Master becomes a handsome image of kindness and courage.

Mr Henry began to shunned; yet a while, and the commons began to murmur as he went by, and the women (who are always the most bold because they are the most safe) to cry out their reproaches to his face. The Master was cried up for a saint. It was remembered he had never any hand in pressing the tenants; as, indeed, no more he had, except to spend the money. He was a little wild perhaps, the folk said; but how much better was a natural, wild lad that would soon have settled down, than a skinflint and a sneckdraw sitting with his nose in an account book to persecute poor tenants! One trollop, who had had a child to the Master, and by all accounts had been very badly used, yet made herself a kind of champion of his memory...one calumny brought another; until my poor patron was so perished in reputation that he began to keep to the house...<sup>87</sup>

Here lies the folkloric aspect of the novel. Ultimately Stevenson's deprived lower classes move away from the provision of any diabolical insight like Hogg's. They serve to precipitate events in James's favour. Despite such degrading circumstances Henry keeps his integrity intact: 'he uttered no complaints at home, the very ground of scandal was too sore a matter to be handled; and Mr Henry was very proud, and strangely obstinate in silence.'<sup>88</sup> Essentially it is Henry's pride which serves as a means for James to seek his revenge. Like Gil-Martin he directs his energies to the manipulation and corruption of Henry's idealisms and family: the things closest and of the most importance to him.

The first notable change in Henry's behaviour comes after the communication that James is still alive. Writing to all three of his relations separately provides the

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<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p.64

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p.8

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, pp 9-10

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p.10

Master with scope to abuse Henry secretly. James provokes Henry into paying out his high demands of money by calling him a ‘niggardly dog’<sup>89</sup> in order to incite Henry into generosity. Despite Henry’s attempts to outsmart James, he still falls into the Master’s trap. By giving in to James’s demands for money Henry believes he has proven himself to be anything but a ‘niggardly dog’. However, Henry has become stringent with the Estate’s finances, which has severe repercussions. Lord Durriseer and Mrs Henry begin to resent Henry for his miserliness. They are kept unaware of the tensions between the brothers as Henry tends to the Master’s demands in secret with only MacKellar knowing the true state of affairs. MacKellar notes a change in Henry’s demeanour that implies all is not well with Henry’s sanity: ‘I durst no longer oppose him; indeed I was very much affected by the sight of so much disorder in a man usually so controlled.’<sup>90</sup>

With the constant withdrawals of money from the estate, the house of Durriseer’s reputation comes under such unbearable scrutiny that the proud, but unaware father and wife, question Henry’s intentions: ““These shameful proclivities must be trod down; we are already a mark and eyesore in the neighbourhood. ””<sup>91</sup> After this argument with his wife, MacKellar finds ‘Mr Henry in his usual retreat, the steward’s room, perched on the end of the table, and plunging his penknife in it with a very ugly countenance.’<sup>92</sup> James’s tactics have caused a subtle change in Henry’s person. He still maintains the same sense of pride but he has begun the journey to the same dark descended levels of his brother’s devilishness. This is the extent of James’s effect on Henry based on communication by letter alone. It is MacKellar’s interference at this stage which saves Henry’s sanity until James makes his appearance at the house of Durriseer.

James is conscious of the extent of Henry’s proud and resilient nature and strikes relentlessly at this when he returns home. Like MacKellar and Henry, James is fully aware that Mrs Henry still holds the best place in her heart for him. James uses this and his father’s doting attitude to his advantage. The Master also makes use of his theatricality and changing demeanour to provoke Henry. James courts Mrs Henry

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<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, p.58

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p.59

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p.62

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, p.62

every day, and even directs his attentions onto Henry's daughter, Miss Katherine, as a means of antagonising him. The Master makes his father and Mrs Henry deliberately ignorant of the taunts and insults he throws relentlessly at Henry in their absence. Due to Henry's pride, he finds himself in a restricted situation. Mr MacKellar explains:

It was on him the burthen fell. How was he to respond to the public advances of one who never lost a chance of gibing him in private? How was he to smile back on the deceiver and the insulter? He was condemned to seem ungracious. He was condemned to silence. Had he been less proud, had he spoken, who would have credited the truth? The acted calumny had done its work; my lord and Mrs Henry were the daily witnesses of what went on; they could have sworn in court that the Master was a model of long-suffering good nature, and Mr Henry a pattern of jealousy and thanklessness. And ugly enough as these must have appeared in anyone, they seemed tenfold uglier in Mr Henry; for who could forget that the Master lay in peril of his life, and that he had already lost his mistress, his title, and his fortune?<sup>93</sup>

Like Hogg's Gil-Martin, James has sought out and corrupted Henry's ideals in order to condemn him. He is so successful in his manipulation that Henry fully succumbs to the Master's trickery:

The Master...had never a movement but it commended him. So it befell that when the one appeared gracious and the other ungracious, every trick of their bodies seemed to call out confirmation. Not that alone: but the more deeply Mr Henry floundered in his brother's toils, the more clownish he grew; and the more the Master enjoyed his spiteful entertainment, the more engagingly, the more smilingly, he went! So that the plot, by its own scope and progress, furthered and confirmed itself.<sup>94</sup>

It is the Master's antics that give rise in Henry to a hatred and intolerance of his brother that brings about his own and James's downfall. The subsequent duel – brought about by James's malevolence - adds to the Master's apparent immortality, but more significantly, brings about a distinct change in Henry's demeanour.

The coma that Henry falls into after the 'fatal' duel with James is essentially his rebirth: Henry's manifestation into a demonic being on a par with James. This change becomes clear as Henry's health returns:

Upon his recovery, all was changed, the past forgotten, the wife first and even single in his thoughts. He turned to her with all his emotions, like a child to its

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<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p.74

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, p.75

mother, and seemed secure of sympathy; called her in all his needs with something of that querulous familiarity that marks a certainty of indulgence...when he was able to resume some charge of his affairs...there was no lack of understanding, nor yet of authority; but the old continuous interest had quite departed; he grew readily fatigued, and fell to yawning;...the whole thing marked a change, very slight yet very perceptible; and though no man could say my master had gone at all out of his mind, no man could deny that he had drifted from his character.<sup>95</sup>

From this point forward the balance of good and evil has been overturned. Previously Henry represented the stolid, upright and enduring moral example, where James was malign, virile and satanic. The tables are not turned: Henry has descended to the same dark level as James. Dr Jekyll warns the reader in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* that 'all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil.'<sup>96</sup> The novella illustrates this theory physically as Jekyll splits himself in two, to find that good and evil cannot survive separately. Henry Jekyll is taken over by the evil side of his character, Mr Hyde. Once he has been let loose there is no return to normality: 'Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil.'<sup>97</sup> Hyde overthrows Jekyll, just as Henry is overthrown by the Master. For the Duries, this is not a physical manifestation but a psychological one. James has been presented as naturally demonic since childhood. Henry's '[drift] from his character'<sup>98</sup> has been manufactured (like Hyde) by James's relentless taunts at his pride. Dr Jekyll philosophises: 'man is not truly one, but truly two.'<sup>99</sup> The transference of this wisdom to *The Master of Ballantrae*, where Henry is the good and James the evil, now sees both as malign and intolerant of the other. The balance of good and evil has been disrupted. Like Jekyll and Hyde, James and Henry are destined to die by the hand of the other.

MacKellar's narration, despite his bias towards Henry, gives a detailed account of the nature of both brothers. MacKellar's intimate knowledge of Henry's demeanour and personality clearly illustrates his degradation of character. MacKellar is forced to stand back and watch a sober and powerful man nurture a malign hatred and

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<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, pp 113-114

<sup>96</sup> Stevenson, RL., *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and The Weir of Hermiston* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p.64

<sup>97</sup> Stevenson (Jekyll&Hyde) *op cit.*, p.64

<sup>98</sup> Stevenson (Ballantrae) *op cit.*, p.114

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, p.61

intolerance that eventually drives Henry insane. Henry's demonic transformation is completed when he receives the pamphlet containing the ill-fated words:

“Another notorious Rebel, the M\_\_\_\_r of B\_\_\_\_e, is to have his Title restored...[t]his Business has been long in hand, since he rendered some very disgraceful Services in Scotland and France. His brother, L\_\_\_\_d D\_\_\_\_r, is known to be no better than himself in Inclination; and the supposed Heir, who is now to be set aside, was bred up in the most detestable Principles. In the old Phrase, it is *six of one and half a dozen of the other*; but the favour of such a Reposition is too extreme to be passed over.”<sup>100</sup>

His reaction to these circumstances sees Henry's 'countenance deformed with fury',<sup>101</sup> to the extent that MacKellar barely recognises him. MacKellar notes that on his entrance Henry 'sprang up like a figure upon wires'.<sup>102</sup> This implies Henry is no longer in control of his own actions. His fury at the thought of James has taken over his senses rendering him unconscious to his estate, his friends and family. As Gil-Martin takes possession of Robert's entirety, so too does James of Henry. It is with sincere regret and pity that MacKellar calls to mind who his master once was. This passage clearly demonstrates the extent of Henry's possession. For MacKellar, Henry, a man he once so much admired, has ultimately become one he now fears:

A kind man, I remembered him; wise, with a decent pride, a son perhaps too dutiful, a husband only too loving, one that could suffer and be silent, one whose hand I loved to press...this was the best man to me and to himself, and now I shrink from him.<sup>103</sup>

James is presented from the beginning of MacKellar's narrative as one whose demeanour is naturally diabolic. The demonic references within the text are numerous and come particularly with allusion to James. As a child he terrifies Wullie White the Wabster, an 'unco praying kind o' man'<sup>104</sup> who reprimands James for his behaviour. By way of revenge, James harasses the old man by making it seem that the devil is after him by putting gunpowder in his fire and such like. These actions appeal directly to Wullie's religious fears, notably Calvinist in origin. Consequently, a terrified Wullie dies convinced that he is going to spend an eternity in Hell. Such calculated misdeeds call to mind the tactics employed by Robert Wringham to get Old Barnet

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<sup>100</sup> Stevenson (Ballantrae) *op cit.*, p.18

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p.177

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, p177

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, pp109-110

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p.16

fired because he continually checked Robert for his behaviour,<sup>105</sup> and how he achieved the expulsion of his rival M’Gill from school.<sup>106</sup> It also highlights James’s ability to overwhelm a person by appealing directly and insidiously to their preferences. This is a trait he later uses to condemn his brother, and a technique employed by Gil-Martin in order to conquer Robert.

MacKellar’s narrative sees James referred to as a ‘devilish dissembler’.<sup>107</sup> James’s free trader associates tell the whistling Francis Burke to “‘wheest, in the deil’s name’”.<sup>108</sup> MacKellar notes on the Master’s first return to Durrisddeer that ‘devilish was his impudence’.<sup>109</sup> Lord Durrisddeer tells James, “‘I think you are a devil of a son to me.’”<sup>110</sup> James’s devilishness is also hinted at in the memoirs of Francis Burke. To avoid certain death, the Master and Burke volunteer themselves to serve as pirates on board the *Sarah*. During this adventure the reader witnesses James overthrowing Captain Teach who calls himself Satan, on a ship that Burke describes as a ‘kind of pandemonium...[that] might be called a floating Bedlam.’<sup>111</sup> It is significant that James takes charge of and successfully runs this ship and its devilish crew whom he abuses in order to guarantee his own safety and success. Burke’s memoirs only hint at the atrocities that were committed by the crew of the *Sarah* during the time of Ballantrae’s control. Burke recalls that ‘the scenes that must follow on our success tempted me as little as the chances of defeat,’<sup>112</sup> which the Chevalier believes to be high. However, the implication of rape in this section of the novel suggests an evilness in James’s character that surpasses the boundaries of what is considered an ‘acceptable crime’ in the context of the novel in order to guarantee his own safety and better his own position:

Twice we found women on board; and though I have seen towns sacked, and of late days in France some very horrid tumults, there was something in the smallness of number engaged, and the bleak dangerous sea surroundings, that made these acts of piracy far the most revolting.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, pp83-87

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, pp88-90

<sup>107</sup> Stevenson (Ballantrae), *op cit.*, p.98

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, p.60

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p.70

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, p.6

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, p.31

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, p.37

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, p.37

The textual suggestions are abundant. James's demonism is not confined to the insinuations of the narrative, however.

His time on board the *Sarah* demonstrates the Master's ability to turn his hand to anything. He has been a gentleman, a soldier and now a pirate and quartermaster. His initial return to Durrisdeer sees him as a fop with an English accent dressed in Parisian fashion, Henry reveals the Master's work as a British spy and in New York James presents himself as a tailor. Like Gil-Martin he has faces to suit every occasion, as well as a list of names. He is known as James, the Master of Ballantrae, Quartermaster, Mr Lally, Mr Bally and the Sahib. He also possesses the ability to incessantly change his demeanour. For example, as their circumstances in Albany take a turn for the worst, Burke is subjected to James 'ranting like an actor; and then...biting his fingers and staring at the ground, a most unchristian object.'<sup>114</sup> This observation illustrates the Master's ability to manipulate his appearance and is suggestive of a kind of malevolence. The depiction of the Master's devilish demeanour is continued as 'Ballantrae turn[s] to [Burke] with a face all wrinkled up, and his teeth showing, like what [he had] read of people starving; he said no word but his whole appearance was a kind of dreadful question.'<sup>115</sup> Like Gil-Martin, James is able to visibly manipulate his appearance. However, he does not carry this out through any supernatural means like Gil-Martin. James has the ability to direct any given situation to his best advantage.

It is with this skill that James continually manipulates events at Durrisdeer to better his own reception by Lord Durrisdeer and Mrs Henry, while simultaneously blemishing Henry's reputation. Henry remarks to James on their first encounter after the Master's 'death' at Culloden, "'you understand the power of your position excellently well.'<sup>116</sup> There is no doubt that James does, as he cleverly manipulates his entire family with his theatricality. As the reader is already aware, this provides James with a face for any and every occasion. The Master is careful to choose the best timing and methodology in order to manipulate his intended victim. This is clearly demonstrated by the advances made towards Mrs Henry in order to precipitate

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<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, p.53

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, p.54

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, p.70

Henry's degradation in character. The assault is initiated by a moving ballad sung to the family by James one evening at dinner.

O, I will dye my petticoat red,  
With my dear boy I'll beg my bread,  
Though all my friends should wish me dead,  
For Willie among the rushes, O!<sup>117</sup>

The Master's techniques are subtle but very effective. James seemingly directs his attention to pleasing his father with a tale and a song. This is clearly meant to affect Mrs Henry, however. The ballad he has chosen to sing is about an exile and the woes of his lover, a situation akin to his and Mrs Henry's. A state of affairs he does not duly care for, as is expressed by his virility, but one that is very deep-rooted in Henry's wife's heart. This remonstrance has clear connotations as far as the relationship between James and Mrs Henry is concerned. James informs his family: "It is supposed to be sung, I should tell you, by an exile's sweetheart; and represents perhaps not so much the truth of what she is thinking, as the truth of what he hopes of her"<sup>118</sup>. This affects Mrs Henry's reception of James from then forward. To Henry's dismay, she takes him back into her heart as he appeals to her deep seated and unerring devotion to him.

MacKellar's narrative allows the reader to clearly identify the methods of James's manipulation. However this is only made obvious with hindsight. As MacKellar explains, in the actual moment such a cleverly conceived performance has its desired effect and James's success becomes imminent.

He sang it well, even as a song; but he did better yet as a performer... the Master played upon that little ballad, and on those who heard him, like an instrument, and seemed now upon the point of failing, and now to conquer his distress, so that words and music seemed to pour out of his own heart and his own past... his arts went further yet; for all was so delicately touched, it seemed impossible to suspect him of the least design; and so far made a striking parade of emotion... we all sat silent for a time; he had chosen the dusk of the afternoon, so that none could see his neighbour's face...<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p. 79

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, p.79

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, pp 79-80



James's theatrical skill and ability to turn a situation to his advantage with a single gesture permeates *The Master of Ballantrae*. His abilities are not supernatural, but they do achieve the same effect and desired outcome as the designs Gil-Martin has on Robert Wringham. MacKellar's admission, 'what was in [James's] mind, God knows, or perhaps Satan only',<sup>120</sup> reinforces the idea that James presents a human figure who is inherently devilish in his methods and intent.

James is presented by Stevenson as a mortal being. However there is a distinction in his character that supports the textual suggestions that he is spectral. Stevenson reveals in a letter to Sidney Colvin that, 'the Master is all I know of the devil. I have known hints of him in the world, but always cowards; he is as bold as a lion...the Master has nothing but his devilry.'<sup>121</sup> This is true of James's pursuit of Henry, and his ability to affect a person or company with a single gesture. However his diablerie is most evident in his seeming immortality and the combination of admiration and hostility MacKellar finds he holds for the Master.

The events that surround the Master's 'deaths' enhance his apparent immortality. The first comes at the battle of Culloden when only one of James's drunken mob, who take their leave to fight with the Master, returns bearing the news of his death. James only makes his real circumstances known to his family when he requires money. This is followed by the 'fatal' duel during which Henry believes he has killed James. However the circumstances surrounding the Master's death are uncertain. MacKellar and Lord Durrissdeer decide it is most likely that James did in fact survive the duel after being lifted to safety by the free traders. The news of James's probable survival does not bode well with Henry. He tells MacKellar that "nothing can kill that man. He is not mortal. He is bound upon my back for all eternity – to all God's eternity!"<sup>122</sup> This statement suggests that James's survival is made certain because he lives only to torment Henry. 'Despite their mutual hatred each recognises that he cannot achieve fulfilment in the absence of the other.'<sup>123</sup> This idea is supported by the events which take place in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. As Hyde

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<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*, p.171

<sup>121</sup> Daiches, *op cit.*, p.77 letter from RL Stevenson to Sidney Colvin reproduced.

<sup>122</sup> Stevenson (*Ballantrae*), *op cit.*, p.115

<sup>123</sup> Hammond, JR., *A Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide to the Novels, Essays and Short Stories* (London: MacMillan, 1984) p.153

becomes stronger and begins to overtake Jekyll, he too becomes aware that without Jekyll it is impossible for Hyde to exist either. Like James, Hyde torments Jekyll by destroying his belongings, particularly a portrait of his father. However, the form of Jekyll is Hyde's safeguard and protection; without him Hyde would be persecuted and face certain death on the gallows. Evil takes over and both die. Likewise, Henry is consumed by his malevolence and malign hatred of James. This in turn kills both.

James's last supposed death in the wilderness of Albany is the most fantastic. Secundra Das teaches the Master the trick of swallowing his tongue, and after 'dying' from some feigned illness Secundra buries him alive for a matter of days. Henry is taken to see the grave of James which Secundra is frantically digging up. Again Henry is witness to James's return from the dead, as his freshly dug up corpse exhibits signs of life which confirms to Henry that James is indeed immortal. Henry can take no more and dies instantly, quickly followed by James. This is the Master's true hour of death, and it is significant that the brothers should die within seconds of each other. Ultimately Henry has fallen by the hand of James, as Gil-Martin is responsible for Robert's act of suicide. James's persistent manipulation of Henry's ideals can be compared to Satan's direct appeal to Robert's warped religious fanaticism.

The time MacKellar spends with James on the *Nonesuch* is crucial to the development of James's demonic representation. MacKellar becomes tolerant and even fond of the Master during the time spent alone with him at Durrisdeer. However, their voyage to America reveals another side of James's demeanour. His pleasant and cheerful countenance aboard the *Nonesuch* becomes unbearable to MacKellar.

This outer sensibility and inner toughness set me against him; it seemed of a piece with that impudent grossness which I knew to underlie the veneer of his fine manners; and sometimes my gorge rose against him as though he were deformed – and sometimes I would draw away as though from something partly spectral.<sup>124</sup>

MacKellar's feelings towards James confirms the suggestion in the text that he is the demonic in humanity. This revelation is emphasised by MacKellar's physical reaction to James's being, and underlined by the fact that a normally stolid man should exhibit

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<sup>124</sup> Stevenson (Ballantrae) *op cit.*, p.152

such emotions. It may be suggested that MacKellar's now intimate knowledge of James serves to reveal to him the true side of the Master's nature; his inherent devilishness. This explains why MacKellar's 'gorge rose against him'.<sup>125</sup> He is experiencing the same feelings of repulsion as were felt by those who encountered Hyde. Dr Lanyon explains:

This person (who had thus, from the first moment of his entrance, struck in me what I can only describe as a disgustful curiosity)...there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature that now faced me – something seizing, surprising and revolting...<sup>126</sup>

Neither James nor Hyde are physically deformed; it is their underlying hatred, intolerance and desire to harm that provokes in people a kind of repulsive fascination which simultaneously intrigues and repels. This is similar to the feelings which are roused in Robert during his initial encounters with Gil-Martin. Robert feels drawn towards Gil-Martin by a means of enchanted fascination while repressing an overwhelming urge to escape his grasp. This kind of repulsion is common to the demonic manifestations in the writings of Burns, Hogg and Stevenson.

In comparison with *Confessions*, James is a combination of Gil-Martin and Robert Wringham. The Master possesses qualities similar to Gil-Martin's. James has inherited Gil-Martin's changing demeanour. He also has the ability to contrive any situation to his advantage. James presents himself as seemingly immortal and has a supernatural mien. Like Gil-Martin he appeals to the preferences of his intended victim as a means to precipitate their condemnation. However, James pursues Henry as a means of revenge. The intentions of Hogg's Gil-Martin, once he has seduced Robert, remain ambiguous. The Master also has some affinity with Robert Wringham. Both characters represent the demonic in humanity and thrive upon a fraternal vendetta. However, James presents himself as a demon with a difference. Despite his malign, virile and satanic status, James is admirable and heroic. He is regarded with a high esteem by many of the characters throughout the novel. MacKellar aptly sums up the force of James's personality when he says: "Hell may have noble flames. I have known him a score of years, and always hated, and always admired, and always

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<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, p.152

<sup>126</sup> Stevenson (*Jekyll&Hyde*) *op cit.*, p.56

slavishly feared him.”<sup>127</sup> James’s popular reception denotes a change in the direction of the demonic representation in the Scottish canon.

David Daiches describes James as ‘one of the most effective studies of the hero as villain’.<sup>128</sup> The Master embodies admirable qualities. James’s various escapades, such as the battle of Culloden and his time on board the *Sarah*, demonstrate his bravery and prowess at dealing successfully with dangerous and futile situations. He is no coward in the face of death. MacKellar informs James that, “‘I do not think you could be so bad a man...if you had not all the machinery to be a good one.’”<sup>129</sup> This is an accurate observation, and validated by Dr Jekyll’s explanation to Hyde that ‘all human beings...are commingled out of good and evil.’<sup>130</sup> James befriends those he has a high regard for. James admires honesty and bravery in others, but will not tolerate those who are disloyal to him. This is the root of his devilish behaviour. He warns several characters in the narrative, including James and Francis Burke, that he is ‘an ill man to cross.’ James refutes Burke’s plea for help in India because of some undisclosed breach of trust committed earlier by the Chevalier. James’s incessant pursuit of Henry can be accounted for by the same token.

‘They do not know that I am the true Lord Durrisdeer, they do not know you are my younger brother, sitting in my place under a sworn family compact; they do not know (or they would not be seen with you in familiar correspondence) that every acre is mine before God Almighty – and every doit of the money you withhold from me, you do it as a thief, a perjurer and a disloyal brother!’<sup>131</sup>

It is MacKellar’s display of enduring loyalty to his master, Mr Henry, that gains him respect in the eyes of James. MacKellar’s attempt to push the Master overboard during the voyage to America, and his disparate prayer for the ship to sink and drown all on board, adds to the Master’s high opinion of MacKellar. James sees MacKellar as a brave and dutiful man. MacKellar’s attempts to provide the Master with the means to go to Albany from his own savings provokes this informative conversation between the two characters:

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<sup>127</sup> Stevenson (Ballantrae) *op cit.*, p.207

<sup>128</sup> Daiches, *op cit.*, p.75

<sup>129</sup> Stevenson (Ballantrae) *op cit.*, p.150

<sup>130</sup> Stevenson (Jekyll&Hyde) *op cit.*, p.64

<sup>131</sup> Stevenson (Ballantrae), *op cit.*, p.166

‘Mr Bally,’ said I, ‘I have near five hundred pounds laid by in Scotland, the economies of a hard life. A letter goes by yon ship to have it lifted. Have so much patience til the return ship comes in, and it is all yours, upon the same condition you offered to my lord this morning.’

He rose from the table, came forward, took me by the shoulders, and looked me in the face, smiling.

‘And yet you are very fond of money!’ said he. ‘And yet you love money beyond all things else, except my brother!’

‘I fear old age and poverty,’ said I, ‘which is another matter.’

‘I will never quarrel for a name. Call it so,’ he replied. ‘Ah! MacKellar, MacKellar, if this were done from any love to me, how gladly would I close upon your offer!’

‘And yet,’ I eagerly answered - ‘I say it to my shame, but I cannot see you in this poor place without compunction. It is not my single thought, nor my first; and yet it’s there! I would gladly see you delivered. I do not offer it in love, and far from that; but, as God judges me – and I wonder at it too! – quite without enmity.’

‘Ah!’ says he, still holding my shoulders, and now gently shaking me, ‘you think of me more than you suppose. ‘And I wonder at it too,’ he added, repeating my expression and, I suppose, something of my voice.

‘You are an honest man, and for that cause I spare you.’<sup>132</sup>

It is with Henry’s best intentions at heart that MacKellar offers James his savings. However, the Master refuses MacKellar’s gift on the grounds of this principle. If MacKellar’s intentions were in the Master’s favour then he would have no qualms about accepting MacKellar’s money. MacKellar is honest enough to admit his preference. James admires MacKellar for this and subsequently dismisses him without any malevolence. This conversation reveals what could be considered as a display of the Master’s code of ethics. This explains the nature of James behaviour towards Henry. This conversation suggests that, like Henry, James’s demonism is rooted in pride. However, James’s character is multifaceted. His volatile demeanour puts in doubt any sincerity the Master expresses. This man, who has a face for every occasion, cannot be trusted. There is no doubt the Master is gallant in situations that may cost him his life. His intentions are far from heroic, however. James’s bravery and hostile strategies are cunningly conceived as a means of bettering his own situation. James’s demonism is not rooted in pride, but greed, selfishness and a lust for revenge.

James is a hybrid form of the demonic and the heroic. He possesses all the greed, selfishness and hostility of Robert and the manipulative capabilities of Gil-

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<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, p.175

Martin. However, Stevenson moves his demonic representation away from the 'theological monomania' and 'grotesque Scottish diabolism' to use Francis Russell Hart's words<sup>133</sup> presented in Hogg's *Confessions*. James is 'all [Stevenson] knows of the devil',<sup>134</sup> but in the form of a heroic gentleman whose standards dictate any devilish onslaughts he carries out. Gil-Martin's appearance may be conceived as gentlemanly, however, his demeanour becomes horrific to Robert. James may repel MacKellar for a matter of days, however his mien is compared to 'all the splendour and some of the gravity of Milton's Satan.'<sup>135</sup> Like Milton's Satan, James is a handsome and valiant figure. His attractive and gentlemanly mien detracts from the real reason for his fallen position and the inner hatred and malignity he nurses for Henry. Many similarities can be drawn between the two. Milton's Satan is a moody, dark figure whose arrogance is later developed by Stevenson in the character of James Durie. The Master of Ballantrae appears (like the Arch Fiend) to carry an air of splendour despite being continually defeated. He is full of pride and harbours a courage which is fuelled by a desire for revenge. James continually rebels against his brother whom he perceives to be in an unfair position of power. Milton's Satan views God in a similar light. Both Satan and James are skilled rhetoricians whose verbosity instil in the reader a sense of admiration and even a little sympathy. Despite their dire situations, the Arch Fiend and the Master of Ballantrae convey an immense passion and an abundance of energy.

The psychological aspect of *The Master of Ballantrae* demonstrates the manifestation of a demonic figure in Henry, similar to the creation of Robert Wringham's own diabolism. Both figures become pitiful in their lot but refuted for their pride and malignity that are responsible for their eventual downfall. Whether supernaturally or psychologically manipulated or manufactured both figures have succumbed to a type of possession. However, it is the possessor that proves to be of more significance. The figure of the devil in Scottish literature is in a state of continuous change. This has been demonstrated in the representation of the Devil in Burns's work and that of Hogg, from the grotesque bodily figure of Burns's devil, to the gentlemanly appearance of Gil-Martin. *The Master of Ballantrae* witnesses

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<sup>133</sup> quote from FR Hart found in Mack, D., 'Hogg's Religion and *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*' in *Studies in Scottish Literature XII* (University of South Carolina Press: 1971) p.167

<sup>134</sup> Daiches, *op cit.*, p.77

<sup>135</sup> Stevenson (Ballantrae), *op cit.*, p.136

another mutation in the changing representation of the demonic figure in the Scottish canon.

Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*

The comparison of Spark's novel with the works of Burns, Hogg and Stevenson reveals similarities in the use of the older and darker characteristics of the supernatural in Scottish fiction. Dougal Douglas possesses demonic abilities and a demeanour akin to that of Gil-Martin and James Durie. Dougal displays a kind of polymorphic ability and wreaks havoc on the community of Peckham. His techniques however are not subtly employed as by Gil-Martin and the Master. Dougal openly and ironically exploits his supernatural features by claiming to have had his horns removed by a plastic surgeon, and informs Humphrey, quite frankly, that he is "one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls."<sup>136</sup> This ironic openness is itself beguilingly ambivalent: who in the modern world would believe him? Dougal may be a modern demon but his traits are peculiarly Scottish. However Spark's style and literary technique transpire to reveal a different authorial approach to the representation of the dynamic of the Devil.

Spark appears to consider her conversion to Catholicism as responsible for the change in her perspective from that of a literary critic to that of a novelist. Spark states:

Much of the writing I had done...had just been critical work...I was an Anglican intellectually speaking in 1952, though I didn't join them until the end of 1953. And I became a Catholic in 1954. I think there is a connection between my writing and my conversion, but I don't want to be too dogmatic about it. Certainly all my best work has come since then.<sup>137</sup>

This conversion is crucial to the interpretation of her work. An obscure connectedness between ancient pagan ritual, the hypocrisy of Calvinism and the psychological interpretation of reality is the focus of Hogg's *Confessions*. It proves to be his religious beliefs and prejudices that contribute to the creation of such a profoundly disturbing work. Likewise, Spark allows her religiosity to infiltrate her

<sup>136</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.77

<sup>137</sup> Randisi, Jennifer Lynn, *On Her Way Rejoicing: The Fiction of Muriel Spark* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991) p.52 an extract taken from Muriel Spark, 'My Conversion,' *Twentieth Century* 170 (Autumn 1961) p.59



fiction. She informs Janice Galloway during an interview that “‘I write as a Scot and I write as a Catholic.’”<sup>138</sup> To write as a Catholic is to see a drama of good and evil that others do not see according to Piers Paul.<sup>139</sup> Hogg’s commentary on Calvinism as a religious practice of Devil worship in *Confessions*, when compared to Spark’s belief in a Divine economy, reveals a dichotomy in the representation of the demonic in Scottish literature. Hogg and Stevenson suggest that the work of the Devil, or demon, is directed to ensure the successful condemnation of his chosen victim. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, on the other hand, expresses the belief that everything is within God’s power, including the Devil. Hence Dougal serves in God’s Divine economy with a devilish intent that depicts him as a kind of ‘angel-devil’.<sup>140</sup>

Spark reveals the demonic within *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* through various aspects of literary technique and style similar to those encountered in the work of Hogg and Stevenson. The dark fatalism of *Confessions* and *The Master of Ballantrae* is made apparent from the onset of each novel, and *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* is no different. For example from the beginning of the narrative, Dougal Douglas is blamed for Humphrey’s act of abandoning Dixie at the altar on their wedding day. The reader is not provided with any information that explains why Dougal is held responsible for Humphrey’s actions, or why particular members of the community also missed the occasion. However, it is made clear that an ambiguous and sinister air surrounds the character of Dougal Douglas and the events that have taken place during his presence in Peckham:

Miss Merle Coverdale, lately head of the typing pool, did not hear of it. Mr Druce, lately Managing Director, did not hear of it. Neither did Dougal Douglas, the former Arts man, nor his landlady Miss Belle Frierne who had known all Peckham in her youth.<sup>141</sup>

Spark’s approach to the portrayal of the demonic in her novel is more akin to the combination of folklore and religiosity employed by Hogg in *Confessions*. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* presents a demonry that is based on the realm of Scottish folklore and Spark’s Catholicism. The realm of folklore is prevalent in Spark’s

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<sup>138</sup> Galloway, Janice, *An Interview with Muriel Spark* <http://www.galloway.1to1.org/Spark.html> (downloaded 03/02/03)

<sup>139</sup> Horne, Brian, ‘On the Representation of Evil in Modern Literature’ in *New Blackfriars* Jan 2003

<sup>140</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.30

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, p.14

demonic representation and the title of her novel emphasises this. The events that surround the arrival and departure of Dougal Douglas are subject to gossip mongering at the beginning and close of the narrative. The detached fashion in which events are referred to during these conversations recalls the devices that are familiar to the traditional Scottish popular ballad. For example, the lack of narrative consistency of the ballad, due to its word-of-mouth nature, is highlighted during the opening of the novel. Dixie and Humphrey's wedding becomes

a legend [that is] referred to from time to time in pubs when the conversation takes a matrimonial turn. Some say the bridegroom came back repentant and married the girl in the end. Some say, no, he married another girl, while the bride married the best man. It is wondered if the bride had been carrying on with the best man for sometime past. It is sometimes told that the bride died of grief and the groom shot himself on the Rye. It is generally agreed that he answered 'No' at his wedding, that he went away alone on his wedding day and turned up again later.<sup>142</sup>

These events are passed on and altered as they spread from person to person much like Scotland's oral ballad tradition. This frame that surrounds the narration of the actual events leading up to Humphrey and Dixie's wedding, creates a detached sense of reality and 'firmly place[s] the episodes of the novel in a distant realm of hearsay and fable.'<sup>143</sup> This is not confined to the work of Spark. Hogg and Stevenson both make use of the device of the unreliable narrator in their novels. In all three texts these devices contribute to the elliptical nature of the narrative by creating an innate sense of ambiguity surrounding the scenes of death, violence and the supernatural which permeate these works.

Spark continues to manipulate the form of the ballad in her novel through the use of formulaic description and laconic dialogue. This is exemplified by the events surrounding Merle Coverdale's murder at the hands of Mr Druce. Merle tells Druce that she would like a "glass of red wine... to buck [her] up."<sup>144</sup> This calls to mind the colours associated with the realm of the ballad such as green and gold for fairy land and the colour red which is associated with blood. Druce stabs Merle to death with a corkscrew in a bloody frenzy. Spark reports this episode in a concise and detached

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<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>143</sup> Whittaker, Ruth, *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (London: McMillan, 1982) p.95

<sup>144</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.134

manner that reflects the laconic dialogue typical to the ballad form: 'He came towards her with the corkscrew and stabbed it into her long neck nine times, and killed her. Then he took his hat and went home to his wife.'<sup>145</sup>

Dougal's demonry is essentially a combination of the demonic characteristics associated with Gil-Martin and James, as well as those which belong to the Devil of Scottish folklore. The insinuation of Dougal's character as demonic is indisputable in the context of Spark's narrative. He has clearly inherited his polymorphic abilities and manipulative techniques from Gil-Martin and James. Spark has also maintained in Dougal's character, the popular conception of the Devil as existing in human form. Like James, Dougal is human and fallible, but still distinctively demonic. Spark has added to Dougal's character a sense of ridicule and the innate absurdity that is associated with a more traditional and grotesque folk diabolism. This is an area that neither Gil-Martin nor James entertain. However the most significant change to the demonic representation embodied in Dougal's character comes with his admission to Merle that he 'has the ability to drive devils out of people.'<sup>146</sup>

This claim denotes a demonic intent that is not familiar to either Gil-Martin or James. Both characters use their demonry to implicate and condemn their chosen victim. Dougal's diabolical intentions and actions are not conducive to such illicit and vindictive schemes - despite Dougal's employment of similar seductive techniques. This creates a sense of ambiguity surrounding the actual purpose of Dougal's devilish behaviour. Dougal admits to being a devil himself, but he also plays the part of an exorcist. This becomes apparent during the course of the narrative, and is later confirmed when Dougal informs Merle that to be a devil and to have the ability to drive other peoples devils out are 'two states which are not incompatible.'<sup>147</sup> Dougal embodies these two seemingly contradictory positions. His devilish antics give rise to the unearthing of subconscious desires and buried beliefs and prejudices belonging to the inhabitants of Peckham, which eventually erupt into full-blown pandemonium.

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<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, p.136

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, p.102

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, p.102

There are clear similarities and distinct differences to be drawn between Hogg, Stevenson and Spark's demonic characters. Dougal does not prey on any particular individual, but instead turns Peckham into a kind of Pandemonium. When Dougal's behaviour causes Weedin and Druce to exorcise their inner demons, Merle exclaims, "this place is becoming chaos."<sup>148</sup> His methods, to an extent, reflect those employed by Gil-Martin and James, and culminate in a similar outcome. For example, Dougal employs the use of several different names in the course of the narrative. He refers to himself as Dougal Douglas, Douglas Dougal and "Mr Dougal-Douglas... spelt with a hyphen"<sup>149</sup>, depending on circumstances. Dougal reveals polymorphic capabilities and displays physical deformity, a trait also associated with evil characters such as Edward Hyde, and the figure of the Devil. The reader is witness to MacKellar and Robert's repulsion at the appearance of James and Gil-Martin which is provoked by some sense of deformity. However, Dougal's crooked shoulder is received with a mixture of fascination and sympathy. Mr Willis perceives Dougal to be a 'solid steady Edinburgh boy, all the steadier for the hump on his shoulder.'<sup>150</sup> Annette Wren receives a slap on the face for laughing at Dougal during the canteen episode. She is told, "You're ignorant. Can't you see he is handicapped?"<sup>151</sup> Elaine Kent has the same attitude. She asks Trevor Lomas, "Can't you see he's deformed?... making game of a chap like that, it's ignorant."<sup>152</sup> However, Dougal's crooked shoulder has endowed him with a preternatural strength and a claw-like grip which is advantageous to him in the midst of a fight. This suggests more of a grotesque diabolism than is inherent to James or Gil-Martin. It is closer to the realm of folklore and stories of the Devil that involve 'The Earl of Hell' or 'Auld Cloutie'.<sup>153</sup> For example, the Devil in Scotland is treated as a familiar but more often than not is subjected to some form of ridicule. It is reported that in the seventeenth century the Chief of the Clan Mackay, Donald Mackay, outsmarted 'The Earl of Hell'. To avoid being made a disciple of the Devil, Mackay fooled the Earl of Hell into grabbing his own shadow when trying to escape his grasp, thus leaving him shadowless forever. The stories of 'Auld Cloutie' associate the Devil with any physical deformities or odd land formations.

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<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, p.67

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, p.75

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, p.69

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*, p.42

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, p.45

<sup>153</sup> Campbell, Harry, *Supernatural Scotland* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1999) pp 32-36

However, Dougal is neither a conventional nor a traditional demon by the standards of Gil-Martin or James Durie. His victims are not illegitimate, nor does Dougal harbour any malign hatred or thirst for revenge. Like Gil-Martin, Dougal becomes confidante to his victims: Humphrey, Merle and Miss Friene. However his friendship is not malign or deceitful. Dougal is in fact brutally honest, as this conversation with Merle demonstrates:

She told Dougal how she had fallen out of love with Mr Druce yet could not discontinue the relationship, she didn't know why.

'You've got used to him,' Dougal said.

'I suppose so.'

'But you feel,' Dougal said, 'that you're living a lie.'

'I do,' she said. 'You've put my very thoughts into words.'<sup>154</sup>

Dougal's approach is not vindictive. He does not calculate or plan the ensuing calamities of the narrative in cold blood. He also uses his demonic qualities to entertain his associates endlessly. For example, later on in the narrative, Dougal takes Elaine Kent to Findlater's ballroom where,

bearing before him the lid of dust-bin, which he had obtained from the back premises...he placed...upside down on the floor, sat cross-legged inside it, and was a man in a rocking boat rowing for his life...he performed a Zulu dance with the lid for a shield...Next Dougal sat on his haunches and banged a message out on a tom-tom. He sat up and with the lid on his head he was a Chinese coolie eating melancholy rice. He was an ardent cyclist, crouched over handlebars and pedalling uphill with the lid between his knees. He was an old woman with an umbrella; he stood on the upturned edges of the lid and speared fish from his rocking canoe; he was the man at the wheel of a racing car; he did many things with the lid before he finally popped the dust-bin lid up on his high shoulder, beating this cymbal rhythmically with his hand while with the other hand he limply conducted an invisible band, being, with long blank face, the band leader.<sup>155</sup>

This animated performance seems to be for no particular reason. It does however reveal explicitly the range of his polymorphic abilities, and provokes diverse reactions from the crowd. Some people are amused and entertained, where others become insulted and irritated by his performance. However, what is most significant about this display is the comedic aspect. Dougal takes on another facet of the Scottish 'diabolos' which Gil-Martin and James do not entertain. Demonology and ridicule are often

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<sup>154</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.31

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, pp 59-60

deliberately linked in Scottish folklore. This is a concept which aptly describes the antics of Dougal Douglas. The supernatural poetry of Burns and Samuel Scrape's tale to Robert, reveal to the reader the ridiculousness and absurdity which can be associated with the figure of the Devil, particularly when Robin Ruthven pulls back the Preacher's cloak to reveal a cloven hoof.

Dougal does not require a figure like Robin Ruthven to expose his demonic traits or indeed ridicule them. He quite capably does this by himself. Dougal mocks the subtlety and underhandedness associated with James and Gil-Martin when he explicitly reveals his diabolical features. Dougal invites practically every character in the novel to feel the two bumps on his head. Dougal claims that these are the lumps left after a plastic surgeon removed his horns. Humphrey asks him, "You supposed to be the Devil, then?"<sup>156</sup> Dougal replies "No, oh, no, I'm only supposed to be one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls."<sup>157</sup> After Mr Weedon feels these lumps, and is on the verge of collapse, he confides in Merle that he believes Dougal to be "a diabolical agent, if not in fact the Devil."<sup>158</sup> Dougal continually reminds Maria Cheeseman how he does not like crossing the river to visit her. When Humphrey has a pint glass impaled in his face by Trevor, Dougal says when taking him to hospital, "Though it pains me to cross the river...I think we'd better avoid the southern region tonight."<sup>159</sup> Although these claims are accurate and reflect some popular conceptions of demonic behaviour, Dougal's projection of them verges on mockery. Dougal's character becomes a caricature of the Devil which culminates in a grossly exaggerated and ridiculous demonic representation.

Yet the utilisation of this combination of ridicule and demonry allows Dougal to achieve success in his devilish exposure. Dougal makes use of his inherited polymorphic abilities and manipulative techniques and he displays these during his second interview with Druce:

Dougal sat like a monkey-puzzle tree, only moving his eyes to follow Mr Druce...Dougal changed his shape and became a professor. He leaned one elbow

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<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, p.77

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*, p.77

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*, p.81

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, p.111

over the back of his chair and reflected kindly upon Mr Druce...Dougal leaned forward and became a television interviewer. Mr Druce stopped walking and looked at him in wonder.<sup>160</sup>

Here Dougal, like Gil-Martin and James Durie before him, is manipulating his demeanour to appeal to his chosen victim in order to fulfil his own needs. Dougal uses his powers of perception at his initial interview with Druce to ensure his employment with Meadows, Meade and Grindley. Dougal puts 'Mr Druce through the process of his smile, which was wide and full of white young teeth; he made movements with the alarming bones of his hands.'<sup>161</sup> Dougal is perfectly aware that Mr Druce is fascinated by him and uses this knowledge to his every advantage.

Dougal has intentionally but subtly used his changing mien to secure employment. However, this ability to change his demeanour is not always resorted to by Dougal as a means to achieve success in some dire self-advantageous plot or to achieve a better position, like Gil-Martin and the Master of Ballantrae. Dougal is a demon, and his devilish intentions are summarised by Gerard Carruthers who explains that: 'Dougal obeys that particular set of ancient demonological rules which dictate that an evil spirit can work only as a catalyst.'<sup>162</sup> In order to drive out the devils in Peckham's inhabitants, Dougal inflicts his demonry onto whomever he meets. Dougal however is restricted in what course of action he can take, like Gil-Martin, and has to work within a particular set of boundaries. Dougal's infiltration into the lives of Peckham's inhabitants is not as aggressive or indeed as oppressive as the actions of Gil-Martin. Gil-Martin pressurises Robert into action through incessant psychological manipulation and physical possession. Within certain boundaries, Gil-Martin also directs events in *Confessions* with his supernatural abilities. Dougal does not deliberately instigate the events which occur during the course of the narrative. His methods expose the mundane and corrupt lives of his victims, but his presence only accelerates the action to an already inevitable outcome. This is exemplified by his interference in the affair between Mr Druce and Merle Coverdale.

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<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*, pp 15-16

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, p.15

<sup>162</sup> Carruthers, Gerard, 'The Remarkable Fictions of Muriel Spark', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* edited by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) p.517

Dougal exposes their illicit relationship as being nothing more than a reflection of a monotonous marriage. Merle and Druce are stuck in a relationship of habit where they merely 'go through motions' so to speak. Spark reports this laconically which reflects the ballad form and, appropriately, the nature of their actions.

Then they went into the bedroom and took off their clothes in a steady rhythm. Merle took off her cardigan and Mr Druce took off his coat. Merle went to the wardrobe and brought out a green quilted silk dressing-gown. Mr Druce went to the wardrobe and found his blue dressing-gown with white spots. Merle took off her blouse and Mr Druce his waistcoat. Merle put the dressing-gown over her shoulders and, concealed by it, took off the rest of her clothes, with modest gestures. Mr Druce slid off his braces and emerged from his trousers. These he folded carefully and, padding across the room to the window, laid them on a chair. He made another trip bearing his waistcoat and jacket which he placed over the back of the chair... Mr Druce rose first and put on his dressing-gown. He went to wash and returned very soon, putting a wet irritable hand round the bedroom door. Merle said, 'Oh, isn't there a towel?' and taking a towel from a drawer, placed it in his hand.

When he returned she was dressed.

She went into the scullery and put on the kettle while he put on his trousers and went home to his wife.<sup>163</sup>

With Dougal's interference and probing questions, Merle admits to the drudgery of her relationship with Druce, and the contempt that she holds for him. She confides in Dougal, "[I]...like a fool took up with Mr Druce. Now I can't get away from him, somehow. You've unsettled me, Dougal, since you came to Peckham."<sup>164</sup> Dougal has made her realise how she really feels and has exposed her situation for what it truly is. Dougal coaxes Merle into admitting that she only maintains her relationship with Druce to ensure the upkeep of her flat and the security of her job.

Dougal is nothing more to Merle than her confidante. However their relationship sparks off in Druce an intense jealousy which ultimately leads to Merle's murder. Dougal thus exposes another demon. The nature of Druce's behaviour towards Merle throughout the narrative implies that her murder was inevitable. Merle's friendship with Dougal merely provides Druce with an excuse to fulfil his subconscious desire to stab Merle to death. For example:

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<sup>163</sup> Spark *op cit.*, pp53-54

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, p.98



Merle brought in some bread. Mr Druce took a bread knife from the drawer and looked at her. Then he placed the knife beside the bread board.<sup>165</sup>

They stayed in bed for an hour, in the course of which Merle twice screamed because Mr Druce had once pinched her and once bit her. 'I'm covered with marks as it is,' she said.<sup>166</sup>

Mr Druce lifted his paper-knife, toyed with it in his hand, pointed it at Merle, and put it down.<sup>167</sup>

It then seems inevitable that Druce would have eventually killed Merle with some sharp object regardless of Dougal's actions.

In every relationship he initiates Dougal exposes the banal or corrupted lives the people of Peckham lead. For example, his behaviour suggests to Humphrey that there is a life other than the one he is pursuing with Dixie, hence he leaves her at the altar. Dougal also exposes what he refers to as 'wee guilty consciences'<sup>168</sup> when he pretends to be in league with the police. This initiates rumours informing his associates at his places of employment of his 'position'. In turn Dougal receives an increase in his wages. Dougal's psychological manipulation is not vindictive or oppressive like that of James or Gil-Martin, although his presence does coincide with murder. Dougal's actions and questions are suggestive of something different: the existence of another world. His behaviour provokes a reaction in his victims which exposes the 'skeletons in their cupboards' and exorcises their inner demons. This uprooting of such deep-seated emotions, whether they are prejudices or guilty consciences, creates chaos for all those involved. For example, Miss Frierne's meticulous nature is the source of her repulsion when she is confronted with the prospect that her brother could be a tramp. Dougal reveals her tidy habits, particularly when he makes his own bed so perfectly that Miss Frierne leaves him a note expressing her delight. The death of her brother and her sudden stroke should be associated with her guilty conscience for choosing to ignore her brother because of her prejudice toward his bedraggled appearance. These events are outside Dougal's control. He only serves to highlight Miss Frierne's demon, which is a tidiness that borders on the ridiculous, and has clouded her better judgement with regard to the

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<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*, p. 82

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127

position of her brother. Dougal ‘transfigures the common place demonically’<sup>169</sup> but his actions serve to highlight ‘the self allusion and deceit... as is the emptiness of the lives of most of the inhabitants of Peckham Rye.’<sup>170</sup>

Dougal Douglas is distinctively demonic, he does wreak havoc for his victims, and his diabolism is peculiarly Scottish. However, the change in presentation of the demonic is evident. Dougal’s approach, his moral ambiguity and the eventual outcome of the narrative, clearly denote a definite difference in the representation of the demonic figure in Scottish literature. Where Hogg combined his knowledge of Scottish folklore with his views on Calvinism to create such profundity in *Confessions*, Spark does likewise in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. Spark’s statement to Janice Galloway, ‘I write as a Scot and I write as a Catholic’,<sup>171</sup> is crucial to understanding the change in perspective Spark’s diabolism takes. As Piers Paul explains, ‘to write as a Catholic is to see a drama of good and evil that others do not see.’<sup>172</sup> Spark’s fiction then does not adhere to the dark manipulation and violation of Hogg’s narrative, which witnesses the full condemnation, and damnation of Robert to an eternity in Hell.

As Carruthers perceives, Dougal is a catalyst. His presence acts as a stimulant, which helps bring to the surface the underlying mundanity, and corruption of Peckham’s inhabitants. His methods may be similar to Gil-Martin’s and James’s, but the crucial difference lies in the lack of malignity and viciousness, and the actual outcome of the narrative. Spark’s alternate theological view of events within the Divine economy present a more complex notion than those put forward by Hogg and Stevenson. Their dark diabolical narratives climax in a brutal fatalism and obscure conclusion. To view *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* from a Calvinist perspective, as in the work of Stevenson and particularly Hogg (a trait that is seminal to many Scottish texts) is to misinterpret the meaning behind Spark’s work. Margery Palmer McCulloch does this when she claims that ‘Dougal conducts his “human research” like a Calvinist God, directing and reordering the lives of employers and fellow

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<sup>169</sup> Randisi, *op cit.*, p.25

<sup>170</sup> McCulloch, Margery Palmer, ‘Nasty Surprises and A Kind of Truth: Calvinism and Narrative Discourse in Three Novels by Muriel Spark’ in *Odd Alliances: Scottish Studies in European Contexts* edited by Neil McMillan and Kirsten Stirling (Glasgow Cruithne Press, 1999) p.94

<sup>171</sup> Galloway, *op cit.*, (03/02/03)

<sup>172</sup> Horne, *op cit.*, p.31

employees at whim'.<sup>173</sup> Spark's novel may reflect a similar tragic outcome, but it has been formed from an entirely different perspective. A sense of ambiguity is familiar to all these texts, however Dougal's moral ambiguity is central to Spark's narrative: an aspect which is not characteristic of Hogg or Stevenson.

Dougal's demonism projects a kind of energy which has the potential to provoke either insight or chaos, depending on how it is utilised. Spark suggests, as her novel comes to a close, that Dougal's powers could have been used advantageously. The only character who seems to gain insight out of Dougal's presence is Humphrey. As he looks out on the Rye after his marriage to Dixie, Humphrey perceives 'the women coming home from work with their shopping bags, the Rye for an instant looking like a cloud of green and gold, the people seeming to ride upon it, as you might say there was another world than this.'<sup>174</sup> Humphrey's eyes have been opened to the prospect of a different existence other than his own. However, for the majority of Peckham's inhabitants, their prejudices and corruption are so deep-rooted that no one else has been able to direct Dougal's energy positively. The outcome of events involving Dougal, Merle, Druce, Miss Frieme and Mr Weedon clearly demonstrates the alternative outcome. This highlights Dougal's position as a demon and an exorcist. However it is a position which proves to be crucial to an understanding of the change in demonic representation in Spark's novel.

Jennifer Lynn Randisi best explains Dougal's status in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. Dougal's moral ambiguity connects him to the female protagonists that Randisi describes: 'each is a woman...either possesses a guardian spirit – or an inspiring presence like the "diamon" of Greek mythology – or is possessed by a demon.'<sup>175</sup> Ultimately Dougal's character embodies both. Dougal as the possessive spirit, be it demonic or daimonic, is revealed by Spark when Dougal and Merle wander through a cemetery. Dougal, 'posed like an angel on a grave which had only an insignificant headstone. He posed like an angel-devil, with his hump shoulder and gleaming smile, and his fingers of each hand widespread against the sky. She looked startled. Then she

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<sup>173</sup> McCulloch, *op cit.*, p.93

<sup>174</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.143

<sup>175</sup> Randisi, *op cit.*, p. 24

laughed.’<sup>176</sup> Spark’s description of Dougal as an ‘angel-devil’ implicates the concept of Randisi’s demon and daimonic. This is emphasised further by Merle’s reaction. She is shocked but then amused. Her response depends on how she interprets and directs her reaction to Dougal’s behaviour. The inhabitants’ reactions to Dougal’s behaviour are central to the outcome of the narrative.

This demonism, and daimonism, creates two alternative interpretations in Spark’s novel. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* then presents two narratives, like *Confessions*, which are obscurely connected. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* is a combination of Spark’s knowledge of the older and darker characteristics of the supernatural in the Scottish canon, and her Catholic beliefs and prejudices. The culmination of these ideas is similar to the concepts which are manipulated by Hogg in *Confessions*. Hogg’s novel is an amalgam of his views on Calvinism and the demonry of Scottish popular mythology and folklore passed on to him by his mother. Spark merges her Catholic beliefs with her knowledge of Scottish folklore, which she has gained, partly, from her familiarity with Hogg’s work. It is no coincidence that *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* contains scenes of erupting violence on the town’s tennis courts. This is an episode which mirrors Robert’s stalking and haranguing of George while he and his friends play tennis in Edinburgh. Dougal is in fact a descendant of Gil-Martin, and thereby James Durie as well. This is made explicit, as has been already been suggested, by Dougal’s demonic traits and supernatural features regardless of the absurdity with which he presents them. Spark’s manner and authorial technique is also comparable with Hogg’s. A sense of ambiguity is central to both *Confessions* and *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. It is never made explicit whether or not Dougal plays the part of a catalyst or is in fact fully responsible for the ensuing chaos in Spark’s novel. Similarly, uncertainty surrounds the question of Gil-Martin’s existence. As previously noted the narrative suggests either Gil-Martin is the Devil himself or a hallucination resulting from Robert’s mental deterioration. Like Hogg and Stevenson, Spark also makes use of the device of the unreliable narrator. Hogg’s novel is compiled from ‘The Editor’s Narrative’ which relies mainly on hearsay, and Robert’s personal memoirs in which he admits to being a compulsive liar:

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<sup>176</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.30

I was particularly prone to lying...one lie always paved the way for another, from hour to hour, from day to day, and from year to year; so that I found myself constantly involved in a labyrinth of deceit, from which it was impossible to extricate myself.<sup>177</sup>

Neither of which provide a consistent narrative foundation. Likewise, excerpts from Ephraim MacKellar's diary and the memoirs of Francis Burke tell the story of *The Master of Ballantrae*. In *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, Spark's characters continually gossip, exaggerating and manipulating their experiences or other's stories. Spark's novel demonstrates the inaccuracy of this type of narration. For example, the reader witnesses a conversation between Humphrey and Mrs Crewe at the opening of the novel:

'Get away from here, you dirty swine,' she said.  
'There's a dirty swine in every man,' he said  
'Showing your face round here again,' she said.  
'Now, Mavis, now, Mavis,' he said.  
She was seen to slam the door in his face, and he to press the bell, and she to open the door again.  
'I want a word with Dixie,' he said. 'Now, Mavis, be reasonable.'  
'My daughter,' Mavis said, 'is not in.' She slammed the door in his face.<sup>178</sup>

Later Mrs Crewe relates these events to her daughter Dixie and Trevor Lomas, leaving out crucial pieces of information and fabricating bits to take their place:

...I went to the door, and lo and behold there he was on the doorstep. He said, "Hallo, Mavis," he said. I said, "You just hop it, you." He said, "Can I see Dixie?" I said, "You certainly can't," I said. I said, "You're a dirty swine. You remove yourself," I said, "and don't show your face again," I said. He said, "Come on, Mavis." I said "Mrs Crewe to you," and I shut the door in his face.<sup>179</sup>

Despite these obvious similarities, the dynamic of Spark's devil or demon takes a significant change in direction.

The events that take place during Dougal's presence in Peckham create a sense of ambiguity surrounding the purpose and intentions of his antics and behaviour. '[T]o see Dougal as a devil or a devilish sprite leading the good but dull people of

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<sup>177</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, p.88

<sup>178</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.7

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*, p.11

Peckham astray is a red herring'.<sup>180</sup> As has been discussed, Dougal uproots the inner demons of Peckham's inhabitants which ultimately, for the majority, causes chaos. As Dougal 'take[s] the pulse of the people and plumb[s] the industrial depths of Peckham'<sup>181</sup>, he comes to the conclusion that 'the frequency with which...employees use the word 'immoral'...[and] how equally often they use the word 'ignorant' ...are significant... psychologically and sociologically.'<sup>182</sup> Dougal's powers of exorcism and the culmination of events that take place during the narrative suggest that:

the demons among us have many psychological, sociological, political, and even economic names. We are each other's demons. We are, above all, our own demons. The person who feels possessed by a demon is simply a few steps beyond the many irrational acts of compulsion and taboo that most of us practise almost automatically and unknowingly.<sup>183</sup>

To practise 'automatically' and 'unknowingly', even habitually, is how the inhabitants of Peckham live their lives from day to day. Dougal merely highlights this. His presence as a stimulant accelerates the action to a foregone conclusion, which emphasises to the reader the dangers of living life in this fashion. Accordingly Spark's novel then becomes an anthropological study. However Spark's demonic 'transfiguration of the commonplace'<sup>184</sup> suggests an underlying and more complex agenda.

'Demonology' is defined as being the study of demons and demonic possession, and as a belief in or worship of demons. Spark's novel, and the majority of her fiction, is permeated by such preternatural interventions which provide the opportunity for either insight or chaos. The crossing of 'unseen and visible realities'<sup>185</sup> is a concept that is crucial to the understanding of Spark's work: 'I haven't a strong sense of distinction between natural and supernatural; I think we are

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<sup>180</sup> Boyd, William, 'Introduction' in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* by Muriel Spark (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1999) p. vi

<sup>181</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.17

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, p.82

<sup>183</sup> Hart, Francis Russell, 'Ridiculous Demons' in *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision* edited by Alan Bold (London: Vision, 1984) p.28

<sup>184</sup> Randisi, *op cit.*, p.25

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*, p.20

all involved in the supernatural world.<sup>186</sup> Dougal's infiltration is privy to this. The concept of the demon in the world of Scottish folklore is expressed by her allusion to Hogg, the darker characteristics of Scottish fiction and the portrayed absurdity and ridicule. Hence she does write as a Scot. However, Spark's fiction, particularly *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* contains a theological subtext which confirms her claim: 'I write as a Catholic.'<sup>187</sup>

Spark writes from the perspective of a Catholic in the modern world, as Hogg based the narrative of *Confessions* around his knowledge of Calvinism. Hence her view of the battle between good and evil takes on a different outlook. 'Spark regards evil as a demonic force that is somehow contained within the providence of God and the economy of salvation'.<sup>188</sup> Dougal Douglas does provide an anthropological insight into post-war London, but the mundanity and corruption that he brings into focus should not be overlooked. Taking into account Spark's religious outlook, Dougal's ruthless exposure and devilish intent is directed and controlled within the grand scheme of the divine economy. Essentially Dougal is a diabolical agent under the influence of God. This becomes a complex notion since diablerie and the work of God in the novels of Hogg and Stevenson, do not seem to go hand in hand. The tragic outcome of these novels is surrounded by a dark malignity. But Spark's narrative, despite one violent murder, promotes a positivism that is not associated with *Confessions* or *The Master of Ballantrae*, as we see at least one character, namely Humphrey, gain insight and not fall prey to chaos, as he witnesses for the first time the possibility of the existence of 'another world than this'.<sup>189</sup>

This concept then plays on the idea associated with the character of James Durie as 'the hero as villain'. Dougal's character hosts both the hero and the villain. Hence the demonic then takes on a more complicated notion than that of *Confessions* or *The Master of Ballantrae*. The supernaturalism in the novel is two fold. There is the allusion to the world of the folkloric demon, and the demonic and daimonic but Spark's religiosity takes this to another level which involves the preternatural powers of divine intervention. The idea of the numinous: 'man's underlying sense of

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<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>187</sup> Galloway, *op cit.*, (03/02/03)

<sup>188</sup> Hart, *op cit.*, p.39

<sup>189</sup> Spark, *op cit.*, p.143

supernatural fear, wonder and delight when he is confronted with the divine',<sup>190</sup> connects the religious and the mythological, much like the ballad 'which can mingle stark realism and even a relationship to history with fantasy and the supernatural.'<sup>191</sup> From Dougal's infiltration to the outcome of the narrative, Spark's novel appears to answer a commonly asked question: why God allows the Devil to exist? It seems that Satan's existence is tolerated as it allows human dignity.

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<sup>190</sup> MacLachlan, *op cit.*, p.134

<sup>191</sup> Page, Norman, *Muriel Spark* (London: McMillan, 1990) p.31



Edwin Morgan's *Demon*

From the works of Burns through to Spark, representation of the demonic in Scottish literature has evolved from a grotesque and animalistic figure to become human and fallible but still distinctively demonic in nature and intent. His appearance has changed dramatically. Burns's Devil is a grotesque being who simultaneously attracts and repels. This quality has remained throughout the evolution of the figure of the demonic in Scottish literature, but his actual physical appearance has undergone considerable change. The Devil himself has shed his animalistic skin for a more worldly, human and seductive mien. He has ultimately become 'a perfect impersonation of perfect manhood', according to Marie Corelli and her novel *The Sorrows of Satan*.<sup>192</sup> There is no doubt that James Durie epitomises this particular sentiment, as does the character of Dougal Douglas but to a lesser extent. Nor can it be denied that as time has passed the Devil's position in the world of Literature has been significantly altered. He may continue to be ridiculed as is the infamous Dougal Douglas but he has most certainly achieved and maintained the status of hero as villain. Yet despite these undeniable changes to the figure of the Devil as it has evolved in Scotland's literature, the ambiguity and uncertainties that surround him have remained intact regardless of the extent to which we have witnessed other boundaries being blurred. This particular aspect of the representation of the demonic in Edwin Morgan's *Demon* remains as once more the boundaries surrounding demonic representation in Scottish literature are altered.

Morgan's *Demon* has transgressed the boundaries of the demonic in Scottish literature aesthetically, physically and psychologically. Despite Morgan's innovative and modern poetry, his contemporary demon seems to regress from the evolutionary human and fallible demonic figure who wreaks havoc in the midst of humanity back to a more medieval and animalistic representation of that of a dragon. Morgan's demon is an eternal salamander or a pollyon from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* that Rudwin defines in his study as 'a winged dragon covered with scales, and belching

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<sup>192</sup> Rudwin, *op cit.*, p.52

fire and smoke.<sup>193</sup> The aesthetics of Morgan's demon have changed. It is undeniable that the splendour and grandeur of Milton's Satan is still exuded by Morgan's demonic representation physically and psychologically, however, unlike Milton, Burns, Hogg, Stevenson and Spark, Morgan's demonic representation is not founded upon any particular theological contention. Morgan's demon explores the social, psychological and philosophical aspects of contemporary human life in a secular world.

Morgan's representation of the demonic differs in the description of his demon's physical appearance, and the manner in which the demon is conveyed to the reader. Morgan's demon is not human in form or feature. Morgan's description of his demon's physical appearance is reminiscent of an older, medieval representation of the Devil or the demonic as a dragon or salamander. The demon describes himself as 'hard as iron'<sup>194</sup> and considers himself to be 'the salamander of the world...[who] snort[s] flame like coke.'<sup>195</sup> Morgan describes him as a:

Dark shape on a white beach near Durrës,  
Dark yet glistening too, spread eagled,  
Uncrumpled like a new-born dragonfly...<sup>196</sup>

The physical appearance of Morgan's demon immediately distinguishes him from the demonic characters in the work of Burns, Hogg, Stevenson and Spark. Despite his scaled and iron like appearance he is still an appealing and attractive specimen who commands endless attention from the 'neds' he encounters in Argyle Street, to the 'demon-fancier' who he finds pursuing him across fields of heather. Yet despite this change in appearance, Morgan's demon still possesses all the splendour and grandeur of Milton's Satan. In 'The Demon at the Frozen Marsh', the reader is witness to this splendour and beauty encapsulated in the physique of Morgan's demon. As the demon prowls around a frozen marsh, his body is caught in the gleam of the sun:

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<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, p.42

<sup>194</sup> Morgan *op cit.*, 'The Demon in Argyle Street' p.99, line 4

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, 'The Demon and The World' p.105, lines 10-11

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, 'A Day Off For the Demon' p.104, lines 1-3

The low sun paints me – I stare at it –  
A sort of leaden gold along my joints  
I lift a hand spilling indescribable metal  
Over the shallow crust of ice on the pond.  
Is it trying to beautiful, that sullen shine? (7-10)

As a demon he will not tolerate any display of beauty, and before his swift departure he breaks the ice over the frozen marsh smashing ‘that shimmer to complaining splinters.’ Morgan’s demon is not a human or indeed fallible figure. He does not ‘fit into one formula’.<sup>197</sup> His medieval, dragon-like representation separates him from the demonic evolution we have witnessed from the works of Burns through to Spark’s *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. Morgan’s *Demon* does not rigidly follow Scottish folklore or orthodox Christian belief, but this particular sequence of poems does illustrate that the Devil – or something distinctively demonic - is still a living and recognisable spirit. Like Burns’s ‘Address to the Deil’, Morgan’s *Demon* explores the popular conceptions associated with the figure of the Devil. This multi-contextualised approach allows Morgan scope to make broad and occasionally controversial, social, psychological and philosophical comment which simultaneously encompasses popular demonic mythology and the Devil’s relationship with humanity.

Morgan’s demon, like Burns and Hogg’s Devil, is ubiquitous: he travels from dimension to dimension effortlessly. Morgan’s demon is terrifying in appearance. He is grotesque, even monstrous but despite this he is an attractive figure who exudes a sense of splendour and grandeur, but he is not malignant. Morgan’s *Demon* is written ‘in the spirit of attacking the law abiding.’<sup>198</sup> For example in the poem ‘A Demon’ we see the figure of the demonic at the gates of the underworld where he relentlessly strikes at the metal to deliberately antagonise the guards and their dogs. However he is ‘not trying to get out; nor [is he trying] to get in.’ These actions seem to take place for no particular reason other than to irritate or intimidate the guards and undermine their authority. According to Morgan, the classification of his demon as the attacker of the law abiding makes him ‘a real demon in that sense.’<sup>199</sup> Yet these poems comment on more than just revolt. Morgan’s sequence of poems with the exception of

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<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>198</sup> Walker, Marshall *Edwin Morgan in Conversation*

<http://www.carcanet.co.uk/webguild/scribe.cgi?author=morgane&file=interview1.txt> (downloaded on 21/09/03)

<sup>199</sup> Walker, *op cit.*,

a few, are monologues which allow the reader to enter into the thoughts and subsequently the mentality of this particular demon. No other work that has been discussed has considered the psychology of the supernatural demonic being. Hogg's *Confessions* explores in-depth the development of the religious fanaticism that eventually consumes Robert Wringham. However Wringham represents the demonic figure amongst humanity and not indeed the ontological entity that is the Devil.

Morgan's *Demon* comments on various aspects of the demonic in the realm of literature. 'Address to the Deil' is based on the social, religious and psychological contentions associated with the Devil of Burns's era and his overwhelming influence on the lives of the working class man. Morgan's poems serve to comment on contemporary society's perception of the demonic, while providing the demon's own views of the human race. This approach is similar to the style in which Burns's 'Address to the Deil' is written, however Morgan's poem does not question what the Devil or the demonic is, or how it exists, but poses the question: who is actually the demonic? Is it the demon himself, or in fact the human race? There is no doubt that Morgan's demon is an ontological entity, but the thoughts and questions that arise from his various encounters with the human race suggest that the human race is more demonic in nature than we would care to admit. For example in 'The Demon in Argyle Street', the reader is witness to Morgan's demon walking in the streets of Glasgow, a place he considers to be 'full of would-be demons.' It maybe said at this point that 'it takes one to know one', as the demon observes that:

The streets were thick with shadows with eyes  
I watch them trying to let nothing escape  
That might be used to advantage. (7-9)

This behaviour is typical to all the demonic figures we have encountered from Burns to Spark. Hogg's Gil-Martin, Stevenson's James Durie and Spark's Dougal Douglas are all keen observers who make themselves aware of everything down to the smallest of details before using what they have witnessed to their advantage. These particular inhabitants of Glasgow act similarly as they watch Morgan's demon walking down Argyle Street. These Glasgow 'neds' are not apprehensive about approaching, interacting or indeed physically attacking Morgan's demon. They are aware that he is

not human as one attempts to ask him if he knows 'Luficer'! They are not terrified of him as they should be. They are intrigued by Morgan's demon.

Like his counterparts, Morgan's demon is a multifaceted and complex creature. However, Morgan's *Demon* illustrates that our contemporary perception of the Devil or the demonic has been altered by the passing of time. Ultimately our previously intimidated and terrified dispositions have been replaced by a bolder and more inquisitive attitude. In the poems 'The Demon in Argyle Street' and 'A Demon-Lover', the human race seems to have become more daring. The people in these particular poems are not terrified of the demonic – they are cautious, but moreover they are intrigued, if not infatuated with the figure of the demonic. They undoubtedly display, in their attitude and actions, particular traits that, until now, have only been accredited to the demonic amongst humanity and the Devil himself. For example, both the 'demon-fancier and the Glaswegian 'neds' intently observe and relentlessly pursue their victim, as did Gil-Martin and James Durie. However, the roles are reversed. The diabolic seems to have been internalised by the human race, and revealed through such displays of perverse behaviour and infatuation.

Not only has the human race become more demonic, Morgan's demon seems to have become more human. For example, Morgan suggests in his poem 'A Day off for the Demon', that to be demonic is a frame of mind, and demons themselves occasionally take time to themselves. This poem is more light hearted and humorous than some others in Morgan's sequence. The reader is witness to the physical splendour and glory of Morgan's demon, as he lies sunbathing on a beach. Morgan creates a contrast between the terrifying, but fascinating physical appearance of the demon with his thought and feelings. This monstrous specimen is:

...staring up, benevolent  
As the blue above him, embracing  
Whatever breeze there might be from the sea  
And murmuring *falemnderit* to the sun for shining. (4-7)

At this precise moment he is as harmless as the dragon fly Morgan compares him to in the third line. The demon lies in a 'heavenless hellless place' void of any thoughts,

feelings or emotions. Even though he 'lying there blank as jetsam', Morgan warns the reader: 'you will not take that one home with you.'

Morgan's demonic representation can be compared in direction to that of Spark's. Both Morgan and Spark take a humorous approach in the presentation of their demons, although Morgan's is clearly less ridiculous. However he does serve to reveal society's demons and also provide alternative explanations of the demon's role in a contemporary world. As has been discussed, Dougal's demonry serves to expose the corruption of Peckham's inhabitants and to release the community from their monotonous and mundane lifestyles. Morgan's *Demon* follows a similar concept. As Morgan explains: 'a demon is usually thought to be a fairly bad character who could do terrible things to us and better to be avoided, mine has very good things to do and say.'<sup>200</sup> Like Dougal, Morgan's demon reveals his thoughts, fears and limitations. He too is an inquisitor of the human condition, but he does not strive to expose our corruption but serves to question our morals and philosophises about human life itself. Significantly, the ambiguity surrounding the relationship between the human race and the demonic still remains. Morgan's *Demon* may question where the force of the demonic lies, however the demon is another unreliable narrator like Burns's personae, the Editor and Wringham in Hogg's *Confessions*, MacKellar's narrative and the Chevalier's memoirs, and Spark's narrative which is reminiscent of Scottish folk idiom and the oral tradition. Morgan's 'diabolos' could not be further from the truth when he comments, 'All I could give then was a tale to tell'.

In the poem, 'The Demon Winged', Morgan reveals all of these particular qualities. The poem begins with the demon's consideration of his wings. He is not against their use, he finds the idea of them 'permissible, /Even favourable, though I keep mine retracted.' Apparently '[p]otential's best unseen'. This demon prefers not to fly or soar. He believes that it is much more worthwhile and effective to:

... fight the guardians of time  
On foot, where it hurts, like the world  
In its pain, the whole world... (8-10)

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<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*,

This demon has 'a great reserve of soaring'. This presumably refers to his wingspan. In one sense, this statement would suggest that he considers himself the bearer of a splendid set of wings with an impressive expanse, but feels his cause is better fought on foot 'in dregs and mud'. Or his 'reserve of soaring' may be considered to imply, on a more humorous note, that he is not altogether comfortable doing it. Regardless of the reasons behind his 'great reserve of soaring', this demon's battle on foot allows him to comment on the morality of the human race. The demon goes on to describe a war scene where death and destruction ensue:

Into the sand where the blasts go, the fires,  
The cries... a high flash of haloes,  
A curse of megaphones, jam their damnable guns  
- These are childish measures. (11-14)

Again, Morgan offers more than one possible interpretation. Are these 'childish measures' a reference to the comparison of human might with the powers of death and destruction demons and the Devil possess? Or are they childish because the demon is criticising humans for fighting in the first instance? The demon perceives that some of the fighters will be blaming and justifying their actions and the dire consequences of war on the Devil – 'you must look for me! / (If you are one of those who want to find me!)'. This statement refers to the concept that the human race considers the Devil to be responsible for everything evil or wrong with our world, including war. However it seems that the demon condemns us for such escapades when he comments:

Flapping slowly and heavily in time with my shouts  
Of 'Not this time though!' as I spring to wrap  
Such things in my leathery dark as should never have been made.  
(18-20)

The demon in this particular poem seems to be challenging the conventional view that Satan is responsible for war and suffering.

- If you do not see me, the militant seraphs  
Will have heard me, caught me, hauled me off  
For an arraignment. They should be so lucky!  
But do not blame me for the dead. Them you'll see. (21-24)

He condemns the seraphs for removing him only to accuse him of instigating war. However, the demon refuses to take responsibility for such an accusation and claims that it is the angels (and then presumably God) who are in fact to blame.

‘The Demon and the World’ also comments on the wiles of humanity and the apparent strengths and weaknesses of the demonic. Morgan’s demon considers humans to be weak and futile. He plays with us and considers the human race to be: ‘My play, my joy, my matter, my mystery, /My expatriates, my exasperates, my crusty templates.’ It seems that the human race exists only to be shaped and moulded by the demonic: ‘I curse them to their knees, caress them/ with poppies till they dream of others’.

If all humans were to watch and learn from the demonic, and this demon in particular, they would teach us how to cope with any insufferable burden. The Devil has suffered and will continue to suffer for Eternity. It seems that anyone could live a human life: ‘It is like walking on coals, that bit/ Between birth and death: anyone can do it.’ But humans could never suffer what this demon has had to bear:

If they could suffer in all their lives  
Even a millionth part of what I bear  
Every second, they would shriek like wild things,  
Break out of planes, refuse to be born. (16-19)

Yet the demon gives the human race more credit than what he would care to admit. Despite the pain and heartache of being separated from a loved one, and the ensuing sense of denial and desolation, through the test of time, humans are able to move on with their lives. However much a demon can bear, is nothing in comparison to ‘what is taken away’. It seems that absence, and in particular the absence of love, is a burden so heavy that it ‘challenges [his] iron and [his] arms.’

These two poems from Morgan’s sequence both challenge the conventional representation of the figure of the Devil or the demonic in Scottish literature. As Morgan states, his demon has ‘very good things to do and say’.<sup>201</sup> However this statement cannot be taken at face value. As Morgan explains to Walker: ‘it’s a

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<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*,



Blakean thought. Good is bad.’<sup>202</sup> Morgan then goes on to explain that this is ‘because it leads us into various kinds of false directions and various complacencies and also perhaps various cruelties’.<sup>203</sup> This statement seems to be particularly apt as far as ‘The Demon Winged’ is concerned. For example, wars are often fought for a good and valiant cause, but ultimately war is responsible for great cruelty and violence towards other human beings whether in the name of religion or for the welfare of the greater good. Thus what is instigated with seemingly good intention is misdirected and results in needless strife, cruelty and desolation. It could also be argued that the demon criticises war and destruction because the annihilation of the human race would ultimately mean that the Devil would no longer exist on an Earthly plane. This argument may lack theological substance. However in the context of this thesis, without the existence of the human race, the realm of art and literature would ultimately cease to exist as would the Devil himself.

Morgan’s collection of poems, *Cathures* was launched at Borders Books and Music in Buchanan Street, Glasgow on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2002. His sequence of poems entitled *Demon* is contained within this volume (despite being published by Mariscat in 1999). At this launch Morgan read a selection of his demon poems. Before hand, he made it explicit that he does not explain these poems but leaves them to the reader. It seems that demonic representation in Scottish literature, time and again comes back to the question of the Devil’s existence and consequently the continual air of speculation, ambiguity and obscurity surrounding this has remained in place since the beginning of time. This has become clear through the course of this study of these five major authors in the Scottish tradition. There is no doubt that the demonic is still a living and recognisable spirit who has undergone a considerable amount of change, but the ambiguities and uncertainties surrounding him have remained in place. Morgan’s *Demon* is no exception. Yet *Demon* presents the reader with further insight into what the spirit of the demonic may or may not imply or suggest in a modern, contemporary, secular world. The answer may be revealed by Morgan in the poem ‘A Little Catechism from the Demon’.

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<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*,

An initial reading of this poem is thought provoking. There are hints and suggestions that in order to understand the demon you have to live like the demon and understand his life, his suffering and trials which are embodied in the mountain that has to be overcome. However a more detailed understanding cannot take place until the reader has studied Morgan's poem, 'Under the Falls', which is quoted in the eighth line. This poem is part of Morgan's most recent collection, *Love and a Life*,<sup>204</sup> which left readers in suspense until its launch in 2003. The film that is referred to is the poem 'Under the Falls', and when 'it rolls, it tells.' The poem tells of a place behind a beautiful waterfall which Morgan describes as 'a rainbow spray, an unstung / bead-curtain.' The atmosphere in this cave behind the falls seems to suggest or recall the sensuous, paradisiacal Garden of Eden, and what bears the most importance in this garden, '[i]s a loved footfall'. In this cave there are only two people and they are the only ones who matter to each other. They are in a world of their own, as were Adam and Eve. As long as they have each other they can challenge and overcome anything, as Morgan suggests: 'a world stretches/ Somewhere, unseen, without woes or walls.' Morgan has already suggested in 'A Demon and the World' that his demon can bear phenomenal amounts of suffering but the feeling of absence and desolation left when someone or something is removed becomes too much for even him to bear.

It seems then that Morgan suggests through his sequence of poems *Demon* that the Devil or the demonic figure is not responsible for all that is considered evil or wrong with the world. The human race acts as its own demon and has ultimately created and maintained its own demon in the realm of Literature. Sometimes love is the demon. Whatever we may consider or determine to be the diabolic, we will never truly know. As Morgan's demon states:

...Do you even know  
What a demon is? Could you *be* one? Well?<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Morgan, Edwin *Love and a Life* (Glasgow; Mariscat Press, 2003)

<sup>205</sup> Morgan *op cit.*, (Cathures) 'A Demon-Lover, p.97, lines 27-28

## Conclusion: The Demon's Changing Face

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Demonic representation is an aspect of Scotland's literature that remains relatively unexplored. It has not been my intention in writing this thesis to provide a commentary on such an extensive area, but to focus on what I consider to be key texts in the evolution of the demonic figure in Scottish literature. The demonic representation in Burns's poetry, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by Hogg, Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*, Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* and *Demon* by Morgan are canonically important. These texts reflect transitional moments in the evolution of the figure of the Devil and demonic representation in Scottish literature between 1785 and 1999.

The claims made by Christopher MacLachlan in his study, 'Muriel Spark and Gothic' can also be applied, in this context, to the works of Burns, Hogg, Stevenson and Morgan:

The actual effect of the dogmatic foundation to Spark's fiction is not simple reassurance of the reader but rather a reminder of the mystery of meaning in her novels. Gothic has a similar effect and the comments of critics may help us to explain Spark.<sup>206</sup>

MacLachlan's article is an extensive study structured around the views of several critics of Gothic literature including Punter, Modelski and Aguirre. The particular features of their research that MacLachlan has chosen to focus on, provide us with a framework upon which we can consider the treatment of the figure of the Devil, and particularly, what continuities there are in that treatment in Scottish literature between 1785 and 1999.

It cannot be denied that the works explored in this thesis fit Punter's definition of 'paranoiac fiction':

...fiction in which the reader is placed in a situation of ambiguity with regard to fears within the text, and in which the attribution of persecution remains

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<sup>206</sup> MacLachlan, *op cit.*, p.126

uncertain and the reader is invited to share in the doubts and uncertainties which pervade the apparent story.<sup>207</sup>

Psychological and supernatural ambiguities are central to the works discussed in this thesis. The authors and poets, in their own style, consistently create and maintain an air of ambiguity that surrounds the existence of the diabolic. Reason and religion, and order and chaos, are continually at odds from the poetry of Burns to Morgan's *Demon*. This consistency is continued when Punter's 'notion of the barbaric' is considered. The grotesque demonic representation in Burns's poetry and the demeanour of 'Holly Willie', 'bring us up against the boundaries of the civilised.'<sup>208</sup> From Hogg's Gil-Martin, Robert Wringham, James Durie and (eventually Henry) to Dougal Douglas and Morgan's *Demon*, the reader is continually confronted with personae who persistently confront, push and most definitely surpass the boundaries of the civilised.

MacLachlan also considers Modelski's 'nature of taboo'. This is defined as 'the areas of socio-psychological life which offend, which are suppressed, which are swept under the carpet in the interest of social and psychological equilibrium.'<sup>209</sup> Again this feature is applicable, not just to Spark, but Burns, Hogg, Stevenson and Morgan. 'Holy Willie's Prayer,' and particularly Hogg's *Confessions* delve into the deepest and darkest depth of religious fanaticism which results in murder and suicide. There is no question of Dougal's participation in exposing the taboo in Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. Burns and Morgan are maybe more subtle in their revelation of the nature of taboo. Burns's 'Address to the Deil' for example, demonstrates how death by drink is explained in the terms of supernatural haunting. Morgan reveals to the reader their own perversity as a human being as we try to justify the death and destruction caused by war with various excuses in the interest of maintaining social and psychological equilibrium.

Modelski's 'numinous' and Aguirre's 'haunting by the Other' provide further basis for comparison. Again, both aspects apply fully to each text studied. The Devil is a concept that will never be fully understood socially, theologically nor in the realm

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<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*, p. 126

<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*, p. 128

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*, p. 130

of literature. Each text does offer its reader a context that is essentially 'non rational'. The 'numinous' refers to that 'underlying sense of supernatural fear, wonder and delight',<sup>210</sup> that is experienced by the characters and personae in each text. These texts also involve the 'persecution of either one or more human characters; which manifests itself as a ghost, Satan's emissary, as human evil or force of Nature...'<sup>211</sup> Burns's grotesque, animalistic and virile Devil and the religiously warped Holy Willie; the ontological entity, Gil-Martin and the demonic Robert Wringham; the naturally diabolic James Durie and his demonically manufactured brother Henry; the eccentric Dougal Douglas and Morgan's demon, who observes and questions the ethic and moral weaknesses of the human race, *all* present themselves as that Other.

It seems then that these canonically significant texts follow a similar vein in their representation of the demonic figure based on MacLachlan's study. From Burns to Morgan, the reader is confronted with the notions of paranoia, barbarism, the nature of taboo, the concept of the 'numinous' and persecution by a seemingly preternatural force. Despite these consistencies, the works of Burns, Hogg, Stevenson, Spark and Morgan, reflect transitional moments in the evolution of the figure of the Devil and demonic representation between 1785 and 1999.

In the works of Burns, Hogg, Stevenson, Spark and Morgan that have been discussed, it is clear that a remarkable complexity and ambiguity surrounds that figure of the Devil in Scottish literature, and remains unchallenged. The Devil of Scottish popular mythology and folklore is a grotesque, animalistic figure who is more often than not ridiculed as is exemplified by Samuel Scrape's Auchtermuchty tale in Hogg's *Confessions*. However, it is clear that Scotland's fascination with the Devil does not only stem from its popular mythology and folklore. Scotland's dark religious past has also made a significant impact upon its literature. Satan is undoubtedly a recurring figure in Scottish life, legend and literature, as is the 'demonised other', who may be recognised as part of what makes us human. Theological contention, the supernatural and a study of human psychology are the foundations of Burns and Morgan's poetry and the fiction of Hogg, Stevenson and Spark.

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<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, p.134

<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*, p.137

The demonic representation in the works of Burns is of a familiar folk idiom. 'Tam o'Shanter', 'Address to the Deil' and 'Holy Willie's Prayer' bring together the sociological, religious and psychological impact the figure of the Devil has undoubtedly made upon the workingman of Burns's era. Burns's Devil is presented as a grotesque, animalistic and virile figure who both terrifies and entertains. 'Holy Willie's Prayer', condemns the effects of religious fanaticism which Hogg's *Confessions* explores in its most dangerous and darkest depths. Burns's presentation does not only offer an insight into the impact the Devil had on the minds and imaginations of Burns's contemporaries. His poetry recreates and maintains the air of ambiguity that surrounds the Devil and his existence in Scotland. The Devil's existence in the realms of reason and religion, and order and chaos, are open to exploration and continue to be explored by Hogg, Stevenson, Spark and Morgan.

Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is a literary artifice throughout which the psychological and supernatural aspects of the diabolic are chillingly explored and exploited. The reader is simultaneously confronted with the sinister but gentlemanly, worldly and seductive mien of the Devil himself in the figure of Gil-Martin, and the warped religious fanaticism of the demonic amongst humanity in the malign and deceitful character of Robert Wringham. The demonic ambiguities and the irresolvable diversity in human nature between religion and reason are maintained by Hogg's presentation of the realities of religion, the supernatural and psychological worlds which are expertly coordinated and interconnected throughout the novel. Psychological and supernatural obscurity permeate *Confessions* on several levels. The diabolic is revealed through Hogg's use of imagery and word choice. The characters of Robert and Gil-Martin can be considered on a psychological and supernatural level. It should then be considered significant that the narrators' accounts do not compliment each other. They are confused and contradictory both in themselves and in relation to each other. These contradictions could be considered as inaccuracy on Hogg's part. However, it seems more appropriate that these inaccuracies and contradictions are deliberate. Supernaturally, this text is the work of the Devil, thus the novel becomes enveloped in that air of obscurity which continuously surrounds its meaning and Satan's existence. When considered on a psychological level, it is reasonable to assume that these accounts are deliberately abrasive when Robert admits that he is a compulsive and

extensive liar: 'I was particularly prone to lying...the truth is, that one lie always paved the way for another...so I found my self constantly involved in a web of deceit'.<sup>212</sup>

The ambiguities of supernatural and psychological representation are continued by Stevenson in *The Master of Ballantrae*. The text itself becomes the work of the Devil. It is seductive, misleading and a misrepresentation of the truth. The stability and reliability of the narrative and its facts are all questionable. The narrators in Stevenson's novel are a development of those in *Confessions*. *The Master of Ballantrae* explores the concept of human evil and demonic representation through the relationship of the brothers James and Henry Durie. James Durie's human but naturally diabolical disposition is revealed from the beginning of the narrative. Henry's stolid and upright character is inextricably transformed by James's devilish torments which see his brother descend to the same dark depths as the Master. The demonic figure is no longer an ontological entity. Gil-Martin is a supernaturally or psychologically externalised being. The demon is internalised in the character of James and later Henry. This marks a key development in the evolution of the demonic figure in Scottish literature. James is not explicitly revealed as demonic, however it is continually implied by the narrative. For example, the episode that the Chevalier de Burke relates in his memoirs about his time on board the Sarah with James in charge, insinuates a host of unnecessary evils. This is particularly true where the boarding of other ships is concerned, especially when women were found onboard. There is the insinuation of rape and the text itself is indicative of evil. The narrators too are duplicitous characters. Both are subservient, as is Secundra Das. All three are to varying extents, deceptive as they strive to assist their master.

Spark significantly alters the representation of the demonic in her novel *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. The figure of Dougal Douglas remains attractive and irresistible. His character however recalls the ridicule that is associated with the older Devil of Scottish folklore. In Spark's novel there is no longer a force at work which is attached to a malevolent individual. The reader is faced with the demonic in social terms. Spark's religious milieu places the demonic figure in the framework of the

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<sup>212</sup> Hogg, *op cit.*, p.88

divine economy which allows Spark to comment on the mundane and corrupt lives of the people of Peckham. Their demons have been internalised to such an extent that only Dougal's interaction and intervention serves to exorcise them. The face of the demon is not internalised in a single being, but in humanity itself. Dougal serves to reveal the demon that lives in and thrives through contemporary human society. Dougal's position as a demon has served to reveal the inhabitants of Peckham's own diabolical natures.

It seems then that the figure of the demonic in Scottish literature has evolved from a grotesque animalistic entity, to an attractive and seductive supernatural or psychological externalisation, and has come to reside in the human race itself. Contemporary society is still host to the age-old phenomenon of the Devil, whose existence continues to remain enveloped in obscurity. As Russell highlights:

...The concept of the Devil is very much alive today. Indeed, the idea is more alive now than it has been for many decades, because we are again aware of the ineradicable nature of the perversity in our own behaviour, a perversity that has perhaps been more evident in the twentieth century than ever before. Well-intentioned efforts to reform human nature by education or legislation have so far failed, and rather spectacularly, as they break like waves against the rock of radical evil we have direct perception of evil, of deliberate malice and desire to hurt, in mobs, in criminals, and in our petty vices. Many people seem to have the additional experience that behind all this evil, and directing it, is a powerful, transhuman, or at least transconscious personality. This is the Devil.<sup>213</sup>

Russell's commentary confirms what Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* suggests. The demonic in contemporary society resides in the perversity of human nature. Our own malicious acts are recognised as being committed by our own human hand, and not an ontological being. Yet despite this recognition of what is morally and ethically wrong in our society, we are reluctant to blame fully the perversity of human nature. We choose to deem responsible a preternatural force for that side of being human that we cannot explain and keep fully under control. *Demon* by Edwin Morgan explores this concept.

Morgan's presentation of the demonic in Scottish literature returns to the grotesque. His demon goes back beyond Burns's animalistic and virile Satan to an

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<sup>213</sup> Russell *op cit.*, p.222



older, medieval representation of the demonic as a salamander. He is most definitely an ontological entity. However he is not a psychological externalisation. Morgan's *Demon*, like the work of Spark, serves to reveal how the demonic has become internalised in contemporary society. Morgan's *Demon* explores the social, psychological and philosophical aspects of contemporary human life in a secular world. Morgan reveals through the thoughts of his demon that the human race is more demonic in nature than we would care to admit. Yet despite this revelation of such perversity in human behaviour, Morgan's *Demon* takes this image of the demonic, with its potential for destruction, and without defying that potential, turns it round to reveal a sense of creativity and strength. Morgan's demon is an inquisitor of the human race who serves to question our morals and philosophises about human life itself. It becomes clear that we are demonic in nature. However the human race is portrayed by Morgan's demon as resilient with the capacity for good, after all, as Dr Jekyll explains 'all human beings as we met them are commingled out of good and evil.'<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Stevenson (Jekyll&Hyde) *op cit.*, p.64

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