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Hogg's Body

Ian Duncan

One of the most notorious documents in the contemporary reception of Hogg's work must be John Wilson's unsigned review of *The Three Perils of Woman*, published in the October 1823 number of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. In recent years the reception of *The Three Perils of Woman* has come to epitomise the swing of Hogg's reputation, from incomprehension or denigration in his day to rediscovery and admiration in our own.¹ Modern critics especially like to damn Wilson for his infamous treatment of Hogg: unlike Scott and even Lockhart, Wilson seems to offer little elsewhere in his literary career that might redeem him. Yet Wilson's representation of Hogg contains much that is of literary as well as symptomatic interest. *The Three Perils of Woman* provokes a *tour de force* not untypical of the rhetoric of reviewing. Hogg's alleged excesses become the screen for certain excesses of Wilson's own:

It is indeed this rare union of high imagination with homely truth that constitutes the high character of his writing. In one page, we listen to the song of the nightingale, and in another, to the grunt of the boar. Now the wood is vocal with the feathered choir; and then the sty bubbles and squeaks with a farm-sow and a litter of nineteen pigwiggins. [...] Now enters bonny Kilmenie, or Mary Lee, preparing to flee into Fairy-land, or beat up the quarters of the Man in the Moon; and then, lo and behold, some huggered, red-armed, horny-fisted, glaur-nailed Girrzy, removing on the day before term, from the Hen-coop to the sign of the Kilt, on an advance of six shillings on the half-year's wage. Never was there such a bothering repast set down before the reading public by any other caterer. [...] If you suffer your plate for a single moment to escape from the shelter of your bosom, a hundred to one but you see one of the Tweeddale Yeomanry licking it up with a tongue half a yard long, and as rough as a bison's.²

Wilson rails against a chaotic heterogeneity of manner and content in Hogg—a juxtaposition of the base and the material with the exalted and spiritual, the net effect of which is to make everything base and material. The reviewer's explosion of satirical indignation goes well beyond the standard sneer at Hogg's peasant origins. For Wilson is fascinated by what he derides. The occasion, however horrible, is unmistakably festive.

(Nothing quite like this grotesque bacchanalia actually occurs in *The Three Perils of Woman*, whatever that romance's other offences against polite taste.) The riotous hotchpotch of style and substance, troped as Hogg's intractable *hoggishness*, energises Wilson's own writing.

The other striking feature of Wilson's writing is its insistent, obsessive, devolution to the physical—to gross, if not monstrous, bodily presences. Again, the red-armed, horny-fisted Girrzy and the member of the Tweeddale Yeomanry, 'with a tongue half a yard long, and as rough as a bison's', are Wilson's memorable inventions, not Hogg's. It is not long before—in place of the book which is its ostensible topic—the body of the author comes into focus, as the chief object or exhibit of the review. To dismiss this extraordinary diatribe as 'personal' is in certain crucial ways to miss the point:

What with his genius, and what with his buck-teeth; what with his fiddle, and what with his love-locks lolling over his shoulders as he gaed 'up the Kirk,' tastily tied with a blue ribbon; what with his running for prize-hats up the old avenue of Traquhair, 'with his hurdies like twa distant hills,' to the distancing of all competitors; and what with his listering of fish and grewing of mawkins, a gentler and more irresistible shepherd was not to be found from Moffat to Mellerstain.³

The tone of this writing is curiously hard to place. It wants to be contemptuous, certainly, and is not lacking in a bullying sort of affection; it is also definitely excited, exhilarated, by the vision of the 'gentle and irresistible shepherd' with his shameless pretensions to being minstrel, sportsman and lover. Wilson's rhetoric mimics an excessive comic outrage at the usurpation of pastoral conventions by a real shepherd, but it expresses something else besides: beyond the burlesque roar, a strange overtone of yearning. (A yearning, I shall argue presently, for a lost self of Wilson's own.) The desire to crush Hogg, to put him down, is so exaggerated as to have the opposite effect, of celebrating him, building him up, into a mythic figure—the Comus of Scottish letters. This monstrous shepherd presides over the imaginary farmyard of Wilson's review, heaving and teeming with anarchic life, like some kind of pansexual nature-spirit, whose avatars include the bison-tongued yeoman and the sow with her 'litter of nineteen pigwiggins'.

Wilson takes up a rhetoric of Hogg's body, or rather of Hogg *as* body, that was already quite well established in Edinburgh literary circles by the early 1820s. In this essay I shall suggest that Wilson transforms this figure from a merely *hoggish body*, focused on Hogg's grotesque physiognomy, to something different, a *wild body*, focused on Hogg's spectacular virility. One of the earliest, definitive statements of the Hoggish Body comes from the third man in the unholy trio of Blackwoodian cronies, John Gibson Lockhart, in his satiric anatomy of Scottish literary culture *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1819). Lockhart's narrator, Dr Peter Morris, encounters both Wilson and Hogg at the second triennial Burns dinner, 22 February 1819, where Wilson makes a speech eulogising the Ettrick Shepherd as Burns's successor. Morris is gratified by how well Hogg suits his part. Quaintly rather than abominably, the Ettrick Shepherd really *is* a shepherd. Despite the years he has spent mixing in polite society,

[...] the external appearance of the man can have undergone but very little change since he was 'a herd on Yarrow'. His face and hands are still as brown as if he lived entirely *sub dio*. His very hair has a coarse stringiness about it, which proves beyond dispute its utter ignorance of all arts of the friseur; and hangs in playful whips and cords about his ears, in a style of the most perfect innocence imaginable. His mouth, which, when he smiles, nearly cuts the totality of his face in twain, is an object that would make the Chevalier Ruspini die with indignation; for his teeth have been allowed to grow where they listed, and as they listed, presenting more resemblance, in arrangement, (and colour too,) to a body of crouching sharp-shooters, than to any more regular species of array.⁴

Lockhart establishes the two features that identify Hogg's grotesque physiognomy: the Shepherd's long hair, which is here transformed from gracefully luxuriant to coarse and stringy, and, above all, his irregular, projecting *teeth*—emblems of bestial appetite and oral aggression, the tusks of the Boar of Ettrick. (Lockhart's bizarre simile of the 'body of crouching sharpshooters' hints at a revolutionary dangerousness in popular vitality, perhaps, in this year 1819.)

Sarah Green's anti-Blackwoodian anti-romance, *Scotch Novel Reading* (1824), would pay tribute to the forcefulness of Lockhart's description—and to the peculiar cultural frisson of having the imaginary features of an author, that shadowy figure we fantasise 'behind' the text, suddenly lean into visibility. Seduced by fashionable Scottish novels, Green's heroine has fallen in love with 'the Ettrick Shepherd': 'She saw, in imagination, the sunny ringlets floating over the rosy cheek of poor Hogg'. Imagining herself as Mrs Cargill in Allan Ramsay's play *The Gentle Shepherd*, she vows—like Scott's Jeanie Deans—to 'walk leagues, barefoot (a l'Ecossaise,) to get only one sight of him'. But she receives a disillusioning shock when she comes to read Dr Morris's description in *Peter's Letters*. Hogg's physiognomy is bound up, as in Wilson's review of *The Three Perils of Woman*, with the English reading of his name: 'when she found that The Ettrick Shepherd was named Hogg, her grief was beyond all bounds'.⁵

Nor was the figure of Hogg as hoggish body limited to the Blackwoodians. I have written elsewhere about the appearance of Scott as a figure in Hogg's fiction.⁶ More conjectural is the presence of Hogg in Scott's. In *Ivanhoe* (1820) Scott may have been paying a compliment to Hogg, *de haut en bas*, in the person of Gurth the swineherd, the hoggish shepherd of his English romance of chivalry. Gurth's valour and loyalty to *Ivanhoe* earn him his manumission from serfdom; internal bonds of fealty replace the external shackles of the slave's collar. Thus Scott rehearses, elegantly enough, the roles of patron and 'faithful shepherd' with which he and Hogg had commenced their relationship—and even allows for Hogg's limited progress in a literary career of his own, in Scott's shadow.

Three years later, following Hogg's more aggressive 'homage' to Scott in *The Three Perils of Man* (1822), and contemporaneous with Hogg's thoroughly subversive inclusion of him in *The Three Perils of Woman*, the hero of Scott's *Quentin Durward* encounters a fearsome, carnivalesque figure of appetite, riot and misrule called 'the Wild Boar of the Ardennes'. The Wild Boar exhibits a hideously divided physiognomy: the upper part of his face consists of 'an open, high, and manly forehead, broad and ruddy cheeks, sparkling, light-coloured eyes, and a nose hooked like the beak of an eagle', while the

lower part is disfigured by ‘an unusual thickness and projection of the mouth and upper jaw, which, with the huge projecting side-teeth, gave that resemblance to the bestial creation, which [...] originally procured for him the name of the Boar of the Ardennes’.⁷ This creature commands a revolutionary violence that degrades men to beasts—not only himself and his mob, but the venerable Bishop of Liège, poleaxed like an ox in the shambles.

The Wild Boar of the Ardennes, whether or not he bears any intended reference to Hogg, is a sinister and repulsive monster.⁸ The most elaborate, and notorious, fictional representation of Hogg in this period, the Shepherd of the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, gives us a very different and far more complex creature, as J. H. Alexander has shown, both in an essay published in *Studies in Hogg and his World* (1993) and in his valuable selection from the *Noctes*, *The Tavern Sages* (1992).⁹ Contesting the traditional view that the *Noctes* present a crude burlesque of Hogg as rustic simpleton and ‘boozing buffoon’, Alexander combines two arguments (which may not, perhaps, flow together quite so smoothly as they appear to in his account). First, ‘a credible James Hogg may be discerned in the *Noctes*, which were after all written by those who knew him well’.¹⁰ Second, the authors of the *Noctes*—and Wilson especially—make of the Shepherd a richly symbolic, even mythic figure that exceeds mere caricature. Our present concern, it should be apparent by now, is with the symbolic rather than real or biographical Hogg. According to Alexander, Wilson’s Ettrick Shepherd personifies a Romantic ideology of natural genius and organic being: he represents ‘non-intellectual and instinctive’ energies, a ‘sane and healthy’ imagination in touch with its dark side, ‘an intensely physical response to experience’.¹¹ Although ‘the Shepherd with his noble buck teeth, displayed in all their brown irregularity’, makes his appearance in the Lockhartian precursor series, ‘Christopher in the Tent’ (August and September 1819),¹² and shows up in the early *Noctes* (from 1822), written jointly by Lockhart, Maginn, and Wilson, he really comes into focus, or finds his characteristic voice, as Wilson takes over the series in 1825. I shall return presently to the deadly irony that attends Wilson’s representation of the Shepherd: that none of the qualities mentioned by Alexander—vitality, magnanimity, an organic wholeness in relation to experience—belonged to Wilson himself, either in his biographical role of man of letters or in his magazine persona of ‘Christopher North’.

Wilson’s representation of the Shepherd in the *Noctes* shifts progressively away from the phobic or grotesque effects of ‘hoggishness’ towards something quite the contrary. Hogg’s body becomes the vessel of a wonderful, attractive vitality. This frequently displays itself in gargantuan feats of appetite—much of the *Noctes* takes place around lavish banquets and potations, which themselves furnish much of the conversation. More strikingly, the Shepherd embodies a ‘natural’, instinctual masculine sexuality, nowhere more so than in the couple of episodes (conveniently included by Alexander in *The Tavern Sages*) in which he takes all his clothes off. In *Noctes* 34 (July 1827) Tickler and the Shepherd go sea-bathing at Portobello. Hogg immediately gets ‘mother-naked’, boasting that he never bothers with underwear:

As for mysell I never wear drawers, but hae my breeks lined wi’ flannen a’ the year through; and as for thae wee short corded under-shorts that clasp you like ivy, I never had ane o’ them on syn last July, when I was forced to cut it aff my

back and breast wi' a pair o' sheep-shears, after having tried in vain to get out o't every morning for twa months.¹³

As Hogg shows off in the water, Tickler pays somewhat bizarre tribute to his comeliness:

You look more irresistible than you imagine. Never saw I your face and figure to more advantage—when lying on the braes of Yarrow, with your eyes closed in the sunshine, and the shadows of poetical dreams chasing each other along cheek and brow. You would make a beautiful corpse, James.¹⁴

The Shepherd spins an elaborate fantasy of being embraced by a Mermaid: a passage that shifts from delicate eroticism ('Something—like a caulder breath o' moonlicht—fell on my face and breast, and seemed to touch all my body and my limbs') to a vivid, if perhaps predictable, sexual horror:

It is quite true that the hair o' the creatur is green—and it's as slimy as it's green—slimy and sliddery as the sea-weed that cheats your unsteady footing on the rocks. [...] hech, sirs! hech sirs! the fishiness o' that kiss! [...] Sae that I was as naked as either you or me, Mr Tickler, at this blessed moment—and when I felt mysell enveloped in the hauns, paws, fins, scales, tail, and maw o' the Mermaid o' a monster, I grued til the verra roof o' the cave let down drap, drap, drap upon us—me and the Mermaid—and I gied mysell up for lost.¹⁵

Here the grotesque and bestial body returns in the form of a Mermaid; sexuality is exteriorised, alienated, as a monstrous feminine aggression. Otherwise, it seems to be a necessary part of the scenario that some ladies show up to be thrilled by the spectacle of Hogg's nakedness. When a Steamer draws near, with 'a bevy of ladies on deck', Tickler predicts 'fainting from stem to stern, in cabin and steerage'.¹⁶ By this time a kindlier totem animal, the acceptable figure of the Shepherd's virility, has joined them: 'MR NORTH'S GREAT NEWFUNLAN' BRONTE!'—i.e. Christopher North's (and John Wilson's) Newfoundland retriever, Bronte, who swims about barking ecstatically.

The other major episode of heroic nudity occurs in the Shepherd's tall tale of his adventure with the Bonassus, a wild ox or bison (April 1830). Hogg infuriates one of these animals by practising blasts on a cow-horn; presumably it mistakes him for a mate, or a sexual rival. Charged by the enraged beast, Hogg—of course—takes off all his clothes:

slipping aff my breeks, jacket, waistcoat, shirt, and a', just as you've seen an actor on the stage, I appeared suddenly before him as naked as the day I was born—and sic is the awe, sir, wi' which a human being, *in puris naturabilis*, inspires the maddest of the brute creation, (I had tried it ance before on a mastiff,) that he was a' at aince, in a single moment, stricken o' a heap[.]¹⁷

The naked Shepherd hops on the bull's back, and there ensues an epic wild ride—compared by one of his auditors, the 'English Opium-Eater', to the wild ride in Byron's 'Mazeppa' and to Homer's description of the 'whirling of the dead body of Hector in

bloody nakedness behind the chariot-wheels of Achilles'.¹⁸ Unlike those, this is an entirely comic procession. Once again, Hogg's naked body has to be exhibited to the scandalised gaze of ladies: he encounters 'three gig-fu's o' leddies', one of whom however, '—a bonny cretur—leuch as if she kent me, as I gaed by at full gallop—and I remembered haeing seen her afore, though where I couldna tell'.¹⁹ The momentary erotic recognition, an exchange of glances that registers physical presence but not name or social station, acknowledges the triumphalism of Hogg's naked ride on bull-back.

These episodes render Hogg as a mythic figure of primitive male sensuality—a figure of, to borrow a term coined by Wyndham Lewis one hundred years later, 'the Wild Body'. Even so, Wilson's narratives are only able to produce that figure by splitting off and externalising its 'hoggish' property, genital sexuality, which reappears in the form of a beast or monster with which the Shepherd is forced to struggle. Equally conventionally, the Mermaid represents a feminine sexual threat. To be embraced by her is to be overwhelmed, to suffer a loss of control and consciousness issuing in a post-coital loneliness and disgust:

The Mermaid held the grup—and while I was splutterin' out her kisses, and convulsed waur than ever I was under the warst nicht-mare that ever sat on my stamach, wi' ae desperate wallop we baith gaed tapsalteerie—frae ae sliddery ledge to anither—till, wi' accelerated velocity, we played plunge like porpusses into the sea, a thousand fadom deep—and hoo I gat rid o' the briny Beastliness nae man kens till this day; for there I was sittin' in the cave, chitterin' like a drookit [drenched] cock, and nae mermaid to be seen or heard; although, wad ye believe me, the cave had the smell o' crabs, and labsters, and oysters, and skate, and fish in general, eneuch to turn the stamach o' a whale or a sea-lion.²⁰

Hogg's combat with the Bonassus, however, brings a reunion of male body with phallic beast in the parade of a triumphant, satyr-like virility. This too has its price. In response to the laborious allegorical exegesis of the Opium Eater (Wilson shrewdly anticipates a critical industry to come), Hogg is obliged to dismiss the whole vivid adventure as no more than a fantasy—as though we had not noticed, or had forgotten. 'You wad believe me, were I to say that I had ridden a whale up the Yarrow frae Newark to Eltrive! The haill story's a lee!'²¹

To compose the icon of a primitive virility, then, the male body is split off from and resundered with its wild sexuality, through a confrontation with monsters and totem animals. This logic points us towards a further symbolic predicament: namely, the drastic splitting of Wilson himself as authorial subject.

In the 1823 review of *The Three Perils of Woman*, Wilson justifies his sketch of Hogg's physiognomy by taking exception to Hogg's prior description of Wilson himself—a 'self' in which the features of John Wilson and his magazine persona, Christopher North, are interestingly juxtaposed. Wilson begins with a testy allusion to the vignette of himself in Hogg's *Memoir of the Author's Life* (already abused by Wilson in a review of 1821): 'In his "Own Life", he describes his friends by "hair like feathers," and "nails like eagle-claws," and so forth, which is all very proper and pretty portraiture'.²² (Hogg had written: 'All that I could learn of him was, that he was a man from the mountains in Wales, or the west of England, with hair like eagles' feathers, and nails like

birds' claws; a red beard, and an uncommon degree of wildness in his looks'.²³) Wilson goes on: 'More than once hath he scoffed at our crutch and our rheumatiz; and, from these and sundry other hints, we presume he wishes us to favour the public with a caricature of himself in an early Number'.²⁴ Here now speaks a literary figment, the famous Christopher North, Wilson's dominant persona in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. North, supposed to be a crippled, decrepit old man in his seventies, makes for a grotesque contrast—one that goes well beyond a joke—with the biographical legend cultivated by Wilson as early as his Oxford undergraduate days. Tall, powerful, and graceful, endowed with his mother's fairness, Wilson excelled in athletic and field sports—notably (to cite the running heads of his daughter's 1863 biography) 'Walking Feats [...] Cock-Fighting—Pugilism—Leaping'.²⁵ He also excelled in the virile exercises of boozing, brawling, and seducing lower-class women. In one of the livelier modern demolitions, Donald Carswell describes the student career of this 'big blond beast':

[...] his fame rested on the flesh rather than the spirit. Of his prowess in love and drink and battle all sorts of stories were told. He had soundly thrashed the most redoubtable of the town bruisers. He had served as a tavern potman in order to have access to a barmaid of whom he was enamoured. [...] He was, in the worst sense of the term, a man's man.²⁶

It is difficult not to be impressed by the thoroughness of Wilson's expulsion of this aggressively muscular and heterosexual masculinity from his literary self-performance—an expulsion that ante-dates his appointment to the chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh in 1820, when he was forced to clean up his act.²⁷ In the event, Christopher North is only able to recover his author's exuberant youthful fleshliness via the oral gratification of second childhood, in the heroic gourmandising at Ambrose's, or else in the medium of memory, as a lost innocence. The series of *Blackwood's* sketches, 'Christopher in his Sporting Jacket' (1828), looks back nostalgically on a boyhood and youth spent hunting, shooting and fishing in the Paisley countryside. These amusements as often as not involve the young gentleman's wanton destruction of pets and livestock belonging to local farmers. The violence confirms the general character of cruelty and bullying that has attached itself, probably indelibly, to Wilson's reputation (whatever one's opinion of field-sports).

Wilson's Shepherd, however, lacks cruelty. His masculinity typically expresses itself, without sense of contradiction, in a lyrical tenderness and sympathy, even at the heights of knockabout farce or superhuman whisky consumption. In short, then: Wilson projects the quality of a lyrical, instinctual, sensual virility onto the Shepherd instead of claiming it as his own. The virtues Wilson lends Hogg in the *Noctes* are not virtues that belong to Wilson's own authorial performance, despite Wilson's reputation for all kinds of physical prowess. At the same time, of course, this Not-Self, the Ettrick Shepherd, is to an extent Wilson's invention and so his property, and throughout the *Noctes* we constantly find him asserting his control over the figure: making North overwhelm the Shepherd with flights of oratory and erudition, turning Hogg into the obedient interlocutor in Socratic dialogues, and putting Wilson's own (often repellent) views into his mouth. In one episode (No. 42, April 1829) Hogg is exasperated by North's inattention and flings a glass of toddy in his face, provoking a boxing match. His lameness notwithstanding,

North floors the Shepherd with a scientific blow under the ear, and then magnanimously colludes in the fiction that the Shepherd was the one who prevailed. The author feels so anxious that he has to throw a punch through his persona in order to remind Hogg—and the reader—who really is the strong man here. This brawling registers (with a high-pitched exuberance) how far the performance is getting out of control—and how far the breach of control is its point.

After the grotesque flourishes that introduce the review of *The Three Perils of Woman*, Wilson goes on to admit that Hogg's exhibitions of sexuality—'coarse, but potent; hairy, but headlong'—may look almost respectable when set beside those of the detested Hazlitt, who had just published his *Liber Amoris* (1823), to the fiendish glee of the Blackwoodians:

Now, our most excellent friend, the Shepherd, would not have allowed himself to have been jilted like the New Pygmalion. He would have made love, not like a small, fetid, blear-eyed pug, but like a big curly Newfoundlander, who had broken his chain, and bounced like a rocket out of his kennel upon the beauty of Southampton-Row. The whole affair would have been over, while Pug, or Pygmalion, was shedding his rheum down 'the pimple pass' of his nose, and most disconsolately brandishing over his back that tail, which is fixed for ever and for aye in one ludicrous circumbendibus. James is a man, and that is well known among friend and foe alike all over the Forest; but silly Billy was taken up for an indecent exposure of his person, and acquitted solely on the ground, that the New Pygmalion was incapable of any misdemeanour implying manhood.²⁸

It should go without saying that this riff on male sexuality as doggy misbehaviour is far more 'coarse' than anything in *The Three Perils of Woman*. Foreshadowing his later technique, Wilson represents Hogg's reckless phallic brio through the medium of a totem animal: metamorphosing Hogg into his beloved Newfoundland, Bronte (who is clearly guilty of the most annoying habits of large dogs). The Shepherd is redeemed from hoggishness into doggishness—and an animal that happens to be Wilson's own proud property, just as Wilson at the end of his review asserts a proprietorial concern in the literary career of James Hogg: 'It is impossible to know you, James, and not to love and admire you. [...] But you know little or nothing of the real powers and capacities of James Hogg'.²⁹ We see that Hogg is Wilson's dog, or at any rate that Wilson wants him to be that—that is, his innocent, instinctual, sensual, animal part, his body.

The function of Hogg as Wilson's body expresses a symptomatic splitting in Wilson's writing, which has been well noted by modern critics. In an especially devastating commentary, Andrew Noble draws attention to the schism between 'melancholic fine-feeling' and 'manic animal high spirits' in Wilson's work, the expression of a pathologically 'fissile' personality.³⁰ Wilson's official, high style, when he is writing as Christopher North, is unbearably bombastic and mawkish, a primary source of the most overwrought effects of Victorian sentimentalism. At its best it looks forward towards the finer unreadability of, say, Pater (in *Marius the Epicurean*):

To Amy Gordon, as she chanted to herself, in the blooming or verdant desert, all these various traditionary lays, love seemed a kind of beautiful superstition belonging to the memory of the dead.³¹

Notable about this style—the style of Wilson’s fiction as well as of his essays moral and spiritual—is its insistent rhetorical performance of disembodiment and dematerialisation, miming the strenuous repression of the bodily that is also its preferred thematic content. Wilson’s fiction offers us a parade of triumphs of repression and sublimation over threatened outbreaks of licentiousness, more often than not issuing in weepy death-bed scenes.³² Although Wilson’s programmatic sentimentalism gestures back to Mackenzie, still alive as the grand old man of the Edinburgh Post-Enlightenment, commentators perceived it as an appropriation of rhetorical resources coded as feminine. Hence Henry Crabb Robinson’s derisive verdict: ‘A Female Wordsworth is the designation of this author’.³³ For so ostentatiously manly an author, feminisation, like Christopher North’s lameness, would signify a high-minded castration—a literary equivalent of the disciplinary self-mutilation practised by certain cults and sects. No wonder, after such drastic recourse, that tears flow so readily.

The stylistic virile body missing from these performances is, above all, Scots: the language of national popular life. (To say so is not to endorse these classed, gendered and sexualised identifications, but to note them as Wilson’s own.) It is especially in the *Noctes*, the expression of Wilson’s other side of ‘manic, animal high spirits’, that Scots abounds. Henry Cockburn—a critic far from disposed in Wilson’s favour—called the Scots in the *Noctes* ‘the best Scotch that has been written in modern times’.³⁴ This best Scotch, which also happens to be Wilson’s best writing, issues most eloquently from the mouth of the Ettrick Shepherd. Andrew Noble shrewdly describes the *Noctes* as the product of ‘a more genuine symbiosis with Hogg’s genius than Wilson would ever admit to’.³⁵ Symbiosis, though, is not quite the right term for these psycho-rhetorical strategies of self-division attended by a jealous, bullying reappropriation of the Other, who has become the Narcissistic image of a lost, pure, better self.

I wish to close with a couple of suggestions rather than a firm conclusion. First, my reading offers a complementary reversal of the account of Hogg in the *Noctes* favoured by some Hogg critics, who conjecture a traumatic dissociation of identity for Hogg himself, reproduced (for example) in the thematics of doubling in the *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.³⁶ Here, the victim of a schizoid division of identity or loss of self is the same as its instigator, John Wilson. Wilson may have gone out of his way to insist, in effect, that the Ettrick Shepherd was *his* invention, his property—his dog: an identity no longer belonging to the degraded and unworthy original, ‘James Hogg’. But Wilson’s very insistence reiterated the designation of this authentic, organic, unalienated self, his own natural true genius, as in fact not himself but always *another*—as the Ettrick Shepherd, James Hogg. In this way the alien career of the Ettrick Shepherd in the *Noctes Ambrosianae* rehearses a Hoggian revenge upon Wilson.

Second: I have found it more productive to view this literary configuration of selves, bodies and personae as a public, institutional and cultural phenomenon, rather than a private, strictly biographical and psychoanalytic one. (And I accept that this is, absolutely speaking, a false distinction: let me say rather that I give the first set priority as inclusive of the second, rather than the other way around.) The topic of ‘literary authority’, recently

current in Scott studies, may help us interpret a symptomatic and influential convergence of figures of male sexuality and masculine authority in early nineteenth-century Edinburgh literary culture.³⁷ The convergence is a legacy of the precocious professionalisation of Scottish metropolitan culture in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, further modernised in the domestic ‘culture wars’ that raged after 1815. One consequence of this professionalisation, sufficiently well noted by Scottish cultural historians and critics, was a class distinction encoded in the division between vernacular Scots, increasingly designated the oral language of the peasantry, and English, the literary language of an imperial administrative élite. Under Wilson and Lockhart, *Blackwood’s* redefined the social style of national literature towards a Victorian norm of middle-class gentility. This new gentility, despite a tendency to regress to eighteenth-century bouts of swaggering, claimed the distinguishing virtues of piety and propriety—including an often self-righteous sexual propriety. The language of cultural authority was increasingly a language that obliterated its own origins not just in speech and locality but in the body.

Burns himself, in the generation following his death, became the inaugural figure of a vexed cultural distinction between gentility and virility, or ‘chivalry’ and ‘licentiousness’; and we recall that Wilson (like Jeffrey, Scott, Hogg and Lockhart, actively involved in the refashioning of Burns’s image as National Bard) had been eager to claim the Ettrick Shepherd as Burns’s heir.³⁸ In the case of Wilson’s Hogg, however, more is at stake in the sexualising of the peasant poet’s body—the identification of him *as* a male body—than the relatively straightforward distinction between boor and gentleman. By the 1820s Edinburgh literary politics were beset by an institutional exaggeration of masculine relations of paternal control, dynastic succession, oedipal conflict, and sibling rivalry. The formidable fatherly authority of Scott presided over a savage warfare between the ascendant young Tories and their Whig elders, complicated by intense, tangled, often bitter relationships of friendship, collaboration and betrayal amongst the Tories themselves. To recapitulate and extend Ina Ferris’s account: the *Edinburgh Review* Whigs had defined a characteristic style of professional authority for themselves, a militant enhancement of an Enlightenment language of abstract judicial reason. The Blackwoodian reaction (once the imitation of the *Edinburgh* by the *Quarterly* proved indecisive) followed Scott’s appropriation of the feminine cultural territory of ‘romance’, to take over related, ‘domestic’ discourses of sentiment, piety, propriety, and local specificity, remaking them into the ideological constituents of a new bourgeois gentility. This discursive strategy reinforced the exclusion of actual women writers and intellectuals from the highly masculinised construction of literature as a *profession*. (Exceptions like Joanna Baillie and Susan Ferrier proved the rule, at least in the eyes of male literati: these were ladies, not bluestockings.) Wilson, pathological only in his exemplariness, enacted in his writing the correspondent, drastic expulsion of the differential signifier of male sexuality—the virile body. He chose James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, to be the bearer of his rejected body, at the cost of only being able to gain access to its outcast wild innocence through authoritarian strategies of repossession and coercion.

Hogg’s body—the avatar of that national body, the people—would indeed be readmitted to the convivial table of the Blackwoodian boys’ club, but under strict conditions of patronage and supervision. Nevertheless Hogg, even cast as Wilson’s

phantasmatic, alienated corporeal self, continued to triumph over them all with displays of an 'organic' energy, at once fierce and tender, they had exiled from themselves.

N O T E S

I should like to thank Leith Davis and Janet Sorenson for their encouragement and delegates at the 1997 James Hogg Society Conference for their comments on an earlier version of this essay. I am grateful, as always, to Gill Hughes for her editorial acumen.

- 1 David Groves's 'Afterword' to the Stirling/South Carolina edition of *The Three Perils of Woman*, edited by David Groves, Antony Hasler, and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh, 1995) includes a valuable account of the novel's reception history (pp.409-20).
- 2 'Hogg's Three Perils of Woman', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 14 (October 1823), 427-37 (p.427).
- 3 'Hogg's Three Perils of Woman', p.428.
- 4 J. G. Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, edited by William Ruddick (Edinburgh, 1977), p.45.
- 5 *Scotch Novel Reading: or, Modern Quackery. A Novel Really founded on facts. By a Cockney* [Sarah Green], 3 vols (London, 1824), I, 10-11.
- 6 Ian Duncan, 'Shadows of the Potentate: Scott in Hogg's Fiction', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 4 (1993), 12-25.
- 7 Sir Walter Scott, *Quentin Durward*, edited by Susan Manning (Oxford, 1992), p.301.
- 8 Writing to Scott in 1805, Hogg had boasted of his ancestor William of Fauldshope, who 'from his great strength and ferocity was nicknamed *The Wild Boar*': cited in Duncan, 'Shadows of the Potentate', p.16. In No. 48 of *The Spy* (27 July 1811) Hogg addressed himself as Editor (referring to Psalm 80.13): 'the *boar* that from the *forest* comes, doth waste it at his pleasure—I beg your pardon, Sir, I was not meaning you' (p.378). I am grateful to Gillian Hughes for this reference.
- 9 J. H. Alexander, 'Hogg in the *Noctes Ambrosianae*', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 4 (1993), 37-47, and *The Tavern Sages: Selections from the Noctes Ambrosianae*, edited by J. H. Alexander (Aberdeen, 1992).
- 10 Alexander, 'Hogg in the *Noctes Ambrosianae*', p.42.
- 11 'Hogg in the *Noctes Ambrosianae*', pp.40, 42.
- 12 *Noctes Ambrosianae*, edited by R. Shelton Mackenzie, 5 vols (New York, 1863), I, 14. 'Christopher in the Tent' appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in August 1819, and was the bridge between *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* and the *Noctes Ambrosianae*.
- 13 *The Tavern Sages*, p.74.
- 14 *The Tavern Sages*, p.79.
- 15 *The Tavern Sages*, p.80.
- 16 *The Tavern Sages*, p.81.
- 17 *The Tavern Sages*, p.99.
- 18 *The Tavern Sages*, p.101.
- 19 *The Tavern Sages*, p.100.
- 20 *The Tavern Sages*, p. 81. Charlotte Brontë, whom childhood reading had made familiar with Hogg and the *Noctes*, inserts a feminist rewriting of this episode in Volume 2, Chapter II of *Shirley*. See also Chapter XIII of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*.
- 21 *The Tavern Sages*, p.103.
- 22 'Hogg's Three Perils of Woman', p.428.
- 23 James Hogg, *Memoir of the Author's Life and Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, edited by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh, 1972), p.29.
- 24 'Hogg's Three Perils of Woman', p.428.
- 25 Mary Wilson Gordon, *Christopher North: A Memoir of John Wilson* (New York, 1894).
- 26 Donald Carswell, *Sir Walter: A Four Part Study in Biography* (Edinburgh, 1930), p.221.
- 27 Scandalous accounts of Wilson's conduct circulated in the weeks leading up to the appointment:
I have twice heard Mr Wilson sing such things to Psalm tunes in Youngs Tavern in the High Street at a meeting of the Dilettanti Society and at a Burns dinner. He gave out the line regularly as is usual in Presbyterian churches—One of the Parodies began
 'Lift up thy Pitticoats on High
 'Uplifted let them be, &c
The last line of one of them as I heard it given out and sung was
 She farted Amen!—
And the last line of the other
 That I can f**k as well as Preach!'

- (Letter from Robert Jamieson to A. Gillespie, 14 July 1820, National Library of Scotland MS 30,002, f.11. I am grateful to the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland for permission to make this quotation from the Blackwood Archive). Several witnesses indignantly denied this particular report.
- 28 'Hogg's Three Perils of Woman', pp.428-29.
- 29 'Hogg's Three Perils of Woman', p.437.
- 30 Andrew Noble, 'John Wilson (Christopher North) and the Tory Hegemony', *The History of Scottish Literature: Volume Three, Nineteenth Century*, edited by Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen, 1988), pp. 125-52 (p.126).
- 31 John Wilson, *Tales of Scottish Life* (Edinburgh, 1865), p.2 (The excerpt is from 'The Lily of Liddesdale' in *The Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*).
- 32 According to Antony J. Hasler 'no fewer than eighteen of the stories [in *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*] involve death, near approaches to it or funerals'—see 'The Three Perils of Woman and John Wilson's *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*', in *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 1 (1990), 30-45 (p.31).
- 33 Cited in Noble, 'John Wilson (Christopher North)', p.138.
- 34 Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time*, edited by Karl Miller (Chicago, 1974), p.304. Cockburn adds, 'I am really sorry for the poor one-tongued Englishman, by whom, because the Ettrick Shepherd uses the sweetest and most expressive of living languages, the homely humour, the sensibility, the descriptive power, the eloquence, and the strong joyous hilarity of that animated rustic can never be felt'.
- 35 Noble, 'John Wilson (Christopher North)', p.127.
- 36 See 'Introduction' to James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, edited by John Carey (Oxford, 1970), and David Groves, *James Hogg: The Growth of a Writer* (Edinburgh, 1988).
- 37 See Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, Genre and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), and Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford, 1994).
- 38 For early nineteenth-century discussions of Burns see *Robert Burns: The Critical Heritage*, edited by Donald Low (London, 1974), pp.178-426. See also Robert Crawford's fascinating discussion of poetry and masculine sexuality in eighteenth-century clubs and fraternal societies, 'Robert Fergusson's Robert Burns', in *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, edited by Crawford (Edinburgh, 1997), pp.8-22.

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