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James Hogg's controversial novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, resembles Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* in several respects. Although separated by over two centuries, both works are tragedies involving a protagonist who has been educated in Calvinist theology, who seeks to transcend the ordinary limits of human consciousness, and who is eventually defeated by demons. In addition to these parallels, this essay will explore ways in which *Dr. Faustus* is reflected in the imagery, theme, and structure of *A Justified Sinner*.

Marlowe's Faustus had studied theology at the university in Wittenberg, but later turned to "cursèd necromancy."[1] Similarly, Robert Wringhim prides himself on his theological "discernment,"[2] but when he pretends to be "a student of theology, and on my way to Oxford," the Scottish peasants suspect him of practicing "the *black arts*" (230).

Like Faustus in his pursuit of "concealèd arts" (I.i.103), Robert Wringhim seeks to transcend common humanity through privileged and certain knowledge. He assures the reader of his "well-founded faith, and conviction that I was a chosen and elected one before the world was made" (196). God, Robert claims, has selected him for eternal salvation "by an eternal decree never to be annulled" (230). Robert's pretension to

being "justified and infallible" (193), is, like Faustus' conjuring, an aspiration toward superhuman status through the possession of privileged knowledge. In different ways, both heroes use intellectual means to pursue a sense of spiritual superiority over others.

Although Robert's friend Gil-Martin remains a mysterious figure throughout the novel, his own statements and those of others suggest that he is a demon. He tells Robert, "I have servants and subjects more than I can number" (130), and, when the two of them murder Robert's brother, Gil-Martin exults, "I'll have your soul, sir" (77). Like Faustus, Robert first reveres his "guide and director" (126), but eventually dreads him as his "tormentor" (229). A superstitious peasant tells Robert that, "[W]herever he sets his foot, the grass withers as gin it war scoudered wi' a het ern" (203), although Robert finds, "It was the foot of a gentleman, in every respect, so far as appearances went" (204).

Recalling his first meeting with Gil-Martin, Robert writes, "It was on the 25th day of March 1704, when I had just entered the eighteenth year of my age" (119). Robert's expression is slightly ambiguous, but it actually indicates, as John Carey observes,[3] that he is seventeen years old. Robert is, therefore, twenty-five at the time of his (presumed) suicide in September 1712. Earlier, as a result of the laird of Dalcastle's refusal to acknowledge him as his son, the infant Robert "had to live and remain an alien from the visible church for a year and a day" (18). Robert lives a total of twenty-four years, then, as a baptised member of Reverend Wringhim's church. The number of years is identical with the length of time Faustus enjoys the protection of Mephistopheles.

The rise and fall of both Faustus and Robert is presented partly through images of flying. The chorus informs us that Faustus' "waxen wings did mount above his reach" (Prologue, 21) only to result in a "hellish fall" (Epilogue, 4), and Faustus himself literally flies across Europe with Mephistopheles. In *A Justified Sinner*, Robert describes his elation on learning that he is "a justified person," in these words: "I felt I could have flown through the air, or leaped over the tops of trees. An exaltation of spirit lifted me, as it were, far above the earth, and the sinful creatures crawling on its surface; and I deemed myself as an eagle among the children of men, soaring on high..." (116). When Gil-Martin has persuaded him to commit fratricide, Robert announces, "I fly to perform that which is a duty toward God and toward man!" (160). Robert later becomes a fugitive of the law when Gil-Martin counsels him to "leave this place for the present, flying where you best may" (207-8). Robert writes, "I flew...so swiftly, that I often lost sight of the ground, and I said to

myself, 'O that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly to the farthest corners of the earth'" (224). Ten days before his suicide, Robert records his despair in a way that makes it appear an ironic fulfillment of his initial phantasy of flying: "My vitals have all been torn, and every faculty and feeling of my soul racked, and tormented into callous insensibility. I was even hung by the locks over a yawning chasm, to which I could perceive no bottom" (239).

Allusions to flying emphasize the hero's transition from exaltation to despair. Like Faustus, Robert first equates flying with a sense of physical and spiritual potency, but ultimately both protagonists come to associate flight with their increasing powerlessness and fear. Faustus, in his last hour, calls, "O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?" (V.ii.142); Robert, in his final days, recalls sadly his former "high and flourishing hopes," finds himself "lame," and concedes, "I had no power to fly from" Gil-Martin (227).

In *Dr. Faustus*, the search for special knowledge and special status is frequently depicted through images of eating. In the Prologue, the audience learns that Faustus has "glutted" himself with theology, and now "surfeits" on magic (*ll.* 24, 25). At the height of his powers, Faustus asks Mephistopheles "To glut the longing of my heart's desire" (V.i.91).

Similarly, the religious pretensions of Robert and other extreme Presbyterians in *A Justified Sinner* are frequently associated with images of eating or digestion. The editor represents the doctrine of predestination as "an unguent hard to be swallowed" (2), whereas in Reverend Wringhim's mouth it becomes a "glorious morsel" (15). Later, Robert is disappointed to discover that his jailor "could not swallow such great truths at the first morsel" (151). The editor dismisses Reverend Wringhim's doctrine as "a very delicious one...to the worst characters" (56). The Reverend, on the other hand, assures Robert's mother that "all earthly bonds are absorbed and swallowed up in the holy community of the Reformed Church" (13). Like Marlowe, Hogg uses grotesque digestive imagery to suggest an abnormal state of mind.

Digestive allusions highlight Robert Wringhim's transition from perceiving himself as an active hero to seeing himself as a passive victim. Early in his account, he hopes to become "a devouring fire among the workers of iniquity" (123). However, his role during the murder of his brother, according to the editor's version, is noticeably diminished, as he hides "in the mouth of the dark entry" (77). Near the end of Robert's life, Gil-Martin warns him that "evil ones...long to devour you, both soul and body" (228). Just as Faustus cries, "Then will I headlong run into the earth. / Earth, gape!" (V.ii. 152-3), Robert Wringhim cries, "Oh, that the earth would swal-

low me up" (238). In a comment that would apply equally well to Robert, C.L. Barber suggests that Faustus "envisage[s] death in a way which makes it a consummation" of his earlier desires.[4]

Figurative allusions to eating reveal a deliberate pattern in *A Justified Sinner*. As in *Dr. Faustus*, they contribute to a sense of continuity between the hero's early pride and subsequent despair, and to a sense of the appropriateness of his fate. They consistently undermine the hero's aspiration to privileged knowledge, by serving as ironic reminders of his creatural status as a human being and his involvement in common physical processes. They also emphasize the ironic justice with which Robert receives the punishment he had formerly wished on others.

Both protagonists formulate a phantasy of physical assimilation in their last-minute desire to escape torture by demons. Robert feels an "insatiable longing...for *utter oblivion*" (183-4), while Faustus envies creatures whose "souls are soon dissolved in elements" (V.ii.175). Robert wishes "To be enclosed in the deeps of the sea" (192), while Faustus cries,

> O soul, be changed to little water-drops
> And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found.
> (V.ii.182-3)

Robert wishes himself "a worm or a moth that I might be crushed and at rest" (205); Faustus asks himself, "Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?" and longs to be "changed / Into some brutish beast" (V.ii.169, 172-3). Robert prays "that the Lord would hide me in the bowels of the earth" (229); Faustus exclaims,

> Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,
> And hide me from the heavy wrath of God.
> (V.ii.149-50)

Although the sequence of these images is altered, it seems difficult not to believe that Hogg modelled Robert's downfall on that of Faustus.

The reader never learns whether Robert actually does commit suicide and whether or not he seeks or receives God's forgiveness in his last moments. However, his final diary-entry suggests, as David Eggenschwiler points out, that he dies "like Faustus, in the sin of despair and unable to repent."[5] During his last "one bare hour" (V.ii.131) Faustus tries to "repent and save his soul" (V.ii.138), but is prevented by devils, who then carry him to Hell; in his last entry Robert writes, "The

hour of repentance is past, and now my fate is inevitable" (240).

Minor characters in *A Justified Sinner* often utter statements which implicitly rebuke the hero's claim to privileged and certain knowledge. Arabella Calvert remarks, "We have nothing on earth but our senses to depend upon" (80), and her friend Mrs. Logan asks rhetorically, "Whose word, or whose reasoning can convince us against our own senses?" (85). Robert's servant Samuel Scrape tells his master, "Gin ever [Satan] observes a proud professor, wha has mae than ordinary pretensions to a divine calling, and that reards and prays till the very howlets learn his preambles, *that's* the man Auld Simmie fixes on to mak a dishclout o'" (197). Throughout the novel, commonsensical comments by ordinary Scots peasants and servants undermine Robert's pretensions to divine knowledge, in the same way that the speeches of the Good Angel and the Old Man's advice to "leave this damnèd art" (V.i.38) undermine the aspirations of Faustus.

The court testimony of Bessy Gillies in *A Justified Sinner* corresponds to the comic scenes in *Dr. Faustus* in which Wagner, Robin, and Dick burlesque Faustus' interest in magic. When the prosecutor asks Bessy to "relate some of the particulars" regarding the theft of valuables from her mistress' house, she replies,

> 'O, sir, the thieves didna stand upon particulars: they were halesale dealers in a' our best wares.'
>
> 'I mean, what passed between your mistress and you on the occasion?'
>
> 'What passed, say ye? O, there wasna muckle: I was in a great passion, but she was dung doitrified a wee....When we got the candle lightit, a' the house was in a hoad-road. "Bessy my woman," quo she, "we are baith ruined and undone creatures." "The deil a bit," quo I; "that I deny positively. H'mh! to speak o' a lass o' my age being ruined and undone! I never had muckle except what was within a good jerkin, an' let the thief ruin me there wha can."' (65-6)

Confronted with compelling evidence, Bessy nevertheless replies, "Bless you, sir, I wadna swear to my ain fore finger, if it had been as lang out of my sight, an' brought in an' laid upon that table" (67). She informs the judge, "I am resolved to keep a clear conscience, till I be married at any rate" (68). Bessy's facetious respect for absolute truth and certain knowledge (as opposed to mere perceptions) ironically parallels Robert's pretensions to certainty, in the same way

that the "foolery" (II.iii.13) of servants mirrors the pretensions of Faustus.

The death of Faustus is followed by the appearance of three anonymous "gentlemen" scholars (V.iii.1), who discover the body and comment briefly about the hero; the death of Robert Wringhim is followed by the appearance of the editor, his "fellow collegian, Mr. L--t of C--d" (245-6), and four other anonymous "respectable witnesses" (249), who journey to the grave site, exhume the body, and comment briefly about the hero. Hogg's use of the Faustus parallel is highly ironic in this episode, however. The scholars discover Faustus' body, "All torn asunder by the hand of death" (V.iii.7); the editor's friends, on the contrary, are quite possibly at the wrong grave, and they themselves tear apart the body in the act of digging it up. The third scholar speculates that, "The devils whom Faustus served have torn him thus" (V.iii.8), whereas the editor tells us,

> A number of bones came up separately;....[P]art of a skeleton came up, but no flesh, save a little that was hanging in dark fritters about the spine, but which had no consistence; it was merely the appearance of flesh without the substance. The head was wanting; and I being very anxious to possess the skull, the search was renewed among the mortar and rags. We first found a part of the scalp, with the long hair firm on it....Soon afterwards we found the skull, but it was not complete. A spade had damaged it, and one of the temple quarters was wanting. I am no phrenologist... but I thought the skull of that wretched man no study. (249-50)

The scholars express pity and fear at the thought of a damned soul, and see in Faustus' fall a spectacle "As every Christian heart laments to think on" (V.iii.14); the editor and his friends express nothing more than pseudo-scientific curiosity, and the editor calmly dismisses Robert as "that wretched man." The scholars are mainly concerned about the fate of Faustus' soul; the editor's friends are exclusively concerned about the condition of Robert's dead body. Despite his horror, the Second Scholar vows to "give [Faustus'] mangled limbs due burial" (V.iii.17);[6] the editor, on the other hand, writes, "All the limbs, from the loins to the toes, seemed perfect and entire, but they could not bear handling. Before we got them returned again into the grave, they were all shaken to pieces ..." (251). The Faustian parallel in these passages effectively destroys the editor's credibility, and ironically fulfills,

in another sense, Robert's fear that he would be "torn in pieces" (237) by devils.

An obvious difference between the two works is that *Dr. Faustus* contains scenes which clearly satirize Catholicism, while *A Justified Sinner* is partly an attack on extreme Presbyterianism. In one passage, though, James Hogg appears to suggest a similarity between debased or extreme versions of the two religions: Robert writes that he "put on [Gil-Martin's] green frock coat, buff belt, and a sort of turban that he always wore on his head, somewhat resembling a bishop's mitre: he drew his hand thrice across my face, and I withdrew" (208). Despite his abhorrence of prelacy, Robert recreates, in his subordination to Gil-Martin, a debased version of the Catholic relationship between layman and priest. Hogg's theme is the importance of humility as an antidote to human pride, whether in Protestantism, Catholicism, or the scientific and rational attitudes of the editor; although the novel is set convincingly in a particular time and place, it surpasses *Dr. Faustus* in achieving a more clearly universal significance.

Hogg uses allusions and parallels to *Dr. Faustus* in a creative and original manner. Gil-Martin, for instance, is "an elusive, subtle figure,"[7] according to one reader, while another credits James Hogg with "a remarkable feat in conferring an objective and very palpable existence on Gil-Martin, yet simultaneously implying that he is also an externalization of the hidden processes of [Robert's] mind."[8] Whereas Marlowe depicted the conflict between angels and devils for the soul of Faustus, Hogg shifts part of the emphasis to the question of whether Gil-Martin exists objectively or is merely, as Barbara Bloedé argues, "hallucinatory."[9] According to André Gide, Hogg's approach is more applicable than Marlowe's to modern experience: "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 admissable, even by unbelievers."[10] Ian Campbell adds that the last pages of Robert's diary "gain inestimably" because "though the tortures are real enough they are implied in Robert's account, and stimulate their own details from the imagination of the reader."[11]

By combining two separate and incompatible narratives in one novel, Hogg finds another way of modernizing the conflict of *Dr. Faustus*. The editor, who venerates "nature, utility, and common sense" (12), is the polar opposite of Robert, whose sole criterion is "the might of heaven" (97). As Andrew Hook notes, the two narrators represent "the voice of enlightened reason and moderation on the one hand, and the voice of religious passion and commitment on the other."[12] Rationalism and faith contend for the soul of the novel, so to speak, just as

angels and devils contend for the soul of Faustus and of Robert.

In this respect *A Justified Sinner* is a more complex work than *Dr. Faustus*, for in addition to the Faustian conflict within Robert's soul, Hogg achieves a structural and thematic tension between reason and faith. It is fitting, then, that while Faustus cries, "Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast!" (V.i.72), Robert Wringhim should allude, in a more general sense, to "opposing principles in the soul of man, correcting, modifying, and refining one another" (101). The role of the central character in the novel might be summed up in Hamlet's words,

> 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
> Between the pass and fell incensèd points
> Of mighty opposites.[13]

A Justified Sinner remains a "dynamic and intractable work."[14] Like *Dr. Faustus*, it derives much of its appeal and vitality from an underlying unresolved tension between tremendous opposites. Without discarding the moral and theological conflict of the Faust legend, James Hogg superimposes a more modern sense of epistemological and psychological complexity.

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NOTES

[1]Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, in *The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Irving Ribner (New York, 1963), Prologue, 25. Subsequent references (in parentheses) are to this edition.

[2]James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. John Carey (London, 1969), p. 98. Subsequent references are to this edition.

[3]Carey says that Robert "is seventeen on 25 March 1704"--Introduction, p. xiv.

[4]"The Form of Faustus' Fortunes Good or Bad," in *Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Text and Major Criticism*, ed Irving Ribner (New York, 1966), p. 193.

[5]"James Hogg's *Confessions* and the Fall Into Division," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 9 (July 1972), 38.

[6]This avowal to "give...due burial" to Faustus' "mangled limbs" is also clearly echoed by a passage in Robert's account: "I know I shall be torn in pieces before morning; and then who will deign or dare to gather up my mangled limbs, and give them honoured burial" (237-8).

[7]L.L. Lee, "The Devil Figure: James Hogg's *Justified Sinner*," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 3 (April 1966), 231.

[8]Marius Bewley, "The Society of the Just," *New Statesman*, 26 October 1962, p. 581.

[9]"James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*: The Genesis of the Double," *Études Anglaises*, 26 (April 1973), 178.

[10]Introduction to James Hogg, *A Justified Sinner* (London, 1947), p. xii.

[11]"Hogg's *Confessions* and the *Heart of Darkness*," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 15 (1980), 198.

[12]"Hogg, Melville, and the Scottish Enlightenment," *Scottish Literary Journal*, Vol. 4, no. 2 (1977), 26.

[13]*Hamlet*, V.ii.60-2.

[14]Karl Miller, *Cockburn's Millenium* (London, 1975), p. 197.