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# The Bottle Imp

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The Devil in Scotland  
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What follows is a consideration of some of the more canonical moments in Scottish literature when the Devil features (or in some cases, as we shall see, fails to feature). Many more examples might be adduced, but those chosen here are selected not only for their prominence but for the way in which they congregate around conceptions of moral discernment and the divine economy (the universe as presided over by the Christian God) and in relation to what I argue to be the overdriven Calvinist perception of the fallen world. Arguably, in trailing the Devil in Scottish literature, we become especially aware of a widely diagnosed flaw in the Scottish cultural imagination precipitated by the theological tincture of Scotland's Reformation. Though this 'flaw', it can also be argued, is somewhat recouped as literature in its fundamentally imaginative propensity flushes it out.

The Scottish ballads of the 14<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries provide plentiful material on the Devil. 'The Daemon Lover' sees a married woman visited by a former paramour missing for seven years, who returns to claim her 'former vows'. The woman though insists on the sacredness of the marital pledge to her husband and her loyalty to her children. However, the old lover points out his material wealth and the woman immediately agree to go off with him on his ship. Unsurprisingly, all does not go well:

She had not sailed a league, a league,  
A league but barely three,  
When dismal grew his countenance,  
And drumlie grew his ee.

They had not sailed a league, a league,  
A league but barely three,  
Until she espied his cloven foot,  
And she wept right bitterlie.

'O hold your tongue of your weeping,' says he,  
'Of your weeping now let me be;  
I will shew you how the lilies grow  
On the banks of Italy.'

'O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills,  
That the sun shines sweetly on?'  
'O yon are the hills of heaven,' he said,  
'Where you will never win.'

'O whaten a mountain is yon,' she said,  
'All so dreary wi frost and snow?'  
O yon is the mountain of hell,' he cried,  
'Where you and I will go.'

He strack the tap-mast wi his hand,  
The foremast wi his knee,  
And he brake that gallant ship in twain,  
And sank her in the sea.<sup>1</sup>

We should notice the theological rules, where the Devil or his demon-disciples cannot abduct humans gratuitously. The woman gives in to the temptation of riches, and, indeed, not only acts basely but is wilfully blind to the signs that there is something of the night about her former lover, the number of years which she ignores, and which he has been gone, *seven*, being one of those numbers associated in folklore with the supernatural. The scenario of 'The Daemon Lover' represents a kind of morality test. There is perhaps some suspicion that the woman, with her 'former vows' has been unfaithful to her first lover, now reappeared in wraith form, and so God (who in the Divine Economy allows even Satan and his minions to operate) has sanctioned another testing of the woman. She is given the definitive chance to prove herself faithful on her second encounter, a challenge which she fails. The ballads are sometimes anti-feminist, and, certainly, 'The Daemon Lover' might be said to feature a rather jaundiced view of female caprice. However, I would suggest that we are invited to feel some sympathy for the woman, especially as Satan, or his minion, taunts her with romantic dreams, declaiming as they sail off: 'I will shew you how the lilies grow [in] Italy'. It is not only the woman who is carried away, but also the demon lover who promptly sinks the boat while the woman weeps (contritely?) and so, as the Medieval audience would know, is more likely to be ushered into Purgatory rather than Hell. We should be aware also that the original lover has deserted his prospective bride, going off to plunder Ireland (perhaps as one of Robert the Bruce's troop on Scotland's earliest ill-fated colonial adventure). He has lost his life and has, presumably, as the nature of his return shows, gone to Hell; sent back to ruin another soul he takes her life, but perhaps fails to accomplish her damnation.

We might glance at another ballad, 'Thomas the Rhymer', about Thomas of Erceldoune, the poet and visionary of the thirteenth century.

While out walking, Thomas encounters a beautiful woman, before whom he kneels taking her for Our Lady, Mother of Christ. She informs him, however, that she is actually the Queen of Elfland and dares him to kiss her, telling him if you do so you are mine forever. Ignoring this warning, Thomas kisses the Queen and is carried off to Fairyland for seven years. We see them on their journey:

O they rade on, and farther on,  
And they waded thro rivers aboon the knee,  
And they saw neither sun nor moon,  
But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was mirk mirk night, and there was nae stern  
light,  
And they waded thro red blude to the knee;  
For a' the blude that's shed on earth  
Rins thro the springs o' that countrie.<sup>2</sup>

Here Thomas undertakes, essentially, the journey into Hell, in an episode that recalls the Apostolic Creed ('He descended into Hell'), as well as one of the Apocraphyl gospels where Jesus Christ is depicted freeing from Hell those souls condemned because they had lived before his birth. There are strange goings on here, clearly, as we have something of an analogy between the Queen of Elfland/Satan and Fairyland/Hell. How do we explain this? The key lies in the fact that when Thomas returns to the human world he is now 'True' Thomas; he has the gift of prophecy or seeing the truth. This gift is also, however, a searing pain, a Christ-like burden of recognising human sin and suffering (knowledge gained in Elfland/Hell, a place of depressing knowledge where human misery and evil are computed). This distillation of all the bitterness of human life made known to Thomas represents a version of the story of the pain that Christ must know in the incarnation. Christ in opening the gates of Hell must go there and taste human despair. If it is not exactly the case that the Devil has 'shape-changed' to appear as the Queen of Elfland, the Christian narrative of good and evil, of life and suffering is deeply imbued within the 'folk materials' of the ballad (rather than folk materials being deeply impregnated within or appropriated by Christian narrative, a lazy, erroneous assumption often made in the 'post-Christian' era).

More overtly orthodox in voice the great fifteenth century maker, William Dunbar, features the Devil in a song of Eastertide. 'Done is a battell on the dragon blak'. Dunbar's hymn features the cross amidst fierce, guttural beasts (a reversal of the nativity narrative in the stable). Even as it is a cry of triumph, it

features the ongoing human situation, as the vulnerable, sacrificed Christ-lamb has emerged triumphant from being surrounded by ghastly forces and improbable odds, so too humanity in all its frailty is promised redemption. The predatory, nightmarish beasts of Hell are both an acknowledgement of the Devil and a counsel not to despair.

With Dunbar we see the orthodox bestiality of Satan and one might mount the argument that it is because of the loss of the iconography of the diabolic in art in Scotland following the Reformation that Calvinists tend to see the Devil everywhere. The extreme, puritanically Calvinist outlook sees the world as a fallen, outcast place a place where all human joy might be read as a deceitful trick of the Devil, grace residing not potentially in nature (as Medieval Catholicism had allowed, but subsisting only within the word of scripture). If we are to seek solid, imaginative portrayals of the Devil in Scotland between the medieval period and the eighteenth century, these are far and few between. One of the most dramatic examples concerns the case of John Graham of Claverhouse (1648-89), Royalist persecutor of the Covenanters, killed at the Battle of Killiecrankie. In Scottish poetry between the 1690s and the 1770s, Claverhouse is a hero in the pantheon Jacobite heroes, certainly so far as writers such as Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson are concerned. In the Covenanting/Presbyterian tradition, however, Graham is 'bluidy Clavers' and is even seen as the Devil, reputedly because of the uncanny number of failed Covenanting attempts to kill him. Paradoxically, Claverhouse contributes to a tradition of the Devil as swashbuckling hero, a general idea promulgated most famously in John Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost* (1667). It would seem to be the case that those on the dissenting, anti-Royalist side in the British dynastic and religious struggles of the seventeenth century do most to project an ambiguous or glamorous Satanic 'other'.

We find fairly precisely an echo of the Satanic Cavalier/Jacobite in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* (1888) where James Durisdeer, inveterate adventurer goes off to support Charles Edward Stuart in 1745 after 'winning' the toss of a coin so that his younger brother, Henry, stays, to at home as loyalist heir to safeguard the family inheritance. Returning an outlaw, James ignores the reality of the sensible family expedience and the fact that Henry had tried to insist that he as younger brother ought to be 'out' with the highly risky, ultimately failed rebellion, and pro-

ceeds to persecute Henry for having 'usurped' him, while Henry attempts at various points to accommodate his brother as well as he can. A very typical Stevensonian manoeuvre is to re-play narratives from the Bible. In *The Master of Ballantrae*, the parable of the Prodigal Son is revisited (an item of the New Testament that is problematic *a propos* God's banishing of Lucifer in the Old Testament). James, no matter the enormities he commits, remains the favourite of Lord Durisdeer and is always welcomed home. James responds by being evermore the Satanic figure, shouting down chimneys pretending to be a possessed voice and burying himself alive, intending to resurrect himself. A question is asked implicitly: is James really evil or just a shoddy stage-trickster? The narrator of the novel, the dour, Calvinistic Ephraim Mackellar, is the family steward, and for much of the novel he is attracted to James; however, eventually he reaches the conclusion that, simply, James is a bad man and Henry a good one, with the implication, then, that James is motiveless evil. James's childish cheap tricks, in fact, are a sign of evil, not things of lesser magnitude. If it looks like the Devil at work, then probably it is the Devil. There is no real reason for James's badness, which we see before and after he loses his patrimony. He makes himself outcast, Satan-like: 'Non serviam', a very profound, though ultimately inexplicable, evil.

We see something different in the depiction of the devil by Robert Burns. Burns himself flirted with the persona of the Devil, as inspired by Milton he took the Satanic disposition to stand for rebellion against autocratic authority. He is one of two Scottish writers – the other being Lewis Grassie Gibbon – who are explicit in their 'blasphemy'. This marks Burns standing sometimes, at least, at the radical atheistical side of the Enlightenment. Burns, so often read as a champion of 'folk-culture', is in fact somewhat disdainful of the supernatural traditions of the countryside. We see this in 'Address to the De'il' (1785) as Burns laughs at the devil getting the blame, according to parochial superstitions, for milkless cows and impotent husbands. In a very rich vein of iconoclastic comedy in this poem, Burns even registers his own blasphemy against the Devil, before spinning into a daring, paradoxically Christian-challenging sympathy for the source of all evil:

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

But fare you weel, auld Nickie-Ben!  
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!  
Ye aiblins might – I dinna ken –  
Still hae a stake—  
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,  
Ev'n for your sake!<sup>3</sup>

Burns here puts his finger on a perennial theological problem: how far God's promise of universal salvation is to be taken. At the end of universal time might all humans, might even Satan be redeemed?

Less theologically problematic is Burns's 'Address of Beelzebub' (1786), where Satan's prince of the infernal legions, sends an epistle from Hell to the Earl of Breadalbane – President of the Highland Society – a group of landowners who sought not to lose labour and elements of their own patronage by preventing the emigration (in the pre-Clearances era) of highlanders to Canada. Beelzebub recommends brutal violence, child labour and prostitution of their women as further useful controlling treatments for the Scottish Gaels that Breadalbane and his colleagues might adopt. Here, as so often with Burns's work, we see that evil is not actually lurking extraneously out there but is something emanating from within humanity. One of the ironies of the poem is that the Highland landowners need little help or advice from Hell, they are creating misery and infernal imprisonment quite well enough on their own. Burns features something close to demonic possession in two of his poems, 'Holy Willie's Prayer' (1785) and 'The Holy Fair' (1785). In the first of these texts, Willie, ostensibly praying, is, in fact, boasting of the power of his sexual appetites and his sins. Believing himself to be one of the Elect, vouchsafed knowledge of his own salvation since God stands omniscient at the beginning of time knowing who ultimately will be saved and who will be damned, Willie reasons that his lust must be God's way of providing a little imperfection and 'humility' in this paragon of humanity. Willie must simply 'bear his cross'. However, Willie's smug monologue is also disturbed at one (penultimate) point with his fearfulness, a mark of actually being haunted by the Devil. A hypocrite, he is now afraid of those whom he has previously and unsuccessfully attempted to have prosecuted by church and law for their alleged failings. The poem reaches a crescendo as he implores God to destroy these enemies, those who have had him in a state of sweating shaking and even 'pissing' himself with dread. Thus Willie is rendered animal-like, he has upon him the mark of the beast (it is a shame that Burns did not write an additional verse, as its seventeen rather than

eighteen stanzas denies the pattern 6-6-6!). 'The Holy Fair' dealing with Presbyterian field gatherings of the eighteenth century, where communities would congregate to sample a variety of preachers also sees Burns satirise the most traditional Scottish Calvinism. One 'Auld licht' preacher, not unlike Holy Willie in extremes of mood, is observed:

Hear how he clears the points o' Faith  
Wi rattlin' an' thumpin!  
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,  
He's stampan, an' he's jumpan!  
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,  
His eldritch squeel an' gestures,  
O how they fire the heart devout,  
Like cantharidian plaisters  
On sic a day!<sup>4</sup>

Cunningly, Burns schooled in Enlightenment psychology sees religion at its most extreme as sublimation of the urges of the flesh. This preacher's dwelling upon evil turns his listeners on (cantharides was used as an aphrodisiac), and he himself with his 'eldritch, or unworldly, noises and in his demeanour (especially his upturned snout) is clearly porcine. The association of pigs with the demonic can be found in both the gospels of Luke and Mark, where Christ casts a demon from a possessed man into a herd of pigs (in Jewish culture, of course, a site of the extremely unclean). Burns once again, then, provides a sceptical critique of those most puritanically possessed of a sense of 'unworldly' righteousness.

Famously, Burns's work on the thin interface between idealised, unworldly, Calvinist good and actual, life-denying evil inspires James Hogg's novel, *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) set in the early eighteenth century. The central protagonist, Robert Wringhim, is 'safe' in the knowledge that he is one of the Elect, and so rapes and murders with impunity. The novel actually suggests, of course, that predestination is the Devil's doctrine, since morality and conscience become irrelevant in the face of 'faith'. Wringhim's nefarious path is set out after he is visited by the demonic figure of Gilmartin, who appears after his minister of religion, the Reverend Wringhim (who is most probably Robert's natural father), has assured Robert that he is chosen for salvation. The idea here is that in believing this proposition, Robert Wringhim is guilty of sinful pride and so, true to the rules of the Divine Economy where the Devil cannot act gratuitously, allows evil to take up residence. Alongside this supernatural reading, there is the possibility that Gilmartin is a delusional

eruption of Robert's conscience (as an 'externalisation' or a pushing out of evil from him). The duplicity of voice, character and narrative in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (with two main narratives that of the sinner himself and of a later editor, neither of whom can be absolutely trusted) makes for a suitably demonic texture in the novel. In Christian cultural coinage this confused or impure identity relates again to the Gadarene swine into which Christ drives the demon: before doing so, he asks the demon's identity and it responds, 'My name is Legion for we are many.' Amidst much clever ambiguity in Hogg's novel, however, there is some interesting sign-posting. Robert's problem is that he refuses to read the signs of good and evil, or even deliberately and wilfully confuses them. This relates to my earlier suggestion about the lost iconography of the devil in post-Reformation Scotland. At one point, in a moment of relative narrative clarity, standing essentially beyond either the sinner's or the editor's account, he has told to him the story of the satanic visitation, probably in the seventeenth century, in the town of Auchtermuchty, famed for its frenzied field preaching and all night sermons. The townsfolk are particularly enraptured of one itinerant preacher who tells them that they are the most miserable transgressors of God's law, more or less that their town is Sodom and Gomorrah rolled into one. However, Honest Robert Ruthven knows, because he has overheard crows say so, that this preacher is the Devil. So Robin crosses himself and goes off to the latest preaching at Auchtermuchty, where he rips aside the preacher's gown 'and behold, there was a pair o' cloven feet! The auld thief was fairly catch'd in the very height o' his proud conquest, an' put down by an auld carl. He could feign nae mair, but gnashing on Robin, wi his teeth, he dartit into the air like a fiery dragon, an' keust a reid rainbow our the taps o' the Lowmands.<sup>5</sup> Now this story is allegorically obvious enough in its application to the situation of Robert Wringhim, the Reverend Wringhim and Gilmartin (whom Robert at first takes to be a good Christian): all are wolves in sheep's clothing.

The Auchtermuchty story is an opportunity for Robert to work out the truth and find self-realisation, but a number of things stand in the way of his free reception of the narrative. The Disney-esque crows represent one barrier, the fact that Robert Ruthven though not a Catholic crosses himself, another (here like George Mackay Brown later, Hogg depicts the sign of the cross as lingering on as a kind of

detached folk custom in not necessarily Catholic lower class groups such as tinkers). We ought to realise that the Auchtermuchty story represents the critique, it is very interesting that the sincere, moderate Presbyterian Hogg should make it, post-Reformation Scotland has lost a certain guiding iconography of evil, and also of the good that opposes it. The Calvinist emphasis upon the sinful or fallen world, to be so mistrusted, makes things easy for the Devil-preacher in Auchtermuchty. The Devil says to the people you are all the site of evil from which you cannot break free and the townsfolk in their gloomy theological mindset agree. In their strange pride, the Devil is everywhere except where he actually is: encouraging them in their warped religious conceit of their resounding evil. Implicitly, on the other hand, Robert Ruthven (heretical in the Papist-tinged expression of his belief in God) believes that evil and good can be separated out in the world, that human moral agency is a necessity in the world and need not be paralysed as it is in the doctrine of predestination with its implicit abnegation of free will (or agency). The Devil in the Auchtermuchty narrative is one that extreme Calvinist Protestantism cannot see, cannot locate, cannot disentangle from its own despairing theology or preaching so as to combat. It wields a pessimistic mentality close to the heresy of the Manicheans (that good and evil are equally weighted contending principles in the moral universe). Robert Wringhim's terrors, the demons that he eventually claims assail him, increase as his story proceeds and in despair he commits suicide at the end. In a religious reading, these are the legions of Hell gradually emerging to carry him off. Earlier the Devil has appeared in the seemingly pleasant form of Gilmartin, again symbolic of the inability of the Calvinist mindset to discriminate between good and evil. By the end, it is too late for Wringhim and he is paralysed as Hell finally gapes (indeed in committing suicide in the traditional Christian mentality ushers himself into it).

On of the most persistent essayists of the Devil in Scottish literature is the dramatist, James Bridie. Perhaps his most interesting rendition of the Satanic character is primed by the true history of Robert Knox in Bridie's play, *The Anatomist* (1931). Bridie is drawn to Knox, to whom the infamous Burke and Hare sold their cadavers in 1820s Edinburgh because he represents the kind of real-life duplicitous morality, the oxymoronic light-dark mindset of 'justified sinner', that has so often been associated with Scottish Calvinism. Knox was both a

racist theoretician and an opponent of animal vivisection, and Bridie builds upon such (to modern eyes) improbable contradiction so that nice ambiguity is maintained: is he a scientist in pursuit of profound truth in his study of the human body or is he a sociopath, a psychopath even, ripping and rending human flesh? Knox, like Stevenson's James Durisdeer, hams up his Satanic accoutrements, quoting Milton's *Paradise Lost* and describing himself (in a justified sinner formulation) as a 'monstrous fine fellow'. He is also devotee of the idea of a fallen world, sneering at the moral scruples expressed by his assistant Walter Anderson on beginning to discover his superior's nefarious connections: 'Et ego in Arcadia'. Knox knows he lives in an imperfect world, indeed is horribly fascinated by the corruption and filth of humanity. On the one hand, Knox is apparently tough, dealing un sentimentally, scientifically with the human body, arguing that the body of a prostitute murdered for his dissecting table is now put to superior use than previously. Even here though we glimpse, in fact, his hyper-sensitivity (his attitude is not all that far from that of those serial killers of prostitutes who claim that they are 'cleaning up' the world). Bridie's Knox enjoys appearing darkly sinister so as to annoy the mores of bourgeois Edinburgh, which he regards as hypocritical in tolerating the human mess all around it, the squalor, the prostitution and so in the 1820s 'Athens of the North'. Knox is the Satan, he feels this society is losing sight off in its moral winking. More than this though, he has also created a Hell on Earth around himself. Actually traumatised by the world, desiring to be its victim, he declaims that he would like nothing more than to be pursued by an Edinburgh mob crying, 'Crucify him!' Once again in Calvinist Scotland, then, we have a protagonist who does not know whether his life is Satan-like or Christ-like (albeit that, as Bridie acknowledges, Knox was essentially an atheist). Contemporaneously, Edwin Muir was certainly taking things too far when he compared Scottish Calvinism to a totalitarian ideology (Communism specifically, but with more than a sideway glance at Fascism), but there is a germ of accuracy in his apprehension that Calvinism like such an extreme political outlook was often incapable of dealing with, and was ham-fisted in its response to, the imperfection of the world.<sup>6</sup> Bridie's *The Anatomist* is prescient of the emerging Nazi creed of biological perfection, and its evil corollary, intolerance of biological 'imperfection.' It is interesting also that James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* becomes after more than a century of

neglect a great cosmopolitan text of the post-Auschwitz twentieth century, edited in 1947 by the French critic, Andre Gide, who sees it as a searing analysis of the morbid, fanatical mindset that had led to the death camps. The truly orthodox, mainstream Christian response to the 'problem' of imperfect life is that God reveals his free, unconditional, perfect love by loving that imperfection.

Let us take one more exemplar of the Devil featuring in Scottish literature, as an especially interesting case presents itself with the work of the Catholic writer, Muriel Spark. In search of the Devil, she returns very precisely to the world of the Scottish ballads in her novel, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960). Unlike Hogg's Gilmartin, Spark's character Dougal Douglas careers around London proclaiming himself to be one of the Hellish legion, even inviting people to feel the cysts on his head which he claims to be the stumps of his removed diabolic horns. From Edinburgh, Dougal comes to proclaim that the wider world (not only Scotland) has a denuded sense of the Devil (and of God, or the moral universe generally). He comes to mock a world obsessed with the wrong things. Encouraging his landlady in her driven, petty tidiness, he keeps his digs impeccably clean (mimicking her threadbare desire for a perfect world). When her long-lost brother appears, someone she had previously loved very much apparently, she cannot accept him as he is a tramp. Dougal, as orthodox agent of Satan where encouragement but not independent agency is allowed has prepared for his landlady's failure of love by encouraging her bourgeois notion that cleanliness is next to godliness. A different type of perfectionism is pursued by the seventeen year old girl, Dixie, planning her marriage and rapaciously pursuing the consumer dream, desperate for a good washing machine and modern furniture. Implicitly, Dougal drives Dixie on in her aspirations by presenting himself as a frivolous, disreputable man very different from the kind of steady, secure husband to be she has landed. Ironically, Dixie's need for respectability as a model housewife arises to large extent from her personal situation, where she is illegitimate (a bastard being a traditional mark of the Devil in much western folkloric culture). She has been conceived after her mother has had a fling with a member of the American military stationed in Britain during World War II. Poignantly, Dixie's mother feels it is sad that her daughter is so devoid of fun at her young age, but 'knows' her daughter to be in pursuit of a 'better' life and so says nothing.

In Spark's novel, 1960s London, like the rest of Britain, is beginning to enjoy modest material progress after the austerity of the 1940s and '50s. However, its people, if the inhabitants of Peckham are anything to judge by, have a denuded sense both of good and evil. This is why Dougal a weird Devilish character as though from an ancient ballad is visited upon the contemporary scene. He reviles and charms the inhabitants of Peckham in equal measure, some, including Dixie, finding his hump (or handicapped status) rebarbative. We see, then, hatred of imperfection (something not so dissimilar to the extreme Calvinist mentality). Dougal (in spite of his status as exemplary lodger) brings messiness, and quite spectacularly so in the case of the bloody death of Merle Coverdale who is having a joyless affair with her boss at work, Mr Druce. Dougal also courts Merle so that Mr Druce becomes jealous and murders his lover in a horrific attack with a corkscrew to the neck. Dougal has helped bring about the kind of gut-wrenching violence that is associated with the ballads, and with great poetic justice of a different kind too. The corkscrew is both a very chilling implement of death and also a continuation of the mockery of the threadbare, suburban lives Dougal is sent to traumatise. These people have lost any true sense of moral categories and so Dougal, as the Devil or one of his agents, is licensed to interfere. If for Calvinist Scotland, an imperfect world is all too easily despised, for materialist 1960s Britain, an all too mundane perspective is applied to the planet. For Spark, diseased imagination needs to be out to rights, needs to grasp both the Devil and God, both evil and good, each apprehended its proper place. Having placed a malevolent spirit on the scene, Spark ends her novel with a reclaimed landscape, or to use another favourite religious term of hers, a transfigured landscape where, in a moment of grace, the border between Heaven and Earth dissolves. Dougal, having done his work has disappeared, and one of her character observes:

it was a sunny day for November, and, as he drove swiftly past the Rye, he saw the children playing there and 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>7</sup>

Scottish Literature continues to struggle with the Devil (the recent fiction of James Robertson comes to mind). Diabolic cover for fanaticism and for avoidance of human rather than

supernatural evil have been a strong, valuable and enduring part of the story of Scottish literature, where undoubtedly creative capital has been made from dour theological and cultural circumstances. What is especially interesting, however, is the way in which Scottish literature in its Satanic theme has carried on a dialogue with itself about human morality, the reality of the world and the imagination.

*This essay represents very preliminary work on what is intended to be a long term study of the Catholic and Protestant imaginations in Scottish Literature. A number of themes (including that of the apprehension of the imperfect world) need teasing out further, and the author welcomes any additional thoughts including contradiction that any kind reader might proffer.*

### Endnotes

- 1 Emily Lyle (ed.), *Scottish Ballads* (Canongate: Edinburgh, 1994), pp.80-81.
- 2 Lyle (ed.), *Scottish Ballads*, p.134.
- 3 James Kinsley (ed.), *Burns: Complete Poems and Songs* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1969), pp.138-139.
- 4 Kinsley (ed.), *Burns: Complete Poems and Songs*, p.106.
- 5 James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* edited by John Wain (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1983) p.199.
- 6 See Edwin Muir, 'Bolshevism and Calvinism' in the *European Quarterly* (may 1934), pp.3-11.
- 7 Muriel Spark, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1963), p.143.



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