THE PRIVATE MEMOIRS AND CONFESSIONS OF A

JUSTIFIED SINNER AND THE VOICE OF THE SHEPHERD

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This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Amal:

“I was able to work on this only because you were with me”
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ABSTRACT

This paper uses postcolonial theory in order to explain the complexities and instabilities of James Hogg’s narrative structure in *The Private Memoirs*. It tries to bring to attention the view that Hogg was writing from the periphery and his work can be read as a challenge to the dominant Scottian historical novel. The paper begins by establishing that Hogg was not an elite author despite the fact that he had strong connections with the Scottish elite. Then, it highlights the novel’s place in Hogg’s cannon and establishes its relation to the political and historical context. Finally, it shows evidence from the text to support its conclusion that the novel resists the dominant elite discourse. This evidence can mainly be found in Hogg’s inconclusive narrative, in giving veracity and wisdom to the voice of lowly characters, and in showing that oral traditions are more creditable than written documents.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>........................................................................</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>.........................................................................</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>..........................................................................</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION .....................................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>A NATIONALIST PROJECT ........................................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>A SCOTLAND THAT “ONCE SHE WAS” .............................</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>DIFFICULTIES OF A TEXT ........................................</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>THE INCOHERENCE OF NARRATIVE ................................</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>NARRATIVE OF RESISTANCE ......................................</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>CONCLUSION ..........................................................</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>.........................................................................</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* has baffled readers since its publication in 1824. One of the aspects of the novel that most perplexed critics was the relation between the two narratives that comprise the novel. The novel is split between two almost conflicting narratives; one is narrated by the Editor, who draws upon several accounts which he has collected from different sources; and the other is narrated by Robert Wringhim, who relates the same story from his own perspective in his private memoir, which has been found buried with him in his grave by the Editor. This division in the novel into two narratives and two perspectives—the Editor’s and Robert’s--coupled with the other bewildering aspects, led critics such as Peter Garside, David Groves, Elizabeth W. Harries, and Ian Duncan to suggest that the novel impedes almost all attempts to reach final conclusions about it or about the major events it depicts. Elizabeth Harries, for instance, suggests that “Hogg’s work is not an exploration of the ‘true’ ways a story can be told, […] but an exploration of the inadequacy of narrative forms to the mystery of experience” (194).
Based on such interpretations that acknowledge the ambiguities of the novel, I argue that, in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions*, James Hogg was presenting a version of Scottish fiction that differs from that of the authors of the educated circles such as Walter Scott who was the dominant figure in the Scottish literary scene at the time. Hogg was excluded to some extent from the Edinburgh literary circles because he was not educated at a university. Such an exclusion, I suggest, gave the novel its basis and shape, making it a response to the grand and elite narratives associated with Scott and the Scottish literati who promoted an Anglicized version of Scotland in their writings. Furthermore, Hogg’s novel problematizes the authenticity of national historiography of post-Union Scottish whiggism as presented in the historical novel. Its problematization of elite narrative of Scottish history is most evident in how it challenges the reliability of evidence from the senses (e.g., Gil-Martin’s presence), in its disrupted narrative (as in the gaps in the plot), and in its lack of a defining generic frame. As we shall see below, the novel delivers to its readers a sense of the incoherence of narratives in general, which would necessarily cast doubt on the historical novel’s implicit claim to provide an authentic narrative of national history. Elite narratives embodying Scottish whiggism, Hogg’s novel suggests, can hardly represent the sole historical truth and their assertions in their approach to historical representation can always be questioned and contested. The importance of “historical truth” in the “fictive” world of the novel is something we are beginning to learn from postcolonialism—as shown in Edward Said’s theories on the role of narratives in the colonial battle for dominance. Hogg and his contemporaries, two centuries earlier, were in a position to realize that the historical novel was shaping the people’s conceptions about their national history.
Hogg was in a special position to try to contest the claims of the historical novel due to his humble origin as an untutored shepherd author. Edinburgh was dominated by famous literary names, such as Walter Scott, J. G. Lockhart, and William Blackwood. The well-known author of the *Waverley* novels was more than a friend of Hogg’s, and their acquaintance extended to collaboration. For example, Hogg was at certain points Scott’s informant on Scottish folklore and Highland culture, and he travelled to the Highlands of Scotland at Scott’s own request and possibly on the promise of patronage (Hughes 50). Although Hogg liked and respected Scott, there were instances, as we shall see below, when Hogg might have suspected that he was excluded from literary circles because he was being compared with Scott. John G. Lockhart was Scott’s son-in-law and biographer who authored, with John Wilson and others, a series of symposia entitled “Noctes Ambrosianae,” in which Hogg frequently was caricatured as the “Ettrick Shepherd.” This series was published by Blackwood in his influential and widely-read *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. Hogg wrote *The Private Memoirs* in this context of the periphery responding to the center. His response was to contest the usually unquestionably accepted authenticity of fictional narratives by showing how such narratives can be incoherent.¹ Questioning the coherence of such elite narratives ultimately deconstructs the partisan ideology of post-Union Scottish whiggism.

¹ I am following Ian Duncan’s lead who explains in *Scott’s Shadow* that Hogg, like John Galt, was responding to Scott’s approach in the historical novel. Duncan shows how Scott dominated the literary scene in Edinburgh and how his “historicization of fiction” in the Waverley novels was a realization of the philosophical claim that fiction is “the medium of reality” instead of the opposite. One of Duncan’s main arguments is that Scottish Enlightenment developed the basis of that claim, which is especially evident in David Hume’s “fundamental practice of modern ideology—acquiescence without belief, crediting without credulousness” (Duncan 7). Duncan, furthermore, interprets Hogg’s “resistance” to Scott’s approach in the Waverley novels by resorting to psychoanalytic theory and to its principles of incorporation and the uncanny (16). I think, however, that Hogg’s response to the prevalent historical novel can best be explained by postcolonial theory as developed by Said and the school of subaltern studies.
Edward Said’s ideas on narrative in his book *Culture and Imperialism* will be used in order to explain the basic argument of this paper. Said writes that narratives played a crucial role in determining who has the upper-hand in the colonial battle between the colonizer and the colonized. Said details in *Culture and Imperialism* what he had started in *Orientalism*—that seminal work in which he contends that orientalist discourse constitutes and misrepresents the oriental other. There, he mainly responded to non-literary works by great European orientalists who wrote about the Orient such as Silvestre de Sacy, Edward William Lane, Lord Cromer, and Ignac Goldziher. In his basic argument, he contends that “orientalism expresses and represents [the Orient] culturally and ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” (2). He also points out that “the orient was almost a European invention.” The works of orientalists who wrote about the East mainly enhanced the binary opposition between the “superior” Occident and the “inferior” Orient/Other. In order to show this, he focused his analysis on historical texts, paying little attention to literary texts, which he did not hold as innocent. Such an omission was compensated for in *Culture and Imperialism*, where he argues that narrative plays an important role in the culture of imperialism. Both sides of the imperial divide made use of it; the colonizer to assert their elevated position over the indigenous peoples, and the natives to assert their identity and independence. He writes:

> A great deal of recent criticism has concentrated on narrative fiction, yet very little attention has been paid to its position in the history and world of empire. Readers of this book will quickly discover that
narrative is crucial to my argument here, my basic point being that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. (12, 13)

Although Said articulated his theories in a relatively different context—namely, that of postcolonial discourse and the cultural, geographical, and political divide between Empire and its overseas colonies, they are extremely illuminating in explaining Hogg’s distrust of narrative in the context of the debate over national identity in post-Union Scotland. Scotland after the 1707 Union, as Kenneth Mcneil explains, gave up its autonomy and its sovereignty in exchange for commercial gain through its participation in the British imperial commonwealth of overseas markets. Mcneil writes that “[the British] empire seemed a field of play upon which Scots and English were equally skilled, cultivating this field would therefore ensure Scottish-English parity within Great Britain” (10). Scottish-English “equality” and “parity,” however, were not easily attainable. As Douglas S. Mack argues, Scotland, for several reasons, had to settle for an inferior, although rewarding, role in the British imperial project. Scotland had never achieved an imperial status as an “independent player like Belgium and Portugal.”
Instead, it was peripheral “to the center of real power [which] lay in England, in the imperial capital, in London” (6). As such, Mack views the relationship between Scotland and England as that of a colonizer (England) and colonized (Scotland). He writes that “Scotland, as a junior partner in the British imperial project, took a colonizer’s role within Britain’s external Empire, but shared with Ireland and Wales the experience of being colonized” (7).

There is, however, some hesitation among critics when applying postcolonial terms to Scotland because of the Scots “subsequent complicity in the British imperial enterprise” (qtd. in Lamont 49). Nevertheless, the Scots, as Mack also explains, were divided into classes that had something to gain from their participation in the British Empire and other classes that were deprived of any imperial gain. Thus, it can be argued that subalternity did exist in Scotland after the 1707 Union (Mack 7).

Given recent appreciation of Scotland’s quasi-colonial status, it is possible to read Hogg’s novel based on views proposed by the subaltern studies. This area of postcolonial theory, mainly expounded by authors like Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri C. Spivak, etc., studies minor groups within the society of grand, elite, and higher classes. In an important contribution to subaltern studies, Guha explained that, in the Indian colonial context, some parts of the Indian society were acting according to the interests of the British colonizers. He showed that the interest of those groups, usually of the upper classes or the elite, did not entirely conform with the interests of the lower and marginalized groups—the subaltern (Mack 1). Subaltern studies are, therefore, concerned with questions “relating to the history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity ‘as well as the attitudes, ideologies and belief systems—in short, the culture informing
that condition”’ (Ashcroft et al 245). One of the most important of these questions is whether or not subalterns can express their voices in the context of colonial hegemony as Spivak asks (Loomba 194). It is important to remember, however, that subalterneity in its use in Gramsci’s theories is mainly focused on the marginalized and downtrodden groups in any society (Ashcroft et al 244). In a similar context Hogg found himself—marginalized and vying to make himself heard in an elite culture of educated authors like Scott, Blackwood, and Lockhart. In his The Private Memoirs, Hogg shows his resistance to the dominant narratives of that elite culture through his implicit attack on the nature of narratives in general. In addition, Hogg’s resistant novel gives voice to marginalized groups and their traditions. As we shall see, Hogg’s novel is peopled with lowly characters and when they speak the narrative suggests that they always tell the truth.
CHAPTER II

A NATIONALIST PROJECT

James Hogg, who was born in 1770 in the parish of Ettrick in Selkirkshire, spent only around six months in school and was forced to leave it after his father’s bankruptcy to become apprenticed to a shepherd. His early life gave his literary works the unique characteristic of being the product of an “untutored shepherd.” In the advertisement to his *The Queen’s Wake* (1813), which was one of his early successful works, for instance, the publisher emphasized that the work was “really and truly the production of James Hogg, a common shepherd” (qtd. in Mack 8). Hogg’s work throughout the rest of his life would rarely be judged without reference to his humble origins (8). For instance, upon the failure of his periodical *The Spy* (1811), which lasted only less than a year, Hogg wrote a farewell statement in its last number to thank those “friends” who remained loyal to it. In probably the most accurate and sincere descriptions of his status in literature, he wrote:

They [the friends of the periodical] have […] the honor of patronizing an undertaking quite new in the records of literature; for, that a common shepherd, who never was at school; who went to service at
seven years of age, and could neither read nor write any degree of accuracy when thirty; yet who, smitten with an unconquerable thirst for knowledge, should leave his native mountains, and his flocks to wander where they chose, come to the metropolis with his plaid wrapped about his shoulders, and all at once set up for a connoisseur in manners, taste, and genius—has much more the appearance of a romance than a matter of fact; yet a matter of fact it certainly is;--and such a person is the editor of “The Spy.” (21)

It is worth noting here, however, that before the 1820’s, most of Hogg’s work was poetry rather than prose. When he turned towards writing novels, he encountered even greater resistance in his search for literary fame.²

The Edinburgh literary world was changing dramatically around the year 1817. A new shift in literary taste from poetry towards fiction was now beginning to be sensed, and it was mainly caused by the publication of Walter Scott’s Waverley in 1814. Hogg felt the need to go with the current and focus in his future writings on fiction instead of poetry (Hughes 146). During this period, the Edinburgh print culture had been dominated by the new publishing houses of the Tory William Blackwood, publishing the Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, and the Whig rival Archibald Constable who published Scots Magazine (146, 147). Hogg maintained friendships with editors from both magazines but was a trusted advisor and contributor to Blackwood. Hogg would later boast in his autobiography that he was “the beginner and almost sole instigator” of the magazine

² There are a lot of instances where Hogg’s person or work were rejected or underestimated by publishers, booksellers, or literary figures. His autobiography and letters have numerous examples. I will, therefore, limit myself, for the sake of brevity, to accounts that are most related to my arguments.
(Hogg 42). Nevertheless, other editors (John Wilson and John G. Lockhart) would eventually be the leading figures in the magazine, and Hogg would “[find] himself increasingly marginalized” (Hughes 148).

The competition between the two magazines was usually fierce and was characterized by public personal attacks against well-known figures in society which usually did not spare anyone. Hogg, of course, was to become the target of some of those attacks like anyone else, but he was particularly mocked constantly to the degree that made him feel that he had been excluded from print culture. One of the earliest incidents that marked this exclusion was when his friend James Grey, who contributed to Constable’s *Edinburgh Magazine*, decided to publish a short biography of Hogg. The biography appeared in 1818 in Constable’s magazine, but only three installments were published. It was discontinued apparently by Constable himself because Hogg was a contributor to a rival Tory magazine. What made it worse for Hogg was that what had been published of the biography was a subject of mockery and derision in Blackwood’s magazine. This incident exasperated Hogg beyond measure, so much that he “was ready to call down a plague on both these Edinburgh houses” (149). This eventually led to a breach with Blackwood and to the publication of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*’s “Noctes Ambrosianae,” which was a series of semi-fictional symposia discussing contemporary literary, political, and cultural subjects. Hogg, appearing as the caricatured Ettrick Shepherd, was at the heart of the symposia’s mockery and derision (182, 183).

The series would have a lasting and profound effect on Hogg’s reputation, as Hughes explains, especially since the magazine’s circulation during that period had dramatically increased throughout Great Britain, including the colonies, such as India.
The Ettrick Shepherd of the series became known more than Hogg himself (183). The series had certainly contributed to his fame but probably gave a negative side to that fame, especially when his prose fiction is concerned which had been either totally ignored or denigrated by the Noctes writers (185, 186). This fact led some critics, such as Peter Garside, to conclude that Hogg “was acceptable as a shepherd poet, whose effusions came primarily as untutored inspiration, but as a poet with philosophical aspirations or as a novelist claiming consideration alongside the author of Waverley he was soon to meet resistance” (34).

During that period and towards the closing years of the Regency era, the Scottish people were mainly busy with the exhumation of a national history that would appropriately be comfortably linked to their present. Hogg, of course, shared this general tendency of the Scottish people, but he had his own views and doubts that, for example, he considered William Wallace as belonging to Scotland rather than North Britain. For Hogg, it was a Scotland of “What once she was, and now is not” (qtd. in Hughes 160). That Scotland is definitely not the Scotland that was to be found in Scottish elite narrative at the time as we shall see below.
CHAPTER III

A SCOTLAND THAT “ONCE SHE WAS”

Scotland’s national identity after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9 is hard to define, as Colin Kidd has explained, and many historians have viewed the underdeveloped sense of a unifying nationality in Scotland after 1688-9 as a problematic subject. Strangely enough, the Scots did not have a national revolution similar to the French revolution as did their counterparts in the continent during the eighteenth-century. What they did have, however, was a “retarded nationalist movement” within a culture of “Anglo-Britishness” that was as pervasive in Scotland as it was in the “English heartland” of the United Kingdom (1). Kidd suggests that this underdeveloped sense of national identity in Scotland was caused by the Scottish literati’s “whig historical ideology” with its abandonment of the Scottish pre-Union past and its adaptation of Anglo-British scientific whiggism after the Union of 1707. The end result of such a breach with the Scottish past was “the dissolution of Scottish historical confidence” (7) that rendered the history of the Scottish people almost useless.

The Scottish intelligentsia of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that implemented a form of whiggism similar to the English included historians, sociologists,
philosophers, and men of letters such as William Robertson, David Hume, Sir Walter Scott, and many others. What this intelligentsia did in order to participate in a collective and unifying Britishness was to “assimilate” Scottishness into Englishness and make it meet the expectations of English whiggism. Therefore, the Scottish past was seen by Scottish whigs as an “obstacle” to integration into the new identity and all links to the past--its institutions and its values--were cut off. Scottish Sociologists viewed Scottish history as a story that lacked ideological importance and as being devoid of economic, legal, and institutional development (207). English history, which was viewed as being at least a century ahead, was appropriated in order to explain the social advancements and political liberties that Scotland is now enjoying. Only English history, according to those thinkers, was capable of producing and protecting the liberties of individuals in the present, and the Scottish medieval history, on the other hand, was viewed as an incoherent lore of monarchic, feudal, and aristocratic elements that did not raise to the expectations of the modern age of institutional and liberal advancements. Accordingly, Scottish historical legacy and tradition were considered a “lie,” while English “historiography,” although criticized sometimes, was considered “essentially authentic” (209).

This general trend in the Scottish literati was not without its opponents. Several Scottish historians and writers tried to correct their own version of whiggism such as James Macpherson who saw that liberty was not necessarily a product of contemporary

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3 It is worth mentioning that not all of these figures defined themselves as whig. Scott, in fact, was actually a tory as Kidd admits. Kidd, however, is using the term whig not in the restricted sense of the word as “a set of partisan principles which developed on the basis of a celebratory interpretation of the Revolution of 1688-9” but more loosely as “the national ideologies of post-Reformation England and Scotland” (8). Kidd’s use of the term whiggism includes everyone who adheres to this ideology even if they were tories like Scott or hard-to-classify like Hume.
capitalist society but can also be the product of the early history of the peoples of Scotland such as the Celts (219). In his historical writings and poems, Macpherson sought to re-establish the confidence in that history and argue for its validity as a fertile ground for the building of the modern Scottish identity. In his Ossianic poems for instance, he claims to have found an old epic dating back to ancient Scotland of the third century narrated by the Celtic poet Ossian. The poems attracted a lot of interest on all levels and for a lot of its aspects, including the supposed authenticity of the poems and their attribution to Ossian and the Celtic language. The people who supported it, however, saw in it what Macpherson had intended his audience to view in it, which is a reason for great pride in the Scottish history and its ability to produce such a great work of the likes of the Homeric *Iliad* (220). It is worth mentioning that Macpherson’s work in general, as Kidd explains, had a great influence in the transformation of Scottish whiggism (222).

The transformation that Macpherson had desired for the Scottish literati, however, did not take full effect. A general trend of antiquarian investigation and digging into historical sources, including songs, ballads, coins, medals, language, etc., was now beginning to be noticeable but with the belief that the Scottish past should be viewed for its value as past only. The view that the Scottish history was incapable of explaining modern Scottish liberty, which Macpherson had sought to shatter, remained the same. It was in this atmosphere of political ideology that the Scottish “‘romantic’ historical revolution took place” (251). At the top of the list of the “romantic” literati who accepted this general whig historiography was Sir Walter Scott. Scott was an active member of the movement to retrieve historical sources from the Scottish past through publications and clubs such as the Bannatyne and the Maitland. These clubs and their work were meant to
carry on after Scott’s death in 1832, and their view of the ideological insignificance of the
Scottish past also carried on. Kidd reads Scott’s Waverley novels as part of the literature
produced by this strand of Scottish whiggism. He writes:

Sir Walter Scott was heir to this disenchantment. As a historian of
Scotland his principal achievement was a mythopoeic encapsulation, in
the *Waverley Novels* (1814-1832), of mid-eighteenth-century sociological
and antiquarian deconstruction of Scotland’s much-vaulted historical
identity. This interpretation of the novels is confirmed by study of his
non-fictional writings and reviewing. (255, 256)

Hogg’s words quoted above on the identity of a Scotland of the past that would probably
never be revived again address exactly this view of Scottish identity. When he considered
William Wallace as belonging to Scotland not North Britain, he was expressing his
refusal to link the glorious history of the Scottish wars of independence in the thirteenth-
century to the new and “imported” identity of post-Union Scotland. North British identity
that developed in the eighteenth-century, as Kidd explains, was a “Scottish version of
English whig identity, based on a commitment to English constitutional history” (214).

Traces of Hogg’s rejection of the “Anglicization” of Scottish identity can also be
found in his writings for Scottish publications throughout his life. For example, he once
attacked Frances Jeffery, who was the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, in his periodical
*The Spy*. The *Edinburgh Review* was the mouthpiece of the Scottish whigs and it was
dedicated to denigrating Scottish history and the promotion of reforms in Scottish life that
brought it closer to English life (Kidd 255). Hogg attacked Jeffery as “a prime example of
the Anglicized Scot, the man who rejects his own nationality and community traditions
under a pretense of objective reason” (Groves 24, 25). In such remarks, Hogg was
denoting the failure of elite culture to speak for the nation as a whole, especially how it
overlooked local communities and their valued traditions in favor of those imported from
the imperial center.
CHAPTER IV

DIFFICULTIES OF A TEXT

Towards the end of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, there is a passage in Robert Wringhim’s memoir that can be seen as Hogg’s metaphor for the experience of reading this difficult and perplexing novel. In that part of the memoir, Robert is being pursued by the officers of justice, for the murder of his mother, and by Gil-Martin, who seems to know all of his movements and hiding places. Robert has been forced to leave his house and travel southward. After reaching the house of a weaver, he is led to sleep in a room where the weaver keeps his weaving machine. After waking up in the morning, he entangles himself in a web of the weaver’s strings from which he fails to release himself. He writes,

I trembled with astonishment; and on my return from the small window went doiting [stumbling] in amongst the weaver's looms, till I entangled myself, and could not get out again without working great deray [confusion] amongst the coarse linen threads that stood in warp from one end of the apartment unto the other. I had no knife whereby to cut the
cords of this wicked man, and therefore was obliged to call out lustily for assistance. The weaver came half naked, unlocked the door, and, setting in his head and long neck, accosted me thus: "What now, Mr. Satan? What for are ye roaring that gate? […]." "Friend, I beg your pardon," said I. "I wanted to be at the light, and have somehow unfortunately involved myself in the intricacies of your web, from which I cannot get dear without doing you a great injury. Pray do lend your experienced hand to extricate me." […] My feet had slipped down through the double warpings of a web, and not being able to reach the ground with them (there being a small pit below) I rode upon a number of yielding threads, and, there being nothing else that I could reach, to extricate myself was impossible. (148, 149)

I am suggesting that this passage is Hogg’s description of the reading experience of his novel, and it does not only describe Robert’s entanglement by Gil-Martin. The comparison between weaving and writing is not new in literature. For example, the Greek goddess Athena was the goddess of both spinning and the arts. In addition, the OED cites the Latin word texere, which means simply “to weave” as one of the principal stems for the word “text.” Another Latin stem for the word “text” is textus, which means style, tissue of a literary work, that which is woven, web, and texture. Therefore, if we take Robert’s predicament to be the reader’s, the episode would be an accurate description of the reading experience of the novel. The reader becomes “entangled” in the “weaver’s looms” and the “intricacies” of the text, and his search for clarification would be similar to Robert’s pleas to the weaver to “be in the light” and be lent the weaver’s “experienced
hand to extricate” himself. The two narratives of the Editor and Robert would cause the reader’s “feet [to] slip[…] down through the double warpings of a web, and not being able to reach the ground with them (there being a small pit below) [the reader would ride] upon a number of yielding threads,” but those threads in the narrative would lead to nowhere because “there being nothing else that I could reach, to extricate myself was impossible” (149).

Many critics have commented on the difficult aspect of James Hogg’s prose writing in general and *The Private Memoirs* in particular. Elizabeth W. Harries reads the novel as “a novel of doubles” and argues that “[d]uplication […] always involves loss, the loss of stability and wholeness” (188). She points out one of the most baffling aspects of the novel, which is the double narratives of the Editor and Robert, and indicates that Hogg takes the risk of a “twice-told” story by making the two narratives tell the same events (188). According to her interpretation, the readers are given “no principle” with which they can reach a satisfactory reconciliation between the different tones and worlds of the two narratives, and, thus, the novel ends with uncertainty and ambiguity. Reaching a conclusion about the real significance of what the readers are reading becomes even more difficult because the second narrative does not clarify the first nor does the first clarify the second, leading the readers to withhold judgment.

Harries argues that *The Private Memoirs* is in keeping with the soul of the Romantic era. The novel, according to her, is a true representation of the Romantic fiction’s strength and weakness both at the same time, which is its fragmented and inconclusive representation of the lived experience. She argues that the Romantic fiction “present[s] experience not as experienced but as told.” We are reminded constantly as we
read a narrative that “we are seeing the world through a frame.” Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein*, to use one of Harries’s example, is told through three narratives (the monster’s, Frankenstein’s, and Captain Walton’s), and, therefore, the novel cannot end except in “distance and darkness” (187). Although she makes interesting arguments by saying that the difficulties in Hogg’s novel are part of the moving force of the Romantic novel in that era, she fails to acknowledge the uniqueness of Hogg’s own writing style by choosing Romantic fiction as her context rather than Scottish fiction in the Romantic era. She does not explain, for instance, how Hogg’s novel is different from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* or Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*. The present paper acknowledges the moving forces of the age but also refuses such undistinguishing generalizations by arguing that James Hogg was writing in a particular period of Scottish history which shaped his work.

David Eggenschwiler, similarly, describes a kind of “disharmony” in *The Private Memoirs* in his “James Hogg’s Confessions and the Fall into Division.” Eggenschwiler focuses on the multiple divisions in the narrative form and content of Hogg’s novel and interprets these divisions as Hogg’s commentary on the divided self of the age which led to a divided society (26). Hogg’s exploration of the nature of this division, as Eggenschwiler explains, is done by showing the divide amongst the characters and, in the second part of the novel (i. e., Robert’s memoir), by showing the divide in Robert’s own mind (27). Eggenschwiler begins by demonstrating that, in the first part of the novel, everything in world of the novel “is at odds with everything else,” as in the divergent personalities of the Colwan family, in which the mother is set against her husband, and the two brothers, George and Robert, are set against each other (26). According to
Eggenschwiler, the Laird of Dalcastle stands on a stark contrast with his wife Lady Dalcastle. He is a “likeable fellow with an open enjoyment of pleasure,” while his wife, on the other hand, is a fanatical woman who entirely rejects her “husband’s sensuality” (27). After recognizing their deep differences, they retire to two different parts of the same house with the Laird in the lower part and the Lady in the upper part. Their marriage produces two children George and Robert, who are also divided among themselves like their parents (28). Such divisions also extend to the society where there are Jacobites and Revolutionaries, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, and cavaliers and puritans (27).

Eggenschwiler concludes that Hogg’s theme was to promote compassion, forgiveness, and tolerance and that this theme can be read despite all the disharmony and divisions in the two narratives by those who are “will[ing] to hear” (27, 37). Although I agree with Eggenschwiler in his basic premise that the novel is characterized by disharmony and fragmentation, his arguments offered to support his conclusions are based on only one-sided reading of some of the events and episode. For example, Eggenschwiler takes it for granted that Robert is the one who is responsible for the murder of his mother and Mrs. Keeler’s daughter (36, 37). The text, however, allows for this reading the way it allows for others. While it can be argued that Robert murdered the two women, the episodes telling that story are characterized by gaps in plot and memory that we are given inconclusive evidence as to who the murderer is.

Reaching a similar conclusion, Magdalene Redekop presents a deconstructive reading of the novel in her essay “Beyond Closure.” She comments on “the appearance of Gil-Martin as George” at the end of the novel, by saying that it is a “supernatural
phenomenon” and that “[i]t is the appearance of the supernatural, becoming increasingly prominent as the novel progresses, which insistently denies the reader the premature luxury of saying, ‘Ah! Now I see’” (176). She takes the burial of the memoir in Robert’s grave as a symbol for the burial of meaning in the intricacies of the narrative. When the memoir is exhumed, the reader is left alone with the “Book of the Dead” to perform the difficult task of weighing its truthfulness (161). The task is made even more difficult by the author’s appearance as a character (a shepherd) in the novel, and also by his refusal to participate in the journey to the grave because he is busy trading in sheep. The author, by this symbolic gesture, destroys his fiction from the inside. Redekop understands the novel, in view of all its complexities, as an attempt, on Hogg’s part, to produce a genre of writing called, in Mikhail Bakhtin’s terms, “carnivalesque,” and that, in Hogg’s version of this genre, story-telling, as an art, is “a metaphor for life itself” (164, 165).

Accordingly, the reader’s ultimate role is not to pass judgment but rather to “forgive” (181).

Although Redekop’s interpretation of the novel and of Hogg’s narrative technique is informative and well-grounded in textual evidence, I believe her final conclusions that Hogg has intended his readers to “forgive” as they read does not fully explain the difficulties of the text because this interpretation does not establish a link between the work and the historical context in which it was published. It is very tempting to look at the novel as an attempt on Hogg’s part to promote the values of forgiveness and love by presenting the process of misreading in such a light where our failure, as readers, to fill in the blanks is ought to be viewed as a sign of our “mutual fallibility,” which should bring
us all into “one congregation” (182). The text, however, conveys a message on the inconclusive nature of narratives beyond that of mutual love and compassion.
CHAPTER V
THE INCOHERENCE OF NARRATIVE

In light of these readings of Hogg’s novel *The Private Memoirs*--namely, that it is characterized by duplicity, disharmony and lack of stability or wholeness--I argue that the novel does impede our attempts as readers at interpretation in order to highlight and stress the incoherent and inconclusive nature of narratives in general. My suggestion is that by bringing to the foreground this aspect of the nature of narrative—namely, that it is always inconclusive and its authenticity can always be questioned—Hogg was responding to the Scottian historical novel’s implicit claim to represent and narrate national history. Walter Scott’s novels were steeped in the ideologies of post-Union Scottish whiggism which denigrated Scottish history before the 1707 Union and promoted an Anglicized Scottish identity after the Union. What the above-discussed critics are trying to describe is Hogg’s novel’s inconclusiveness, which is most evident, I argue, in three main points: bringing into doubt the reliability of evidence from the senses, unaccounted-for gaps in the narrative, and the juxtaposition of the real and the fictional as exemplified by the appearance of the author James Hogg as a character in the fictive world of the novel.
First, Gil-Martin’s presence almost always constitutes an obstacle to our attempt as readers to make perfect sense of the events in the novel. It is not only problematic because it is supernatural, but in particular because he always takes up features of other characters, and, therefore, he makes us question evidence from the senses. This philosophical question—namely, that we only have our senses to depend upon in order to discover the truth, and if, for some reason, we cannot trust them, then what do we have in possession to aid us in our search for the truth—is always troubling the characters throughout the novel. For instance, Arabella Calvert, when relating to Miss Logan the incidents of that night when George was murdered, tells of the mysterious reappearance of Drummond hand-in-hand with Robert although she is sure she has seen Drummond leave the place only moments before (51-56). When asked by Miss Logan whether it was the real Drummond or not who was walking with Robert, Arabella answers:

There is nothing of which I can be more certain, than that it was not Drummond. We have nothing on earth but our senses to depend upon:
if these deceive us, what are we to do. I own I cannot account for it;
nor ever shall be able to account for it as long as I live. (56)

The last sentence is particularly significant because, in the world of this novel, supernatural occurrences do not seem to be normal. Many examples indicate this fact as in the case when George attempts to explain the figure in the halo of mist which he has seen when at Arthur’s Seat. The supernatural was explained away by his friend Gordon as a rare “natural” phenomenon (34). Another example is the Editor’s words at the end of the novel when he says that the sequel is “a thing so extraordinary […] and so far out of the common course of human events, that if there were not hundreds of living witnesses
to attest the truth of it, I would not bid any rational being believe it” (165). Gil-Martin’s presence, therefore, is problematic because he appears in a world that seems to the readers to function like our own. This view of the world of fiction, and fiction itself, as “real” is a one that was promoted by Scott’s historical approach in the novel.4

The second point that contributes to the inconclusiveness of the novel is the gaps and omissions in it, and our attempts as readers to have a full account of the events we are reading is sometimes obstructed by such omissions. These are most evident in Robert’s memoir, especially towards the end when Robert is forced to escape from his Dalcastle mansion because he cannot account for the incidents that happened to him and for which he is held responsible before the law and before the people. He notices gaps in time, memory, and actions which leads him to say that he can no longer explain or understand what is happening to him (125). The first of these gaps is the one covering the courtship that he has had with a girl immediately after settling in Dalcastle. Not being able to recognize either the girl or her mother, he denies any involvement in the affair, claiming that he has been in Dalcastle for such a short time “perhaps thirty or forty [days], or so” (120). The mother expresses her amazement at Robert’s forgetfulness and reminds him that he has been in Dalcastle for four months and seven days and that he has been denied entry to her house twenty times (121). He objects to this as nonsense, saying that “the woman is raving mad!” and requests Gil-Martin’s confirmation, but Gil-Martin confirms that the woman speaks the truth about the period they have spent at Dalcastle and about the number of times Robert has frequented the woman’s house (121).

4 See footnote No. 1 above.
Even before the matter of Mrs. Keeler and her daughter is settled, Robert is surprised by yet another transaction of which he has no memory. A lawyer named Linkum steps into the scene to inform both Robert and Mrs. Keeler that Robert has asked him to procure legal documents to seize the lands of Mrs. Keeler’s family, which might have belonged to the Colwan family—Robert’s family—and to deprive the poor woman’s family of all their possessions. Robert is not conscious of any involvement in the affair, and he says “I deny everything connected with the business.” The lawyer assures him that no one would believe his denial because the lawyer has “three of [Robert’s] letters, and three of [his] signatures” (123). Bewildered, sick, and unable to understand, Robert, in probably one of the most revealing and captivating passages in the novel, gives vent to his feelings,

[F]rom this time forth I began to be sick at times of my existence. I had heart-burnings, longings, and, yearnings that would not be satisfied; and I seemed hardly to be an accountable creature; being thus in the habit of executing transactions of the utmost moment without being sensible that I did them. I was a being incomprehensible to myself. (125)

But trouble is not over for him. In a similar manner of events happening in the background, Scrape the servant and Gil-Martin tell Robert that he is being accused of the murder of his mother (129, 131). Following Gil-Martin’s advice, he flees Dalcastle to escape legal prosecutions.

The narrative style that Hogg uses in the novel, especially in these scenes describing Robert’s flight, causes the reader to experience confusion and uncertainty. The
ellipsis and omission resulting from Robert’s absence, or forgetfulness, only make the
text opaque and impenetrable. For example, it is hard to say with certainty whether
Robert in all of these accusations was actually guilty because these crimes happened
totally in the background. Gil-Martin could have assumed Robert’s likeness and could
have been the real perpetrator in order to implicate Robert. The narrative however does
not explain why Robert does not remember those periods or why he fell into amnesia at
the time. It is important to mention, however, that Robert has spoken of an “illness” that
has befallen him in an earlier stage in the memoir. He describes that illness as follows:

I generally conceived myself to be two people. When I lay in bed, I
demed there were two of us in it; when I sat up I always beheld another
person, and always in the same position from the place where I sat or
stood, […] this occasioned a confusion in all my words and ideas that
utterly astounded my friends, who all declared that, instead of being
deranged in my intellect, they had never heard my conversation manifest
so much energy or sublimity of conception; but, for all that, over the
singular delusion that I was two persons my reasoning faculties had no
power. The most perverse part of it was that I rarely conceived myself to
be any of the two persons. I thought for the most part that my companion
[Gil-Martin] was one of them, and my brother the other; and I found that,
to be obliged to speak and answer in the character of another man, was a
most awkward business at the long run. (106)

He writes a few lines later, however, that he “was restored,” but his confusion in all of
this is communicated to the reader because there are a lot of variables in the narrative so
that the reader is not sure what is happening with any degree of certainty. Ian Campbell, who also refers to the above passage in which Robert expresses his feelings of bewilderment, comments on the confusion that arises from Robert’s inner life by saying that it is what gave the novel its genuine appeal--that is, the appeal of elusiveness that characterized the novel. Campbell elaborates on the elusiveness of Hogg’s narrative style by citing Ian Duncan:

Different generic and cultural forms of explanation overlay one another to darken the simplest narrative combination: someone leaves, someone returns, but these events are strangely dislocated, they occupy different dimensions, and we do not know their reason, only the loss that connects them. (qtd. in Campbell 178, 179)

The “loss” Duncan is speaking about is our lack of sufficient evidence and clues as to what happens in the narrative and, most importantly, on what grounds we are to judge and view the events narrated in the novel. The next point in my argument will show exactly this—namely, that the novel is torn between reality and fiction so that a defining principle to evaluate it would always disintegrate as we keep reading.

The third point that clearly shows the inconclusiveness of Hogg’s narrative is the mixing of the fictional and the real, as in the presence of the author James Hogg as a character in the Editor’s narrative at the conclusion and the use of his article “A Scots Mummy” by the Editor as a guide to the suicide’s grave. Although it might be the case that the presence of such an authorial figure clarifies, rather than obscures, the implications of a given literary work, the reader’s attempt here to fit the novel into a defined generic frame virtually reaches a dead end. What began as a historical fictional
narrative based on “tradition” and “parish registers” turns into the “real” present with “real” people acting as characters in what is supposed to be a “fictional” world. In his search for clarifications, the Editor, for instance, is mysteriously brought into the real world of Scotland around the year 1824, the time the novel was published. He brings an extract from Hogg’s article in Blackwood’s Magazine of 1823 and embarks on a search to test the “truthfulness” of its contents (165). The Editor, however, has his own doubts, which he expresses when he comments on the article as follows:

It [the article] bears the authenticity in every line; yet, so often had I been hoaxed by the ingenious fancies displayed in that Magazine, that when this relation met my eye, I did not believe it; but from the moment that I perused it, I half formed the resolution of investigating these remains personally, if any such existed. (169)

His search takes him to his “fellow collegian” J. G. Lockhart (Scott’s son-in-law and contributor to Blackwood’s, in reality), who helps him to go find James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, who wrote the article. When asked about the truthfulness of what the article tells, Lockhart says that he has no doubt that the grave does exist, but he comments, however, that “Hogg has imposed as ingenious lies on the public ere now” (169). They go, however, to the Thirlestane sheep market to find Hogg engaged in selling and buying sheep. When the Editor asks him to help find the grave, he refuses to do so, saying that he has more important things to do than to go “to houk up hundred-year-auld banes” (170).

Hogg’s refusal to take part in the search for the grave has been commented on by Redekop as a symbolic gesture that the author is “destroy[ing] the frame of his fiction from within” (161). What is more important, however, is the mere presence of the author
in his work. This presence, like the presence of the other “real” characters, only
problematizes our reading of the novel as a fictional narrative. The average readers would
be puzzled because these characters appear to be fictional and real both at the same time.
They are torn between the fictional world of the novel and the real world in which the
novel is set in its last pages.

As such, Hogg’s novel presents an inconclusive narrative which I interpret as the
author’s attempt to undermine our belief in the authenticity of narratives in general,
including historical fiction. By doing so, Hogg highlights the inability of narratives to
convey authentic representation of history. Hogg, perhaps pushed by personal
experiences that brought him closer to the marginalized voices of society in general and
the illiterate and uneducated in particular, seems to oppose representations such as the
nation-forming narratives found in the Waverley novels. Both Scott and Hogg were
writing within the Scottish literary tradition of James Macpherson’s Ossian poems, in
which an ostensibly “found” manuscript tells the history of the lost and forgotten Gaelic
nation. Scott’s novels present a fictional representation of the history of the peoples that
inhabit them. Hogg’s novel, on the other hand, problematizes any attempt at an authentic
representation of history in fiction as a medium.

Ian Duncan suggests that Hogg’s approach in fiction always stresses “the material
condition” of what we are reading “as a text.” By contrast, Scott’s approach, in Duncan’s
argument, is to give life to history by reaffirming its authenticity. Scott explains, in the
introduction to his Ivanhoe for instance, that “the Scottish historical novelist’s task [is
like] the necromancer’s reanimation of mangled corpses on a battlefield” (111, 112).
Duncan states the difference in his own words as follows:
Fiction, for Scott, reaffirms an authentic domain of the social and ordinary, since fiction is the medium—the imaginary commerce—through which “common life” sustains and reproduces itself. Textuality, for Hogg, represents a lethal alienation from common life in its original condition of a traditional community, which, as the medium of natural belief, cannot be recovered in the commodity form of a fiction. (112, 113)

The different approaches the two authors took in the historicization of fiction can be better understood in light of their different literary careers. Unlike Scott, who dominated the Scottish literary world in Edinburgh, Hogg, throughout his life and for a long time after his death, was not always recognized as an accomplished writer, especially as a novelist. Hogg may have held that skeptical view about textuality and narrative fictions because of his marginalization, and his skeptical views of elite national narratives represent an expression of a marginalized and non-elite voice.
CHAPTER VI

NARRATIVE OF RESISTANCE

Hogg’s literary work has always been marked by inclusiveness when different components of the Scottish society are concerned. For example, he had a special sympathy and liking for Highland culture, which had suffered a great deal since Culloden. One of his most prominent works in the period, for instance, was Queen Hynde (1824), which was a poem that centers upon a fair depiction the “noble Ossianic Highlands” (Hughes 154). In addition, not only did some of his works since 1819 fairly depict that culture, but he was also entrusted by the Highland Society of London to publish a collection of Jacobite songs. The Highland Society of London was one of the institutions established to preserve the rapidly disappearing Highland legacy because of British modernity (154). The work Hogg was commissioned to write would later appear as Jacobite Relics in 1819 and 1821 in two volumes, and Hogg would comment on the work by saying that it was “The strains, which a shepherd has travailed to save” (qtd. in Hughes 155). In addition, Hogg wrote his prose work The Three Perils of Woman (1822), which was a three-volume work of two related stories. The second of them describes, in graphic details, the destruction and pain suffered by the Jacobites after their defeat in
In this work, Sarah, for example, sets out to search for her Jacobite husband Alaster after the battle to find “her husband’s kinsmen and associates hanged up, and butchered in the most wanton manner.” She also finds that their houses “had lately been reduced to ashes” (qtd. in Groves 187). Hughes explains that, in his description of the atrocities of the post-Culloden years, Hogg may be responding to Scott who had skillfully avoided any mention of them in Waverley (188). David Groves, on the other hand, comments on those descriptions by saying that Hogg is expressing his “conception of the precariousness of individual life and the oneness of humanity, regardless of divisive categories like ‘rank,’ nationality, […] or partisan rivalry” (Groves 187). I believe, however, that Hogg is also drawing our attention to an alienated people who may not have had a chance to convey their true voice and to speak for themselves.

Hogg’s most famous work, The Private Memoirs, appeared only a year after The Three Perils of Woman, in 1824. It came at a time when Hogg was most prolific because he was obliged to write in order to help himself financially. In those years, Hogg had suffered from continuing financial problems due, among other things, to his rapidly growing family. His finances were becoming very much worse in later years which made him more dependent on his publishers so that, in the first months of 1823, he had to ask Blackwood for a loan of fifty pounds (Hughes 189). This was not the only loan on record Hogg had received; there was a loan also from Scott previously in 1819. Scott also offered a plan at that time to allow Hogg to make money. Scott advised Hogg to publish a description of the Prince Regent’s expected coronation in London (176). It is worth mentioning here that Hogg’s distress before the loan from Scott was mainly caused by his failure to publish his work “Border Romance,” later to be entitled The Three Perils of
Man, with Oliver & Boyd. Boyd rejected the work on the grounds that “it is of that cast that must draw down comparisons with the romances of the author of Waverly and manifestly to its disadvantage” (176).

All of these factors, such as Hogg’s continued exclusion from print culture and his view of a nationalist history that includes broader society, contributed to the writing of The Private Memoirs. His novel undermines the type of sweeping generalizations and misrepresentations by an unknowing elite, and his project in the novel was unlike that of the historical novel which implicitly claims to represent and depict the truths of history in its fictional mode of writing. In his previous work The Three Perils of Woman, Hogg was probably challenging Scott’s romanticized and partisan version of the history of the Scottish peoples and their suffering in Waverley (Hughes 188), but now, Hogg’s intervention here was to show the incoherence, not of the partisan narratives that try to make themselves heard in novels like Waverley, but of the approach of the historical novel to history itself. In The Private Memoirs, Hogg was continuing his earlier nationalist project which he began with works such as Queen Hynde, Jacobite Relics, and The Three Perils of Woman. It represented an approach to the writing of national history which critics like Ian Duncan, in his remarks on Hogg’s Winter Evening Tales (1819), considered as representing “a sharp departure from the national fictions of Walter Scott or Maria Edgeworth--‘an alternative, non-novelistic genre of national fiction, close to its roots in popular print media’” (qtd in Hughes 158, 159). It is a representation of history that acknowledges all the components of the Scottish society and gives voice to the marginalized.
As Ian Duncan explains, Scott’s *Waverley* appeals to “an imperialist historiography in which regret for the vanished clans [of the Highlands of Scotland] softens pride in British progress with a tone of aesthetic refinement, a luxurious aura of melancholy.” Duncan goes so far as to say that “*Waverley* is one of the highlights of an ‘invention of Scotland’—tartan-clad, retro-Jacobite, drained of real history—that begins with Macpherson’s ‘Ossian’ and runs through Scott to Balmoral and *Brigadoon*” (Duncan 21, 22). *Waverley* drains Scotland of its history mainly because it represents the Jacobite endeavor to achieve national restoration as an “Italian courtly romance.” In addition, *Waverley*’s depiction of the long, complicated, and bloody history of the rebellion is oversimplified and drawn in rosy colors. For example, the divisions between the two warring camps (the Hanoverians and the Stuarts) are not presented as hostile. Waverley can move freely between the camps, and friendships can exist between members of the two warring sides. Moreover, the novel’s depiction of the partisan split between Tories and Whigs is similarly drawn in a beautiful light. Sir Richard Waverley, for example, can easily change allegiances from Tory to Whig for personal gain, and the Waverley family has other members who are Tory such as Sir Everard Waverley and they can live together without harming family ties.

This depiction of history, as George Lukács explained in his *The Historical Novel*, is the product of, first, Scott’s own conception of English history as that of a “middle course” (37). Scott always saw in English history a steady development despite differences and hardships through that middle ground. Second, Scott’s “middle course” comes as a realization of his strong belief that “fanaticism” cannot inflict the whole population and that a majority would be immune from it, leaving the way for a common
ground where members of different parties can agree. Third, Scott understands that, no matter how great the splits and division in the nation might be, life must go on. It must go on because stoppage would lead people to perish and hinder natural development.

*The Private Memoirs*, on the other hand, represents a different view of historiography and national history as being full of divisions, incoherence, and ambiguity. One of the main aspects of this historiography is a fair depiction of the marginalized. Such a depiction was inaccurately viewed by some critics as a sign that the work centers upon the “Christian ideal of fellow-feeling” (Hughes 191). Gillian Hughes, for example, explains that the servant Samuel Scrape presents one of those instances of communal care and brotherly compassion in his “golden rule,” which is “to do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (192). In addition, she explains that Blanchard, in his definition of good faith, stresses a similar meaning by saying that faith is “the bond of society on earth, and the connector of humanity with the Divine nature.”

Hogg, however, was not merely depicting Christian benevolence; he was also giving voice to the marginalized communities in the Scottish society of his time. Unlike *Waverley* and most of Scott’s works in general, which mainly feature, as Lukács explains, the great figures of history such as Cromwell, Mary Stuart, Richard the Lion Heart, etc. with all of their historical greatness, Hogg’s novel is mainly peopled with ordinary individuals and their voice is given value in determining the course of events.

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5 Although it might be argued that *The Private Memoirs* does not make an overt claim to being a historical novel as does *Waverley* for instance, it has the contemporary Scottish history after the 1688-9 Glorious Revolution in the background and some of its events are based on real historical events. For further discussion see Peter Garside’s introduction in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Edinburgh University Press, 2002.
One of the earliest examples in the novel of the voice of the ordinary people is Bessy Gillies, who is Miss Logan’s housemaid. Bessy represents one of the most likeable examples of benevolence towards the culprit Arabella Calvert when she (Bessy) refuses to identify the stolen articles as Miss Logan’s. When she is examined by the judge she explains to him that the articles, although they had the letter C inscribed on them, do not necessarily belong to Miss Logan because “C is a very common letter, and so are the names that begin with it” (47). She also refuses to take an oath declaring that “An oath is an awful thing, especially when it is for life or death” (48). In addition, she shows a lot of wisdom when refuting the judge’s accusations against Arabella Calvert by saying that she does not believe at all that Calvert is the one who robbed Miss Logan’s house simply because “it was [no] woman’s fingers that broke up the bolts and the locks that were torn open that night” (47). Her conjecture proves to be correct, as we learn a few pages later that Arabella has been working with a man who has helped her in the robbery. The judge, and the law behind him, are not able to see what Bessy, the lowly maid, is able to figure out. Arabella delivers the final comment on Bessy’s actions by saying “Ah, God bless her heart!,” and the narrator comments that “that blessing was echoed in the breathings of many a feeling breast” (47).

In addition to Bessy Gillies the maid, Arabella Calvert the “prostitute” is another voice from the periphery of the society, and she tells the truth in her narration of the events surrounding George Colwan’s murder. She first meets Miss Logan in jail when she is apprehended for the robbery. She asks Miss Logan to deny that the articles belong to her and, in exchange, she would return the articles to Miss Logan after her exoneration. When Miss Logan asks her “What security have I for that?” she replies “You have none
but *my word*” (42). After the trial, Arabella’s word proves worthy and she delivers the articles back to Miss Logan (48, 49). She then tells her version of the events of the night when George has been murdered. She immediately declares that the law is wrong in condemning Thomas Drummond. She says: “I can tell you […] it was not the gentleman who was accused, found guilty, and would have suffered the utmost penalty of the law, had he not made his escape. *It was not he*, I say who slew your young master” (49). She tells Miss Logan everything she has witnessed, and Miss Logan realizes that she is telling the truth. Miss Logan remarks that “The dark suspicions of my late benefactor [Mr. Colwan] have been just, and […] the murderer of the accomplished George Colwan has been his own brother” (55). Arabella’s evidence is taken seriously by the Lord Justice Clerk who “examined Calvert very minutely, […] seemed deeply interested in her evidence [and] said he knew she was relating the truth” (63). In the end, legal action against Robert is taken based on what Arabella, the prostitute, confesses.

Arabella Calvert is not only given credit by the implied author for what she testifies although she is a prostitute, but also her character provides a fair depiction of a stigmatized group in most societies. As Arabella narrates the events she has witnessed, we are given glimpses into the wretched life of a prostitute. For example, when she first meets Miss Logan she is in jail and she explains to Miss Logan that

> My crimes have been great, but my sufferings have been greater. So great, that neither you nor the world can ever either know or conceive them. I hope they will be taken into account by the Most High. Mine have been crimes of utter desperation. (43)
Her journey that night to hunt for customers comes as a result of her motherly desire to support herself and her child as she has been abandoned and left alone by a man who is “an artful and consummate fiend.” She has been in prison previously for his crimes; “[I was] found guilty of being art and part concerned in the most heinous atrocities, and, in his place, suffered what I yet shudder to think of.” She comments that prostitution is a very humiliating way to earn a living but she is forced into it because of her miserable life: “I was banished the county—begged my way […] to Edinburgh, and was there obliged […] to betake myself to the most degrading of all means to support two wretched lives” (49). In addition, when she finishes narrating her story and when asked by Miss Logan why she has not appeared in defence of Thomas Drummond although she has already known the truth, she explains that her evidence would not be valuable in court when her companion that night gives his testimony (55). Her testimony in the novel, however, is given a lot of credit by the implied author and we as readers realize that she is telling the truth.

In Robert’s memoir, John Barnet, Mr. Wringhim’s serving-man, presents another creditable example of a lowly voice who, in spite of all dangers such as losing his livelihood, ventures to pronounce what he believes is the truth about the Wringhims and their fanaticism. When Robert first shows the signs that he is a good student of the doctrines taught by his godfather and mother, Barnet mocks him as another bigot who takes those doctrines to a new level of extremism. He says, “I fear he [Robert] turn out to be a conceited gowk [fool]” (68). In addition, he does not mince his words when he directly reprimands the Wringhims for their beliefs. Robert says that Barnet has told him that he “was a selfish and conceited blackguard, who made great pretenses towards
religious devotion to cloak a disposition tainted with deceit, and that it would not much astonish him if [Robert] brought [him]self to the gallows” (69, 70). The last phrase proves correct in the end and shows that Barnet is prescient. Barnet also expresses his frank opinion about the fact that Robert and his godfather physically look like each other and that the likeness may not be a mere coincidence (70). Robert informs Mr. Wringhim and the latter brings Barnet to question and warns him against entertaining that dangerous thought. Barnet’s reply is that thoughts cannot be controlled and that everyone is free to think what he or she believes (73). He then throws Mr. Wringhim’s keys, telling him that he refuses to give up his freedom to think whatever he likes: “Auld John [Barnet] may dee [work] a beggar in a hay barn, or at the back of a dike [field wall], but he sall aye be master o’ his [own] thoughts, an[d] gi[ve] them vent or not, as he likes” (74). By doing so, Barnet, like almost all the other lowly characters, shows a great deal of independence and ability to revolt against tyranny.

The list of the marginalized also extends to include the “shepherd” James Hogg, who appears in his fiction as a shepherd. Hogg’s dissent from the Editor, who mainly represents print culture, is emphasized by his refusal to take part in the search for the suicide’s grave. Hogg does not appear as a man of letters but as a shepherd whose account is much needed by the Editor, the supposed historian who draws his history from authentic documents and registers. This symbolic gesture, in which the historian has to resort to the shepherd, does not only emphasize the centrality of lowly characters such as shepherds in this novel, but it also indicates the inability of historical narrative that is based on documents and registers to stand alone without the oral. The Editor/historian in this scene needs the oral narrative of the author whose document—the article “A Scots
Mummy”—he holds in his hand. These lowly people’s oral traditions, in Hogg’s novel, are also as central to the society as these people themselves.

The importance of tradition appears in The Private Memoirs right from the beginning. The Editor’s narrative that is based on historical documents actually stops short only after a few lines and everything he can gather from those documents is ambiguous and uncertain. The novel begins thus:

It appears from tradition, as well as some parish registers still extant, that the lands of Dalcastle (or Dalchastel, as it is often spelled) were possessed by a family of the name of Colwan, about one hundred and fifty years ago, and for at least a century previous to that period. That family was supposed to have been a branch of the ancient family of Colquhoun, and it is certain that from it spring the Cowans that spread towards the Border. I find that, in the year 1687, George Colwan succeeded his uncle of the same name, in the lands of Dalchastel and Balgrennan; and, this being all I can gather of the family from history, to tradition I must appeal for the remainder of the motley adventures of that house. (3)

What the Editor can gather from the registers is very little and uncertain, as evident, at least symbolically, in the different spellings of the family names and the “supposed” lineage of the family. In addition, whatever the Editor can gather from the registers is supported also by tradition, as the first sentence indicates, and the rest of the Editor’s narrative is taken from the tradition and folklores of the different parts of that area of
Scotland. The rest of the first paragraph goes as follows in which the Editor defends the truthfulness of his sources:

But, of the matter furnished by the latter of these powerful monitors, I have no reason to complain: It has been handed down to the world in unlimited abundance; and I am certain that, in recording the hideous events which follow, I am only relating to the greater part of the inhabitants of at least four counties of Scotland matters of which they were before perfectly well informed. (3)

It is worth mentioning here that the importance given to tradition and the accounts of the people of the different parts of Scotland does not mean that these accounts are always coherent. In fact, the readers are reminded later that there have been other basically different accounts of some of the events that took place. The Editor writes after the events at Arthur’s Seat:

We cannot enter into the detail of the events that now occurred without forestalling a part of the narrative of one who knew all the circumstances—was deeply interested in them, and whose relation is of higher value than anything that can be retailed out of the stores of tradition and old registers; but, his narrative being different from these, it was judged expedient to give the account as thus publicly handed down to us. (34)

The Editor’s words here also re-emphasize the “higher value” of the oral relation of one man over “old registers.”
Tradition, folklore, and orality are not limited to the Editor’s narrative but also find expression in Robert’s memoir. Scrape the servant’s articulation of the golden rule, which Robert the master could not discern on his own, is important not only because it is delivered by a lowly servant but also for the medium in which it was delivered. In order to teach Robert the golden rule, Scrape retells the story of the people of Auchtermuchty which comes from oral tradition and folklore (135). It has been told first by one of the old ladies in the village when Scrape defends his master Robert as a genuinely righteous and pious believer. The reply of the wise old women is that Satan himself has been “the firmest believer in a’ the truths of Christianity” and that he, after being expelled from Heaven, “preached it himsel, for the purpose o’ getting some wrong tenets introduced into it, and thereby turning it into blasphemy and ridicule” (135). Then, one of the old women (Lucky Shaw) relates the story of the people of Auchtermuchty who are similarly very pious and are misled by a cunning figure (136-140). Robert, however, remains blind to the wisdom of these simple people and their stories, and he ridicules their teachings, which leads to his destruction. Had he believed that Gil-Martin is the devil, he could have avoided committing suicide.

Stressing the importance of orality and traditional folklores, I believe, is one of the distinctive features through which Hogg’s novel challenges the dominant elite discourse. As such, the novel resists the undervaluing of the oral traditions of local communities in the periphery. It had been noted that, in Hogg’s canon as a whole, oral tradition, not print, represented the natural medium of discourse. As Garside explains, Hogg “through various strategies resisted the marginalization of the oral as subordinate and primitive” (Garside 58, 59).
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This reading of Hogg’s novel demonstrates that he was in a position to realize the significance of narrative in writing a different version of history and national identity and in correcting the injustice made against the marginalized voices. The above-discussed evidence strongly suggests that Hogg’s own marginalization was reflected in his novel. *The Private Memoirs* challenges the dominant historical novel’s narrative of Scottish history by showing that narratives in general bear the seeds of incoherence and inconclusiveness. In addition, as a story rooted in Scottish oral traditions and local folklores, the novel is very much close to the ordinary people in the periphery rather than those in the center. Not for nothing does the novel begin with the lairds’ castles and the story of their family unions and ends in the border villages in the south of Scotland among the peasants as they labor to earn their living. The novel also depicts an idealized relationship between the masters and the marginalized as in, for instance, the short encounter between Thomas Drummond and Arabella Calvert. When Calvert narrates her story which reveals that she has been a prostitute, Drummond refuses to identify or sympathize with her and immediately leaves her to herself which causes him to lose his
alibi—his only means of proving his innocence. This and other evidence strongly suggest that we can read the novel in light of subaltern studies and in light of Said’s thesis that narrative fiction is a tool for, or against, colonial dominance.

Our ability to read Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs* using postmodern theory owes so much to the unique position in which Hogg found himself. His novel reflected some of the bitterness he felt and expressed throughout his life. For example, in his autobiography he concluded that he had “always been looked on by the learned people of the community as an intruder in the paths of literature, and every opprobrium ha[d] been thrown on [him] from that quarter” (Hogg 46). Hogg’s greatness as a writer was most evident in translating this bitterness into a great novel that is radically unique to the degree that it was rediscovered and is being extensively republished in different editions and taught in different universities (Eggenschwiler 26). I believe that Hogg’s novel’s greatness can best be explained by Milan Kundera’s insight that the novel as a literary genre since *Don Quixote* has discovered the “various dimensions of existence.” With Cervantes, for example, it inquired into the nature of adventure; with Tolstoy, it featured the intrusion of irrationality into man’s actions; and with Richardson, it revealed “what happens inside” (5). *The Private Memoirs*, I might add, reflects the authors disappointment with the common narratives of national history and his resistance to those narratives.
WORKS CITED


