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James Hogg's *Confessions* and the Fall Into Division

There are signs now that *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is not only being highly praised by occasional critics who rediscover it, it is beginning to be widely read. During the past year it has been issued in both hard and soft covers, and it is being taught more frequently in undergraduate courses on the novel and the English romantics, in addition to the graduate seminars in which it was once hidden away. And a quick survey of its commentators shows why it should be popular: it has been praised on so many different grounds that it should have something for most tastes and for a good many college courses. It has been praised as a modern psychological novel that anticipates the many case studies of twentieth-century fiction, as a formal experiment in point of view and a *tour de force* of contrasting narrative styles, as a metaphysical study of evil in its ambiguously objective and subjective forms, even as a social tract for our times, a lesson on self-righteous totalitarianism. Approaching the novel as a teacher of nineteenth-century literature, I want to demonstrate still another reason why it should be widely read, studied, and taught by anyone interested in that period: it explores better than any other novel of its time one of the central problems of English romanticism, the disharmony in the self that causes disharmony in society and in the whole of natural creation. Scott in his historical fiction, Wordsworth in his autobiographical poems, Coleridge in his theories of the imagination, Keats in his conceptions of the true poet—all were preoccupied with this problem, which Blake called man's "fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity."

Almost everything in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Scotland of the *Confessions* is at odds with everything else. Wife is set against husband, father against son, brother against brother, in the disasterous Colwan family; and these divisions reflect those of the larger society, which is violently divided politically into Jacobites and Revolutionaries, religiously into Episcopalians and Presbyterians, and socially into cavaliers and puritans. In the first part of the novel, the editor's narrative, Hogg explores the basic nature of this division by allegorically aligning the characters, and he quietly but repeatedly suggests what is needed to restore unity. In the second part, Robert

Wringhim's confessions, he shifts the problems and implied solutions into the mind of his protagonist. His use of two narrators is extraordinarily effective, not only because the reader can see the same story from two extremely different and antagonistic points of view, but also because both points of view finally reveal the same basic faults in man and society. No matter how each biased narrator understands the incidents—as a common-sensical, Tory editor or a fanatical, Revolutionary prophet—he inadvertantly betrays the real issues to those who will hear.

The root problems in the novel are man's refusal to accept himself as both a spiritual and corporeal creature and his failure to reconcile the opposing demands of this amphibious self. In the opening pages of the book the division is represented by the Laird of Dalcastle and his bride, who find that they cannot separate the fat and lean so as to clean the platter betwixt them. The laird is an affable buffoon, a coarse, irreligious natural man, who considers himself on cordial terms with man and God. A close cousin of Fielding's Squire Western, he is a likable fellow with an open enjoyment of pleasure, of drinking and wenching and loud snoring. But he also has the limits of the natural man: although not cruel on principle, he is clumsy and selfish toward his wife, he is complacent about his own worth, and he is indifferent about religious and political matters (at least until his wife forces him to choose sides against her). If not on the side of the devil, he certainly favors the world and the flesh and shows little sign of the spirit.

Lady Dalcastle, by contrast, is a prude whose energies are almost entirely sublimated into religious dogmatics. Her disputations with the Rev. Mr. Wringhim, with their "fiery burning zeal," are parodies of sexual infidelity, especially since they generate a symbolic, if not literal, bastard in Lady Dalcastle's second son. Preoccupied with being one of the elect and with joining her pastor in "splitting the doctrines of Calvin into thousands of undistinguishable films," she is fervently opposed to her husband's sensuality. As the editor claims, her tenets were an "unguent embittered and overheated until nature could not longer bear it." [1]

This term, "nature," which occurs frequently in both narrators' accounts, helps to distinguish the two poles represented by this unfortunate husband and wife. When used by the editor, "nature" is invariably a term of approval: to this rather deistical, reasonable man, who can refer to God as the "controller of Nature," the term signifies the just and normal order of things. Behind that usage are the beliefs that man is inherently good in his natural state, that God works entirely

1. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner,* ed. John Carey (London, 1969), pp. 15, 2. This Oxford edition will be cited throughout this study.

through natural means, and that those who would shun cakes and ale are dangerous, unnatural enthusiasts. But when used by the reformers in the novel, the term often carries intense theological censure, since it indicates a state opposed to grace and election. So, in his confessions Robert describes his sinful youth before justification: "then being, for any thing I was certain of, in my state of nature, and the grace of repentance withheld from me,—what was I to do, or what was to become of me?" (pp. 107-108). Both parties would agree, however, that the Laird of Dalcastle was truly a natural man, whether to his eternal credit or damnation; and both would agree that Lady Dalcastle was by no means in such a state of nature, either because she was one of the elect or because she was "the most severe and gloomy of all bigots." And no matter which construction one puts on "nature," the point still remains—and remains unacknowledged by the characters—that the main trouble lies in the disastrous separation of the natural and the unnatural, of the God of the clockworks and the God of the elect, of the body and the spirit—that is, of the Laird and Lady Dalcastle. As with Blake's account of the loves and jealousies of the Universal Man, we have here a metaphysical domestic farce, which represents the divisions of man's self as marital squabbles.[2]

In keeping with the main allegory, the rejected laird retires to the "lower parts" of the house with a mistress, while his wife ascends to the upper story where she disputes with Mr. Wringhim and bears two sons. These two boys repeat the divisions of their parents. George, the elder son, is a natural, robust fellow, who seems to spend all of his time in tennis and cricket matches, taverns, and brothels. Generally open and pleasant, he can become angered by his pestering brother, but he does not remain so long, since he has the changeableness of a man of impulse and sensation. Like his father, George is a bit vacuous; an entirely glandular young lad of animal spirits and mentality, he is characterized by the editor as "hero" and "king" of the tennis match, which stresses his natural regality and inadvertently suggests the limits of his realm. His younger brother, Robert, who is entirely his mother's son (according to the old laird), scorns all of these pastimes, tries to repudiate "carnal nature" completely, and preoccupies himself entirely with spiritual matters of the elect and the reprobate. He is obsessed with righteousness and martyrdom, and he seeks beatings from his wicked brother, thereby trying to demonstrate his own spiritual heroism, show the insignificance of the body, and receive a masochistic

2. That the trials of the lecherous husband and frigidly pure wife are staples of conventional farce does not negate the allegory. This frequently funny, frequently horrifying, novel is doing a number of things that usually are confined to several different modes.

pleasure that a psychologist would probably see as a masked sexual relationship between the complementary brothers. That these two fragmentary characters are indeed complements is stressed by the description of Robert as his brother's shadow when he follows him about, and in the confessions one-half of the delirious Robert's split self appears as his brother George.

Reinforcing these major oppositions within pairs of characters, much of the action of the novel involves dividing and separating. The laird and his wife retire to different quarters; she attempts to separate the laird from his mistress, "for though she would not consort with her husband herself, she could not endure that any other should do so" (p. 17); the laird separates his two sons and tries to prevent their meeting, an act reinforced by Lady Dalcastle, who wants to keep Robert from being tainted by his brother; the laird refuses to acknowledge Robert as his son, which makes him an "outcast" and, for his first year, an "alien from the visible church"; and the main religious activities of Mr. Wringhim and his followers are disputing, dissecting the tenets of the faith, and deciding who is saved and who is damned. All of these separations are preludes to the central actions of Robert's self-righteous war to "cut off" the carnal portion of mankind from the company of the elect, a crusade that precipitates and parallels the battles being fought in the street between Whigs and Cavaliers.

But scattered throughout all these acts of hatred and division narrated by the editor there are counteracting gestures of tolerance and forgiveness, acts between individual characters that suggest the possibility of overcoming the private and public forms of selfhood. George Colwan, the elder son of the laird, is important in this regard, and his vacillations from anger to forgiveness make him a more complex and interesting character than is usually noticed. The pattern of his reactions to his brother, Robert, is established when they first meet as adults, at the tennis match that Robert was trying arrogantly to disrupt. As George's play was obstructed, "a flush of anger glowed in his handsome face, and flashed from his sparkling blue eye; but it was a stranger to both, and momently took its departure" (p. 22). But after being tripped up and kicked at, George struck his brother with his racket and, finding out then who his unknown adversary was, implied publicly that his brother was a bastard. Soon, however, George repented his rudeness and, although still badgered, accepted the blame and sought pardon and reconciliation. In itself, this vacillation seems merely to create sympathy for the good-natured, yet human, character, but in another episode in the editor's narrative Hogg seems intent on underscoring the thematic importance of these changing attitudes. For weeks George had been haunted by his alter ego, who often appeared

like a shadow at his right side as if intuitively knowing all his intentions. Although George was largely the victim of his brother's hatred here, in his troubled state of mind he did not seem entirely innocent; even the sympathetic narrator comments that, "the attendance of that brother was now become like the attendance of a demon on some devoted being that had sold himself to destruction" (p. 37). Although the simile exaggerates, it does suggest that all was not well with George's soul, particularly now that he had been drawn into conflict with his brother. This correlation of the alter ego and guilt became still more apparent when George took stock of his attitudes and decided that he would not return disdain with disdain: "The next time he comes to my hand, I am resolved that I will accost him as one brother ought to address another, whatever it may cost me" (p. 38). Immediately after this "generous resolution," the mysterious shadow ceased to appear at his side.

Not only did George's generosity free him from this external sign of division and animosity, it also created a psychological harmony signified by a joyful communion with nature (pp. 39-45). In his lightheartedness he arose early one morning to travel to the top of Arthur's Seat in order "to breathe the breeze of the dawning, and see the sun arise out of the eastern ocean." In his new freedom he felt the world transfigured: the dew on his fur hat seemed "a fairy web, composed of little spheres," and as he approached the crest of the rise, "he beheld, to his astonishment, a bright halo in the cloud of haze, that rose in a semi-circle over his head like a pale rainbow." Amidst this halo of glory he felt a "supreme delight" and "with a light and buoyant heart, viewed the beauties of the morning, and inhaled its salubrious breeze." In this scene the natural world coalesced with another world of magic and glory; the divisions between nature and God, substance and spirit, were momentarily overcome within the character. In his forgiveness and generosity, which his brother had not deserved, George experienced a unity within himself that was manifested as a unity of all things. The thesis of the little scene is Blakean: the forgiveness of sins is the way back to wholeness, to a resurrection of the fallen self and a transformation of the natural world. And the descriptive technique is good Romanticism in the vein of Wordsworth and Coleridge: the power of joy, which is given only to the pure and in their purest hour, creates a new earth and a new heaven in such moments of perceptual unity and beauty.

But that moment did not last for George; in his impulsive natural state he could not sustain his attitude of forgiveness:

> "Here," thought he, "I can converse with nature without disturbance, and without being intruded on by an appalling or obnoxious visitor." The idea of his brother's dark and malevolent looks coming at that moment across his mind, he turned his eyes instinctively to the right, to the point where that unwelcome guest was wont to make his appearance. Gracious Heaven! What an apparition was there presented to his view! He saw, delineated in the cloud, the shoulders, arms, and features of a human being of the most dreadful aspect.

Despite the editor's common-sensical worries, it does not matter whether or not this apparition could be accounted for scientifically, any more than it matters whether refraction could explain the preceding halo of light. More important is the conjunction of the psychological state and the transformation of the scene: George inadvertently slipped into disdain for his brother and immediately the halo of light became a demonic apparition. Within a few moments George was once again bloodying Robert's nose, then once again asking to exchange forgiveness and be reconciled. In view of this pattern in George's character, it may be significant that he was murdered by his brother after he had argued with a friend, Mr. Drummond, and while he was dueling with the satanic figure whom he thought to be the revengeful Drummond. Even in his final scene George alternated between reconciliation and manly bluster toward his opponent, and, after all, he died in a drunken scuffle. One would hope that the devil's cries, "I'll have your soul, Sir," and "Ah, hell has it," are misleading or exaggerated, but they may well point up the confused state of George's soul as he died in one of his many fights.

During the last third of the editor's narrative Hogg points up his thesis on forgiveness and acceptance through the female characters to whom his story turns. His account of how Mrs. Logan, the old laird's mistress, tracked down the murderer would be no more than a disproportionately long adventure story and plot filler (both of which it is) if it were not occasionally tied in to the main theme by implication. The first of these links is Mrs. Logan's treatment of Bell Calvert, the prostitute who robbed her house and who had witnessed the murder. When Mrs. Logan visited Bell in prison, she first rejected the woman's pleas for mercy with the easy moralism, "the guilty must not always be suffered to escape, or what a world must we be doomed to live in," and she brushed aside the plea of motherhood by commenting that Bell's child would be "a thousand times better without such a guardian and director" (pp. 58-60). When she found out that the prisoner had seen the murder of her ward, she tried to make a deal, but the haughty Bell was not willing to take mercy that was so strained and bartered. At the trial, however, Mrs. Logan refused to incriminate the

unfortunate woman, whose past was most wretched and pitiful; and appropriately this act of trust secured her not only her belongings and the information she wanted, but also Bell's further aid in capturing the murderer. The significance of this act of mercy was also underscored by Bessie Gillies, the maid who refused to identify the stolen articles and was therefore blessed, not only by the prisoner but (says the editor) "in the breathings of many a feeling heart."

The next instance of the theme occurs during Bell's account of the murder. When Mr. Drummond had left the brothel after quarreling with George, he was attracted to Bell, whose tears caused him to request her story. Being in need of a friend, she described her dreadful past too truthfully: "When he learned that he was sitting in a wretched corner of an irregular house, with a felon, who had so lately been scourged, and banished as a swindler and imposter, his modest nature took alarm, and he was shocked, instead of being moved with pity" (p. 72). Repelled by this woman, who had been taken in thievery and prostitution, Drummond left the tavern, lost his alibi, was impersonated by the devil, suspected of murder, and himself forced to flee into exile.

The final instance of the theme comes in the last pages of the section, when the two women had finally overcome Robert Wringhim. Mrs. Logan had sought out the murderer with a vengeance that at times caused her to consider herself the scourge and minister of the Lord: "If the Almighty do not hurl them down, blasted with shame and confusion, there is no hope of retribution in this life. And, by his might, I will be the agent to accomplish it!" (pp. 78-79)—a cry that echoed many of Robert's arrogant and vindictive cries earlier in the novel. When the two women seized Robert, they set upon him "like two harpies," but when they had him secured, they were restrained:

> He was in the two women's mercy, but they used it with moderation. They mocked, they tormented, and they threatened him; but, finally, after putting him in great terror, they bound his hands behind his back, and his feet fast with long strips of garters they chanced to have in their baskets, to prevent him from pursuing them till they were out of his reach. As they left him, which they did in the middle of the path, Mrs. Calvert said: "We could easily put an end to thy sinful life, but our hands shall be free of thy blood." (p. 89).

Although these actions are something less than models of complete forgiveness, they are more tempered than earlier threats had promised, and they pointedly do not repay in kind the violent acts of Robert, who did cover his hands with the blood of the sinful.

In the second part of the novel, the actual memoirs and confessions, the story becomes something of a psychomachia, with various characters reflecting fragments of Robert's divided self. In the editor's narrative Robert was a flat figure, an extension of his mother in the allegorical divisions of human nature; he did not seem as complex as his brother, George, who showed at least occasional signs of flexibility within his place in the pattern. But in the second part Robert, himself, contains the basic conflicts represented previously by several characters. He becomes the prototype of man in extreme crisis, with the anxiety of a divided self, with the false and destructive solutions to that anxiety, and even (as in part one) with signs of the true solutions. By transposing the story into the drama of Robert's mind, Hogg makes explicit what was only implied in the first part of the novel: the divisions that disrupt families, governments, and religions are also the divisions within each man. The implied human self, of whom Robert, George, and the Laird and Lady Dalcastle were fragments, becomes the Robert Wringham of the confessions—not, of course, because he is a typical man, but because he is an extreme symbol of that man with the common problems writ large as they are in the struggles of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* or Byron's *Manfred.* The use of an everyman, even such a bizzarre one, is hardly original to the nineteenth century, but the romantic poets did adopt and extend it to represent man's fall into division and resurrection to unity. Blake's Albion, the Universal Man, is the most obvious and most symbolically developed example, but Wordsworth in his more naturalistic fashion did much the same thing in *The Prelude,* in which his spiritual autobiography is in part a prototype of mankind's fall and rebirth. In fact, in a very specialized sense even the *Biographia Literaria* is a history of philosophical controversy and resolution cast as an autobiography, since Coleridge uses his own philosophical development to show the conflicts of Aristotelianism and Platonism, empiricism and idealism, and to suggest grounds for their reconciliation—all of which abstractly describes our basic problem, the division and reunion of body and spirit.

By concentrating his study into the conflicts within one character Hogg also achieves an effect pleasantly at odds with this romantic myth-making: he portrays more realistically the suffering, distortions, and claustrophobia of the narcissist. Hogg's technique is doubly effective, for it presents Robert symbolically as an emblem of all men *in extremis,* and it reveals him psychologically as an intense egoist who absorbs all things into his own self-absession. The psychomachia is both the author's technique for exploring problems of man's self and a symptom of those problems in the character.

In the opening pages of part two we find the young, not yet justified, Robert tormented by the same conflict that divided his family and his country in part one. He was spiritualistic and scornful of the flesh, but he was also in an "unregenerate" state of nature and subject to carnal temptations he could not resist. Thus, he suffered anxiety, feeling both righteous and sinful, both powerful and worthless. Like the intense Puritan characterized in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners,* he tormented himself with introspection, trying to cast out part of himself in order to feel confident of his election and worthiness:

> I was utterly confounded at the multitude of my transgressions; for I was sensib'e that there were great numbers of sins of which I had never been able thoroughly to repent, and these momentary ones, by a moderate calculation, had, I saw, long ago, amounted to a hundred and fifty thousand in the minute, and I saw no end to the series of repentances to which I had subjected myself. A life-time was nothing to enable me to accomplish the sum. (p. 107)

But he could not rid himself of his carnal nature. He could not even separate the warring parts of himself as his parents had separated to the upper and lower parts of their house in an armed and finally destructive stand-off.

Until he was assured of his acceptance, he could only act out the symptoms of his paranoia in petty, and far from quieting, gestures. He could welcome the "bodily chastisements" received for his sins and abhor the treacherous beauty of women, both of these feelings driving him deeper into the androgynous narcissism that would cause him to seek beatings from his brother. He could also take some comfort in feeling superior to other sinners, but this need forced him into endless competitions to prove his worth: getting rid of old John Barnet, the serving man who caught him lying, or getting his schoolmate expelled because the boy surpassed him in their lessons. In each case he had to conquer religiously as well as tactically: old John may have been moral but he lacked the righteousness of the elect, and the schoolmate, who was surely the son of a witch, must have used demonic powers to become head of the class. But these victories were too slight, the strain of continuously proving his worth too strenuous, and the basic problem of his own sinfulness still unsolved.

The first important stage of Robert's sham resolution came with the announcement that the boy was received into the company of the "just made perfect." With the assurance that he was free from all sin and guaranteed salvation, Robert felt a surge of energy and joy:

> I bounded away into the fields and the woods, to pour out my spirit in prayer before the Almighty for his kindness to me: my whole frame seemed to be renewed; every nerve was buoyant with new life; I felt as if I could have flown in the air, or leaped over the tops of the 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, and looking down with pity and contempt on the grovelling creatures below. (pp. 115-116)

This scene strongly recalls George's experience on Arthur's Seat, but it caricatures that experience. George's delight came from his attitude of forgiveness, Robert's from a feeling of his own righteousness; George felt at one with the rest of existence, Robert felt superior to it and at last freed from it; George's demon appeared when he momentarily stopped his generous attitude and the sanctified mood ended, Robert's demon rose out of the experience itself, which was only a demonic parody of blessedness. The illustrious stranger who now appeared was both the tempter and the externalization of Robert's longings, and he came to assure him that the elect are infallible and to lead him into more extreme acts. Superficially, this sense of being infallible relieved Robert's dilemma, since it assured him that even his apparently sinful acts were holy; as he would later admit, this feeling of justification was "a delightful healing salve for every sore." Fundamentally, however, it changed almost nothing; it merely intensified his vindictive and competitive acts, and it restructured the terms of his inner conflict without reconciling them. Instead of getting his sinful opponents fired or expelled from school, he began to murder them. Instead of lamenting his own carnal nature, he transferred it to his brother, George, whom he then could punish and finally destroy. Between his justification and the killing of George, the opposing halves of Robert's self became externalized into the religious stranger and the carnal brother, the Czar of the elect and the king of games. So, as he lay in a strange distemper for many days, he felt himself to be split into two persons: "The most perverse part of it was, that I rarely conceived *myself* to be any of the two persons. I thought for the most part that my companion was one of them, and my brother the other" (p. 154). Symbolically, Robert was possessed and controlled by the opposing fragments of his self; he was caught as a passive agent between his own flesh and his own spiritual devil, much as the Colwan family or Scotland was caught in the opposition of its members. In this state Robert was, in modern jargon, the alienated man who felt that his actions and emotions were not his own and that he was controlled by alien forces within himself.

After Robert had murdered his brother, his psychological juggling act had to be changed. Under the commands of one of his alter egos he had destroyed the other, much as his religious self used to seek punishment for the sinful self when he was a boy. But merely killing the emblem of the sinful, carnal self hardly resolved Robert's conflict, since he was still left with his body and its desires; thus, he had to find a new way to act out his mental drama.

Shortly after George's death the old laird died in grief; then, as Robert inherited the estate, his new configuration began. No longer an outcast from wealth and position, he yielded to his repressed longings and spent months at a time in drunken, sensual debauches. Following these periods he would return to his stringent, puritanical self, remembering nothing that had happened and shocked at stories told of his escapades. With his new worldly power Robert had reabsorbed into himself all the forbidden sensuality that his brother, George, had represented to him. His divided self was no longer manifested spatially as two other characters; it was again in his own person, manifested temporally as an alternation of masks. As both cruel sensualist and righteous moralist Robert experienced what Blake called "religious lechery," the chaotic condition of man in the worst state of division and destructive selfhood. And during this period of amnesia and schizophrenia Robert was most dissociated. He was also most narcissistic, having reabsorbed into his androgynous self all symbols of his dilemma; he had eliminated his brother and father on one side, and during one of his sensual phases he killed his mother, thus removing the now superfluous symbol of the other side. Parentless, like Satan, having revolted against his makers, he stood alone. In fact, he no longer had much need for Gil-Martin, the illustrious stranger, who left him for months at a time.

The stranger was also interestingly transformed; after Robert became the new laird, Gil-Martin assumed the form of the murdered brother. Although it has been suggested that this change indicates the ghost of the victim tormenting its murderer,[3] it is more likely that it fills out the psychological pattern. Since Robert had become both sensualist and ascetic, his demonic alter ego, Gil-Martin, had also assumed a double self as both George Colwan and leader of the elect. And, mimicking Robert, the stranger acted out alternating and conflicting roles, first leading Robert into vice and folly, then reprimanding him for his self-indulgences. But by this time the stranger no longer controlled Robert as he once had; although the stranger mirrored

3. Coleman O. Parsons, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction, with Chapters on the Supernatural in Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh, 1964), p. 295.

the young laird and occasionally prodded him on, Robert had become more autonomous in his sins and reactions to them. In fact, he reached the full extent of his depravity in a six-months fit of madness during which, in the stranger's absence, he killed his mother and a woman whom he had ruined.

Following these murders the confessions turn into the story of Robert's flight from the law and from his demonic companion, whom he had come to dread. Some commentators have found this section relating Robert's persecutions and suicide to be the weakest part of the confessions, since it moves away from psychological complexities and into some conventional demonology.[4] In this final section of the confessions Hogg has done what he did in the last section of the editor's narrative; he has followed up the climax with some interesting, straight-forward story-telling that carries the plot to its conclusion without extending the main preoccupations of what preceded. As Mrs. Logan's detective work added little to the allegorical conflicts of Scotland or the Colwan family, so Robert's increasing suffering and despair do not develop his symbolic and psychological nature; they mainly finish him off in an appropriately fantastic and dreadful manner. Once again, however, Hogg uses the concluding narrative portion to indicate his theme that forgiveness and acceptance are necessary to overcome the divisions within and between men.

Again, Hogg has used minor characters to suggest at least part of the solution to the central conflicts. In his flight Robert met several people who treated him kindly. When greeted by a weaver's wife with, "You are a stranger, it is true, but *them* that winna entertain a stranger will never entertain an angel unawares," Robert felt "deeply affected by the manner of this poor woman's welcome," a feeling to which he was most unaccustomed (p. 211). The woman's gospel reference to charity and the angel at the door stands in obvious contrast to Robert's lack of charity and his entertaining the devil. Later he was given shelter by a poor widower and became persuaded that "a power protected that house superior to those that contended for, or had the mastery over me." And then again he was taken in by a good man whose cottage "seemed to be a sancturary from all demonic power" (pp. 235, 237). In each case the generosity of the people protected them from the fiends that plagued Robert so.

4. See, e.g., Andre Gide's introduction to the Cresset Press edition (London, 1947), pp. xv-xvi. For a contrasting opinion, however, see David Craig's *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People* (London, 1961), pp. 195-196. Craig thinks that Hogg is at his best when narrating the kinds of superstitious tales found in the chapbooks.

In this last section there is even a change in Robert. In his deplorable state he became somewhat humbler and pathetic. After he had killed his mother and just before he began his flight, he pled with the stranger, "For the sake of that which is estimable in human nature, depart from me to your own home, before you render me a being either altogether above, or below the rest of my fellow creatures. Let me plod on towards heaven and happiness in my own way, like those that have gone before me . . ." (p. 189). Although he is still confident of reaching Heaven, his changing attitude toward human nature and his fellow creatures is underscored with a heavy hand. Similarly, his final entry on the day of his suicide shows such a reversal:

> Unable to resist any longer, I pledged myself to my devoted friend, that on this day we should die together, and trust to the charity of the children of men for a grave. . . . Farewell, woman, whom I have despised and shunned; and man, who I have hated; whom, nevertheless, I desire to leave in charity. (p. 239)

Although he died, like Dr. Faustus, in the sin of despair and unable to repent, yet he was much improved.

During this section the stranger continuously deteriorated, assuming his satanic form of a fallen and decayed majesty. One commentator claims that this deterioration corresponds to Robert's progressive corruption,[5] but the relation seems more of an inverse one, since Robert becomes less corrupt as the confessions reach their close. I should even guess that we are to feel sympathy for him in the last episodes. After all, for the first time in the novel he is a real man among demons; as we move into the realm of folk legend and chapbook superstition, we have a suffering, weak, sinful human being tormented by supernatural creatures, which is quite different from the relations of the character and his demonic alter ego earlier in the book. Of course, Robert does not deserve our sympathy any more than he deserved Mrs. Logan's or the old widower's, or any more than Bell Calvert deserved Mr. Drummond's. But that may be exactly the point. The way out of that nightmare world of psychosis and hatred may begin with a forgiveness that cannot be deserved, that can only be given. With the end of selfhood and judgment, which grow out of fear, guilt, and longing, there may be a move back toward unity. If that is the underlying theme of redemption in the novel, there is hard and effective irony toward the editor in his final comments. After condescending to the

5. Marius Bewley, "The Society of the Just," *New Statesman,* LXIV (1962), 582.

superstitious past and dismissing much in the confessions as dreaming, madness, or clumsily written parable, the editor scorns the author of the confessions, mocks his suicide, and consigns "his memory and his name to everlasting detestation." One suspects that this reasonable, judicious editor will never entertain an angel unawares.

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