THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

NICKIE-BEN'S CLOSE

and

The Devil Loves Scotland: Devil Influence in Scottish History and Literature, and *Nickie-Ben's Close*

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Declaration

This thesis has been composed entirely by the student, and the work is entirely their own. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed: Kelly E. Pierce

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Contents

Abstracts

The novel *Nickie-Ben's Close* is a magical realism bildungsroman that takes the existing Devil archetype and reimagines him in a story set in modern-day Edinburgh, Scotland. Through the first person perspective of our protagonist Morag, who goes by the initial "M", this novel explores the transition from childhood to adulthood and finding one's own identity. The Devil uses M's lack of identity and determination for independence to his advantage in seducing her into selling her soul. As an effect of her immoral choices in Edinburgh, M grows in maturity and understanding of herself and the reality of her life. *Nickie-Ben's Close* shows how easily people are willing to give their—metaphorical—souls away for instant gratification.

In Section I of "The Devil Loves Scotland", I provide a brief history of Devil belief in Scotland through changes in culture, society, religion, and enlightenment from medieval times to present day. I start with supernatural Scottish Border Ballads and then consider the shift in the Devil's representation with the Reformation. Then I examine how the rise of science changed the Devil's representation in the modern era, and how Scottish literature has used the Devil to comment on these changes in belief. In Section II, I explore Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* and argue it is a re-imagining of the traditional supernatural Scottish Border Ballad through analyzing its style, structure, and theme in relation to the Border Ballad. In Section III, I reflect on my novel in terms of craft and inspiration from Scottish Devil belief and supernatural literature, with specific examples from *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by James Hogg, *The Testament of Gideon Mack* by James Robertson, and *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* by Muriel Spark.

Lay Summaries

The novel *Nickie-Ben's Close* is a magical realism bildungsroman that takes place in modern-day Edinburgh, Scotland when a determined 20 year old M steps off the plane from the United States. Study abroad is her excuse, but she's on a quest to learn about her father, who died before she was old enough to remember him—and her bitter mother won't tell her a thing about it. Night one, she meets Graeme. He's attractive, clever, and bewitching but she doesn't know he's the Devil and he wants her soul. Nor does she know that many characters have already paid the price in exchange for wealth, beauty, and power—even M's father and Aunt Liz. With an invitation to the darker side of Edinburgh, Graeme easily seduces M towards immoral decisions. Stealing a wallet is thrilling. Stabbing someone with a knife makes her feel alive! Then, with her witness of what appears to be a sadistic murder, Graeme demonstrates to M his supernatural powers of raising people from the dead. But when M sells her soul in exchange for Graeme to bring her father back, will it be the reunion she's always dreamed of?

In Section I of "The Devil Loves Scotland", I briefly detail the history of Devil belief in Scotland from medieval times to present-day and how it developed, drawing examples from *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by James Hogg and *The Testament of Gideon Mack* by James Robertson. In Section II, I argue that Muriel Spark's novel *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* is a re-imagining of the traditional Border Ballad. In Section III, I reflect on my novel in terms of craft and inspiration from the Scottish setting to the Scottish Devil in literature.

NICKIE-BEN'S CLOSE

Chapter 1.

“Is that you?” a woman calls, like she’s searching through a fog.

I stand, one hand clutched around my suitcase’s handle and the other at my side, as the stout woman in Burberry wades through the crowd towards me. She halts just inches from my face.

I smile politely and stand up straighter. “Aunt Liz?”

She looks me up and down, then exhales. “Oh my days… You look just like him.”

I don’t know what to say to that. She doesn’t wait for me to say anything. I follow her to the exit of the terminal and as the doors open, a rush of cold air gets sucked in, prickling my skin.

“Hold on,” I say. I unzip my suitcase to find the cardigan buried inside. I drag it out by a sleeve and I put it on over my tank top, but it does little to keep me warm. I knew Scotland would be colder than Florida, but I didn’t expect I’d need a jacket in August.

“I hope you have warmer clothes than that. You’re skin and bones,” Liz says in bewilderment.

I fake a laugh, but her mouth tightens further.

“Flight was good?” she asks, walking two steps ahead of me with her boots clacking against the pavement.

“Yeah,” I say. “Just really, really long.”

“Here we are,” she says, pointing proudly towards a silver Audi. As I start for the passenger seat, she clucks her tongue. “Wrong side!”

My face flushes when I see the steering wheel. I try to pretend I was just admiring the rolling hills in the distance and slowly step around to the left side of the car to get in.

“It’s usually a short drive to mine, but you never know with this kind of traffic,” she says as she starts the car. “I’m sure your flight was full of Americans coming for the Festival, hmm?”

I nod. Every August Edinburgh holds the Fringe Festival, the largest festival in the world. I overheard a few Americans beside me on the flight discussing what shows to see during their visit.

Liz lets out a high-pitched sigh. “We have a love-hate relationship with the Festival. Our city is taken from us, but it makes us look good and,” she rubs her thumb and finger together, “we make lots of money.”

She pulls onto the highway beside pastures of grazing sheep and cattle. The land is so vibrantly green that it makes the Everglades look dehydrated. We pass by a standalone house on top of a field, and I envy whoever lives there.

“You’re quiet.” Liz’s curtness is unsettling.

“Sorry,” I say.

“Did you sleep on the flight? Take something to knock you out?”

“Yeah.”

Before going through security at Tampa International, I threw away the sleeping pills my mother gave me and ate a pot brownie instead, but the high wore off by the time I boarded the connecting flight.

“You look out of it,” Liz says.

I eye her, checking out her profile and the way her nose slopes down and rounds at the bottom. I touch the point of my nose with my finger.

She looks at me out of the corner of her eye. “What are you looking at?”

“Nothing.”

She snorts a laugh as if she doesn’t believe me.

“I was just wondering…” I hesitate.

I’m already breaking my mother’s promise. As my mother hugged me goodbye at the airport, she said, “Promise me that you won’t spend too much time on the past. You’ll make your own memories.” She was staring straight into my eyes, her hand wrapped around my wrist like a bangle. I felt so uncomfortable that I could only make eye contact for an instant to nod before pretending that it was time to go.

“Wondering what?”

I give in. “If we had the same nose.”

She glances at my nose quickly. “No, we don’t. I have a very unique nose. People have told me so.”

“Oh, nice,” I mutter. “So my father… wouldn’t have had the same nose as you?”

“No,” says Liz. “Like I said, mine is unique. You have your father’s nose.”

My father’s nose. I turn to look back out the window to hide my smile, pressing my nose against the glass.

Liz turns off an exit and the fields are replaced by factories and car dealerships, then houses and clusters of shops like nail salons, Chinese takeouts, and dry cleaners. There are signs for a zoo as we bend around a turn. Liz makes a noise to get my attention. I take my nose off the glass to look ahead and see a fortress of weathered stone stretched atop the summit of a gigantic rock. It’s the Edinburgh Castle.

“Wow,” I say, completely stunned.

Liz hums in agreement.

The sky is clear from clouds and the sun shines but still, the castle looks as though it’s underneath a great shade. It’s so terrifying and beautiful that I can’t look away, as if it’ll disappear at any moment. The closer we get, the higher into the sky it rises, until the buildings of the city block the view.

Liz cuts through narrow streets, made even narrower by cars parallel parked on either side, so tight that sometimes we have to pull over and wait for an oncoming car to pass. What were once probably large stone houses are now flats split in half, separated by hedgerows and squares of grass barely big enough for a birdbath, let alone some lawn chairs and a swimming pool like the neighborhoods in Sarasota.

As Liz turns one last corner, she announces “Here we are,” and slows to a stop in front of a block of stone flats with large windows.

I take my suitcase out of the trunk and I follow her through the gate to the door. She fiddles with her ring of keys and stops.

“See all these flats?” she says, wagging her finger. “They all have shared stairwells, but I’ve got a main door.” She puffs up her chest proudly.

“Cool.”

She presses her shoulder into the door, grunting against the weight until it opens. We step into an entryway with a leopard print welcome mat and a rusty

umbrella stand with one black umbrella inside it, the wooden handle poking out like a hook. Through the translucent glass of the next door, I can see the outline of something moving.

Liz pulls the door open and a fluffy white cat trots out. “Hello bebe,” she says to it while it weaves in and out of her legs.

I had forgotten about the cat. Liz spoke about Hamish in her emails in a way that made me first think she was referring to a boyfriend, not a pet. When we spoke on the phone to plan my stay, the first thing she said was, “You’re not allergic to cats, are you? Hamish sheds a lot. There will be hair everywhere. If you’re allergic, then I don’t—” “I’m not,” I said. “Okay then,” she responded, which I thought was a weird response. Not “Good!” or “Phew!” just “Okay then.”

The door into Liz’s flat opens to a long hallway with pink painted walls and ivy crown molding. There’s artwork dotted along the wall.

“That’s an original Paton,” Liz says, nodding to one of the pieces. It’s of a furry creature sitting on a toadstool in the grass while, underneath, a snail attacks miniature, naked humans. It’s terrifying. I look away from it quickly and follow Liz into the bedroom beside it.

“Hope this suits,” she says, smoothing out the duvet. “I just had everything cleaned and dusted.

I thank her and look around the room to check the artwork, but thankfully the pieces are all landscape.

“There aren’t any originals in here,” she says. “I rarely use this room. Didn’t want to waste the space.”

“How long have you lived here?” I ask, peering out the window onto the street. Car tires hiss as they pass through a puddle.

“Oh, many years. Your father slept in this bed. The mattress has changed, of course. I keep my flat in good condition.”

I spin around and look at the bed like I’ve only just noticed it. “But this was his room?”

“Aye, before he moved in with your mother.”

I want to ask more but she clasps her hands together.

“I'll let you rest. Bathroom is just this door on the right, kitchen at the end of the hall. Well, you’ll see it when you see it.”

She turns to leave and I say, "I'm not tired anymore." When she turns back around, I widen my eyes to prove it. “But I could use a shower.” I want to wash the America off me.

“I suppose,” she pauses, picking up the cat, “we could go for a wee wander. Just tell me when you’re ready.”

The cat wriggles itself out of Liz's arms and lands on the ground with a thud.

. . .

In Florida, I’m used to averting my eyes from my reflection because the bathroom mirror is just a square barely wider than my shoulders. If I want to see my belly, I have to stand on my tiptoes. But the mirror in Liz’s bathroom takes up an entire wall. I can see everything from the top of my head to my knees. The sight makes me cringe—protruding purple veins like a nurse’s dream snake down my arms and my ribs stick out more than my A-cup breasts.

One night, I overheard Mark, my step-father, whisper to my mother “She’s not eating. She’s depressed!” I was in fourth grade and we had just moved in with Mark. My mother was pregnant with their first child. “She’s not *depressed*,” my mother said. “She’s got a fast metabolism. End of discussion.” She was right. Even now, it doesn’t matter how much shit I eat, I can’t gain weight. When I got to high school, the girls were convinced I was bulimic but the boys I hooked up with didn’t care.

The memory reminds me to call my mother.

“Finally,” she says hoarsely when she answers. “I barely slept last night thinking of you.”

I apologize and explain that I needed a shower. She asks me how it’s going with Liz.

“Fine,” I say.

My mother makes a disbelieving “humph”.

The whole situation with Liz has been strange. On my thirteenth birthday, my mother reluctantly handed me an envelope with an airmail stamp. Inside

was a giant card with a painting of a Scottie dog and a blue five pound note fell out when I opened it. “Happy birthday from your home, Edinburgh. You are always welcome here. I hope to meet you soon in person one day. Love, your aunt Liz”, it read. “Without any contact for thirteen years, why now?” my mother asked. But I was too excited by the invitation to care.

My mother wouldn’t let me travel that far by myself until I was older. “I’ll study abroad there like you did,” I said. “Yeah, maybe…” my mother said, bending the corner of the envelope in her hand. I could tell she wanted me to forget that idea, but I never did. Instead, I obsessed over it.

“Don’t be like that…” I say to her now.

“I’m not being like anything. Glad you’re safe and settled in.” Her voice gets softer, “I better go before I wake up Mark. Love you.”

“Love you. Night.” I hang up.

My head begins to ache as a line of pressure trails from my forehead along the right side of my eye. I put on clothes and wrap my wet hair in a bun, pulling my hair so tight that it makes my head ache even more. I normally smoke weed when this happens. I can’t remember the last time that wasn’t an option, but I’ll have to settle for two Advil instead.

Liz sits on a white leather sofa in the living room down the hall, poking at an iPad screen with her reading glasses at the tip of her nose. When I walk in, she starts, looking up at me with her hand on her chest.

“You are quiet!” she breathes.

I mutter an apology.

“Be very careful in here.” She waves her finger around the room. “I spilled a 200-pound bottle of Bordeaux last month and had to get the carpets cleaned and the whole sofa reupholstered!"

"That sucks," I say, but she ignores it and points to a porcelain statue of a cheetah sitting on its own marble stool by the fireplace.

“That’s from India.”

“Have you been?” I ask.

She snorts through her nose. “Oh goodness no! I got it at an auction.”

My eyes move to the bookshelves framing the window. The books have torn and weathered spines. Some look like photo albums. I want to investigate but something tells me that Liz has a rule about everything, so I won't overstep my boundaries yet.

As if Liz thinks I'm being too curious, she stands up and announces it's time to go. Once we're outside, my skin instantly prickles with goosebumps from the bitter wind.

"You aren't in Kansas anymore," Liz quips as I hug my arms to keep warm.

"Florida," I say.

"I know," she flicks her hand. "I was quoting the movie. It was a joke. You get it? I know you aren't from Kansas."

"Oh… I didn't expect Oz to be so cold."

"Oz?"

"Yeah. The land of Oz."

"Hm. Funny," she says absentmindedly and picks up her pace so she's two steps ahead of me.

The area of Edinburgh that Liz lives in is called Bruntsfield and it's really just a street of coffee shops, gift shops, and hair salons. I wonder how anyone could pick one from the other, but certainly Liz has her favorites because she has something to say about everything we pass.

"Overpriced, slow service, and all the men have earrings and tattoos," she says, gesturing to the upcoming coffee shop.

She looks back at me to check that I'm listening, so I nod, and then we continue down the street, past a church with a spire. In between the buildings, I can see the Edinburgh Castle in the distance sitting high above on Castle Rock.

With just the change of a street name, Liz and I are now in a different area of Edinburgh called Tollcross. The streets are dirtier and busier than Bruntsfield. Discarded trash collects by the sewer grates in the road and a plastic shopping bag floats in the air, spinning and changing direction with each passing car. We cross a small street, pass a theatre, and then Liz stops in front of a dark alleyway. She nods to it.

“There it is,” she says, beaming. “The Green Lady!”

Inside the alley is a wooden door with a sign above it of woman on the bank of a lake, caressing her white hair that’s so long it runs all the way down her green dress and dips into the water.

“A pub?” I ask.

Liz gasps. “Your mum didn’t tell you about the Green Lady?”

“She doesn’t tell me anything. Why? Is it famous?”

“This is where your folks met!”

Here? I hold my breath. My parents met *here*? I start walking into the alley, but Liz pulls me back by my shirt.

“Won’t be open yet,” she says, despite the yellow glow I can see through the frosted glass. “But, perhaps we can go tonight?”

I nod my head eagerly. She presses her lips together and smiles.

The street sign on the stone wall reads “Nickie-Ben’s Close” in faded gold lettering.

“What’s a close?” I ask.

“This,” she motions to the alley. “You’ll learn your Scots words soon enough. Let’s go.” She ushers me away down the street.

The closer we get to the city center and Old Town, the more the festival seems to have swallowed the city whole. The streets are congested with people and there’s no order to where they walk, they just take up the entire sidewalk, ambling around with their noses in the maps held out in front of them. Liz has to take me by the sleeve multiple times and lead me onto the road just to cut past people. I look down to keep my balance on the wet cobblestones and each time my heel slips, I reach out for Liz in a panic.

“Madness!” Liz cries. “I forgot how claustrophobic Old Town is.” She fans herself with her hand, though her cheeks are barely flushed.

We’ve reached the Grassmarket. The buildings surrounding us are different heights, different shades of brick, with thin cylinder chimneys and white framed windows without shades. The square in the middle is covered with outdoor seating for all the pubs and restaurants along the perimeter—the Black Bull, Mama’s American Pizza, the White Hart Inn, The Last Drop, Maggie

Dickson's, the Smallest Pub in Scotland, Biddy Mulligans. It's barely midday and people are guzzling pints of beer like they've been at it for hours.

We are just below the castle now. From here, I can see the esplanade where the stadium's been set up for the Military Tattoo. Liz thinks it looks tacky.

"Can we go up the Royal Mile?" I ask.

"It'll be too crowded," Liz says. "Besides, I'm famished. How about some lunch and then we go back?"

I'm suddenly starving at the mention of food, so I agree to her proposal and we find a restaurant hidden away from the main street. A man sits outside the entrance wrapped in a jacket, slouched over a paper cup in front of him. His face looks dirty and his beard is wiry and unkempt in patches along his cheeks.

"Spare change please," he mutters.

I've seen homeless people before, on the odd occasion that I'd go into town, but it wasn't often and I was never really close to one. I could practically smell the musk coming off this man.

"Just ignore him," says Liz. "Always, always ignore." She puts her hand on my back and guides me into the restaurant.

After the waiter takes our orders, Liz folds her hands together, resting her chin on top, and clears her throat. "So, let's talk about your plan."

"My plan?" I pick up my water and take a sip.

"With you. Staying here."

"I'm here for school, what do you mean?" The question irritates me.

"*University*," she corrects. "We don't say '*school'*. We say '*university'*." She squints at me. "When do lectures start?"

"End of September."

"You'll be bored long before then."

"I doubt that."

She smiles to herself. "I thought the same when I moved here. I went to school with five other kids and after I left, I moved here. I thought it'd be *glamorous*." She sways side to side and bats her eyelashes for effect. "With dances and the theatre, and the cinema… festivals every weekend…" she

laughs. “I was homesick after three days.” She holds her fingers in the air, “*Three*.”

“But you didn’t go back home?”

She fixates on her drink. “There was nothing there for me,” she says.

“But what about my father?”

“It didn’t take much convincing for him to move here too, when he was old enough.”

“How old?”

“I think seventeen. Or eighteen. No, seventeen. Now I remember… I had to sneak him into pubs because he looked even younger than he was. Like you. You don’t look a day older than sixteen.”

“Do I look a lot like him?”

“Finally,” Liz sing-songs, distracted by the waiter coming over with our food.

The immediate avoidance of my question reminds me of my mother, who constantly brushed anything I asked about my father under the rug. She made it clear that she regretted ever meeting him, and made me feel stupid asking questions, as if my father was so unimportant that I was wasting time even thinking about him.

I thought Liz could give me those answers but now I just feel stupid again.

“So,” she says, mid-chew. I put my fork down and give her my full attention. “Moral of this story is that I got a job. And that’s what I think you should do, too.”

I’m taken aback. “A job? I won’t have time for a job once schoo—university starts.”

“You’ll have plenty of time,” she says. “Besides, I won’t be giving you any allowance. In fact, I’ve half a mind to charge you a small renting fee.”

“You’re serious?” I ask. The only summer job I ever had was babysitting my half-siblings, driving them to day camp or the beach, making sure they were kept busy so I could get high with whatever guy I was hooking up with at the time.

“Not a lot. Maybe fifty quid a week? For cleaning and food.”

“I can buy my own food,” I say.

She laughs. “Will you mop the floors and wash the sheets too?”

My jaw drops.

“For god’s sake, use a napkin!”

My cheeks are burning. She’s serious, and what choice do I have? She’s letting me stay at her flat and fifty a week is a lot less than I’d have to pay if I rented my own place here.

I put down my fork.

“You’re finished?” Liz asks, motioning to the leftover food on my plate.

“I’m not that hungry,” I say.

“You don’t have an issue I should know about, do you?”

“Issue?”

With her hand, she draws from her neck up to her mouth and makes a coughing motion, sticking her tongue out. As if she’s implying that I throw up my food.

“I have a fast metabolism,” I say sharply.

Her eyebrows raise up, and she mutters under her breath loud enough so I can hear, “Perhaps I’ve struck a chord…”

We spend the rest of lunch in silence. Liz seems very pleased with herself, almost humming as she finishes her food and picks off the rest of my plate without asking.

I consider calling my mother when we get back to the flat to complain, but I stop myself when I realize my mother will probably be thrilled at the idea of something to keep me distracted.

Chapter 2.

The cat is sat on my chest when I open my eyes. I sit up in a daze, forcing it to leap off me and run out the open door. I'm in a bed in a room I don't recognize. For a minute, I think I'm in a dream, but as I hear footsteps creak along the floor outside, my memory comes back to me.

Liz pokes her head in. "Did you sleep?" she asks, her glasses on the bridge of her nose.

"What time is it?" I ask. Liz thought a nap would help but I feel worse than I had before. My skin is crawling.

"Half seven." She frowns. "Can you manage that drink tonight?"

"Yes!"

"Good!" she says while at the same time clapping her hands together.

The sun has set but it's still bright out when we walk to the pub. Music reverberates from the tents in the Meadows, all lit up with string-lights. The cheers of the crowd sound like a war cry.

"It's probably acrobatics," says Liz.

Past the Meadows, in the distance on the right are two large hills. I'm familiar with Arthur's Seat, the one with two humps, but I'm surprised by the size of the Salisbury Crags beside it. The flat rock curving to the right of Arthur's Seat is just as large in size, but it's always cropped out of photos online as if it's not as important.

"Have you been up there?" I ask, stopping to point at it.

"No," Liz says quickly. She looks toward the Crags while tugging at a few strands of her hair. "No, it's just a tourist attraction. Not exciting. Not worth the walk. Come on."

I feel like I've offended her somehow, so I keep my mouth shut and follow.

Just before the close is a gaunt man leaned up against the side of a building. He's hunched forward, looking down at his fingers tangled together. When we walk past, he jumps as if he hadn't heard our footsteps, and looks at us with blood-shot eyes. He untangles his fingers and reaches out to us. There are scabs up his arms and blood dripping from his fingernails.

"Change for a hostel?" he mutters.

“No, not interested,” Liz says to him. She puts her hand up as if to ward him off, then we turn our backs to him and keep walking.

“*Please, for fucks sake!*” the man cries.

“He’s putting on a show,” Liz warns. “The jakeys are worse than the homeless. They’ll follow you down the street begging for money if you give them a second of attention—and they’ll just spend it all on drugs.”

I hear a bang and turn to see the jakey kicking the trashcan while his fingers claw at his neck. I wonder what kind of drugs he’s after.

Liz urges me away, towards the pub, and when she pulls open the door, the stench of beer hits me hard in the face. The lights are dim, floorboards splintered, and hung on the walls are antique clocks and painted portraits of men in kilts holding bagpipes, and on horseback, and hounds out for the hunt. Amber and clear liquor bottles glisten against back lighting on the shelves behind the bar. There are tartan benches paired with small tables, and larger, circular tables take up the rest of the space with groups of middle-aged men, each with a half-full pint in their hands. They all look like clones of each other.

Why would my mother ever step foot in a place like this? Even if she’s changed in the last twenty years, I can’t imagine her choosing this pub.

At the sound of the door shutting, everyone turns in their seat to look at us. I stop dead and consider turning back, but Liz waves at the table closest to us, “Hallo!”

“Hallo, Lizzie. You awright?” one says.

So, people know her here.

A slender man, balancing a tray of dirty glasses on his palm, weaves through the tables to come give Liz a kiss on the cheek.

“Oi.” He gestures to me. “Who’s this?”

“My niece. From *America*,” Liz says in a way of showing off.

He takes off his cap, displaying his greasy head to me. “You’re a bonnie lass.”

I smile politely.

He smooths his hair against the back of his neck and puts the cap back on. “Go get a drink. It’s on the house.”

“Och! I can manage the bill myself, thank you!” Liz exclaims.

The man throws up his arms. “I ken you can! I was jus’ being friendly.”

“Well that’s new of you.” She lets out a fake laugh and then turns me towards the bar.

“That’s Keith,” she whispers in my ear. “He’s the owner. *And* a boozer.”

We take the two empty stools at the right end of the bar. I pull the passport out of my pocket and clap it against the bar top.

“Just a sec!” the bartender says as he puts a third pint of beer onto a tray.

He’s cute, blonde, and looks about my age. I eye him as he carries the tray to a group of suited men at a round table. The table bellows with laughter at one obese man who’s waving his arms back and forth like he’s reenacting a story.

“Bampot,” Liz tuts, gesturing to him.

“Who’s that?” I ask.

“He’s bloody useless, is who he is. Just *look* at him.”

The man tries to push back his seat to stand and his thighs get stuck underneath the table. As he struggles to release himself, I look away.

“He’s a member of the Scottish Parliament. An MSP,” explains Liz. “But do you think he earned the title on his own merit?” she gives me a sidelong look to show she isn’t convinced. “All he does is drink, drink, drink. This isn’t table service but he makes poor Lewis sweat and deliver the drinks to him. If I were him, I’d say, ‘Come get the drinks yourself you lazy, fat bastard’.”

The bartender rushes back to the bar and with an exasperated sigh, says to us, “What can I get you—Oh, Liz! Sorry, I didn’t realize it was you.” He leans forward and gives Liz a kiss, his stubble scraping against her cheek.

Everyone seems to know Liz here.

She’s is still fixated on the MSP. “You really shouldn’t treat him like that. Let him move his fat arse and get the drinks himself.”

The bartender blows out air through his lips. “It’s nae bother. That’s my cardio for the day, innit?” He looks at me and smiles at his own joke with crooked teeth. “Is this your niece?”

I'm startled by the question and give Liz a questioning look. How does he know who I am?

"Aye," Liz says.

He wipes his hand against his shirt before extending it to me. "Lewis."

"M," I say, taking his damp hand, and recite, "Not E-M, like it's short for Emma. Just M, like the letter."

Liz starts to say, "Short for Mo—"

"No!" I panic, reaching to cover her mouth. "It's not short for anything!"

She jerks away from my hand, aghast. "I didn't realize you had an aversion to the name your *father* gave you."

My mother was the first to call me M. She said she would've changed my name but it was part of my heritage. A Scottish name, despite its unusualness in the States. Actually, it's more than just unusual, it's unheard of. It's Embarrassing. Ugly. Therefore, the nickname stuck.

"I go by M," I say sternly.

Liz glares at me, but once Lewis asks for our order, she seems to have forgotten and asks for a glass of wine. I ask for a cider and he nods without requesting for proof of my age. Disappointed, I cover the passport with my hand and, discretely, put it back in my pocket.

My fingers graze a piece of foam poking out of the rip in the stool. I play with it, thinking about my father sitting here—flirting with my mother, pulling at the foam, like a nervous tick, underneath the counter where she couldn't see. She'd be transfixed by his charming accent. He'd order her a drink, and he'd order a scotch and let her try it, and he'd laugh at her American naivety.

"Don't call it scotch," my mother warned me, "or else you'll look like a stupid American tourist. They call it whisky." "Did you call it scotch?" I asked. She blushed. "Yes. But seriously, if they don't want you to call it that, then they should say so in the guidebook!" I'm sure it is in a guidebook, somewhere. "Did my father teach you all the right words?" I asked. "No," she said quickly. "You just pick up things when you've been somewhere long enough." My mother was meant to live in Edinburgh for only four months, but she met my father, got pregnant with me, and stayed in the city for almost two years.

When Lewis returns with our drinks, I abandon the foam. He puts in front of me a glass as tall as the length of my forearm filled to the brim with bubbly, orange liquid.

"Cheers." Liz touches her glass to mine and we both take a drink.

"How do you know everyone?" I ask her.

When she puts the glass back down, she clears her throat. "I used to work here. The place was in better condition back then, but Keith and Lewis do an okay job."

"Did my father work here, too?"

"Oh no. But he was always in when I was working. Sat right here at the bar," she slaps her palm on the bar top. "He followed me around like a puppy when he first moved to the city. But even after he found work, he was always here when he wasn't working."

I smile at the thought of him sitting in this seat. My foam prediction couldn't have been far off.

"So how did they meet?"

Liz puts her hand out as if to tell me to slow down, while at the same time, taking another sip of her wine. I turn in my seat to face her fully and wait for her to swallow with my hands tucked between my thighs.

"They used to do pub quizzes here on the weekdays…" she pauses and looks to the ceiling. "Why did they even stop that? I don't… Oh, was it when Keith took over? Maybe. Aye. That'll be it…" I pretend to wait patiently as she goes off on her own tangent, talking to herself, while inside I'm thinking *Get on with the story, woman!*

She finally takes notice of my unblinking stare and continues, "Anyway. One day your mum and her friends came in. They were Americans, so of course they were useless at the trivia. It was all questions about British politicians and the BBC, Oasis and Blur, you know. Things we know, but nothing you Americans would get on the telly over there. Then, all of the sudden, I see Robbie going over to them!" her eyes widen for effect. "He wasn't a very sociable man. He didn't have any friends—never had any steady girlfriends either—so I was shocked to see him go over and sit beside the girls."

“Then what happened?”

“They didn’t win.”

“No, I mean with my mother.”

“Oh.” Liz sniffs. “She was the ring-leader of the group. She asked him on a date. He must’ve been her first contact with an attractive Scotsman, so she jumped at the chance.”

“What do you mean?”

She gives me a knowing look. “It’s the accent Americans like. And the story they get to tell their friends when they get back home.”

“It was more than a hook-up,” I say, feeling the need to defend my mother’s intent.

“They fell in love,” she admits.

I bring the pint of cider to my lips to hide my smile.

The door to the pub opens and the liquor bottles shiver together on the shelves as the door slams closed again. Lewis gives a nod to whoever just walked in. It feels as though the pub goes quiet for a moment, a lull in conversation throughout the entire room, and then it picks up again. I’m tempted to turn around, but I continue drinking instead.

“What’s this orange pish?” asks a man’s voice beside me.

I start, causing cider to splash onto my chin, and quickly wipe it away before turning around. I’m matched by two big eyes, so black and glassy that I can see a perfect reflection of myself staring back.

“Och, there you are! You gave me a fright!” Liz exclaims, her hand touching her breast.

“Good,” the man says in a sinister tone. He reaches out his hand to me. “I’m Graeme. Not Gr*ah*am,” mimicking an American accent.

His eyes had been too distracting at first for me to notice how handsome he is. He’s clean-cut, pretty-boy handsome like a catalogue male model, with skin just a shade darker than the rest of the Scots in the room, and his jawline cuts smoothly across his face.

I gingerly take his hand, and it’s surprisingly warm from someone who was just outside. “M,” I say.

He lets go of me and rubs his chin. “Short for something?”

“What?”

“Your name. It must be short for something. You dinnae want us to ken, eh? I bet I can guess.”

“You won’t.”

His lips form into a thin smile at the challenge, then he snaps his fingers out to Lewis. “Gie us a dram.”

Lewis nods his head obediently with a sort of rigidness he didn’t have before.

Graeme takes the empty stool beside Liz and drags around so it’s between us and settles onto it with his legs open, knees bent on either side, posing like a frog.

“So you’re Robbie’s daughter,” he says.

Liz clears her throat and I give her a look—*Does everyone know who I am?*

“You knew him?” I ask, but I realize the stupidity of it. Like Lewis, Graeme doesn’t look much older than I am.

“Just from stories,” he explains.

Why does Liz know so many young men? Thought of her as a cougar is too gross to think about for more than a second.

Lewis puts three glasses and a bottle of Oban in front of us.

“Whisky,” I say before anyone can question my lack of knowledge.

“Good girl,” Graeme says. “Lizzie’s been teaching you well.”

“I didn’t teach her that,” Liz says quickly.

“What other words have you learned?” Lewis asks as he pours our drinks.

“Crisps,” I say, and they laugh. “University, not school. ‘Ken’ means know, dinnae ken means ‘I don’t know’…” I turn to Liz. “But you don’t say those words.”

“That’s because she’s posh, now,” says Graeme. Liz tuts at him and rolls her eyes.

“Dinnae worry,” Lewis says, “We’ll teach you the proper scots.”

“Here’s one,” Graeme clears his throat and gestures to the ceiling, “It’s a braw bricht moonlicht nicht the nicht!”

Liz slaps him on the arm and giggles like a little girl with a crush, “Oh, Graeme!”

“Try it,” he urges me, wriggling his eyebrows. “It’s a braw bricht moonlicht…”

As I attempt to recite it, my teeth champ together and spit flies from my lips. Liz and Lewis look amused, so I must be butchering it, but Graeme urges me to finish with a circular motion of his hand and, with the last bit of spit, he gives me an applause.

“Naebody says that,” Lewis says. “He’s playing with yeh.”

“But she did it,” Graeme says. “She did it well.”

He picks up his glass, “Slan ja-va!” and clinks his glass against mine. “Don’t drink it yet!” he says just as I’m about to touch it to my lips. He holds his glass up to the light and swirls it. “Single malt. Fourteen years old.” He sticks his nose in it and sniffs. “Mmm.”

I put my nose in my glass and the fumes sting my eyes. I shut my eyes as I take a sip and the liquid ignites the roof of my mouth like a lit match. The taste is worse than vodka. My tongue sticks out and I make an involuntary sound, “*Uck!*”

All three of them laugh at me. My face is burning now, from the taste and the embarrassment of their laughter ringing in my ears. I take another sip and try not to make a face but I can’t help keep my eyes from watering.

“You’re no a true Scot if you dinnae like whisky!” Graeme says in a dramatic accent.

Lewis nods in agreement, “You’ll get used to it.”

“I never did,” says Liz. She places her hand awkwardly on my wrist and smiles. “I’ll let you chat with the younger folk…” She gets up off the stool with her glass of wine and walks away to another table.

When she’s out of earshot, I lean in towards the men and lower my voice. “Do you guys smoke?” I ask.

In response, Lewis pulls a bag of loose tobacco out of his pocket.

“I meant weed.”

Graeme snorts through his nose. “Do we look like a bunch ‘o neds?”

I don’t question what I assume is an insulting slang word, and shake my head no. Graeme points at Lewis. “Lew will gie you some, won’t you, Lew?”

Lewis nods his head. “Aye. I’ll gie you some ganj, nae problem.”

I open my mouth to thank him but Graeme’s hand slaps my back so hard that I can’t get words out. “You jus’ come to us if you need anything, awright? We’ll sort you out,” he says.

He taps two fingers against the bar top for Lewis to pour him another glass.

“So Liz says this is your first time here?” Lewis asks.

“Technically my second.”

“She was born here,” Graeme says.

I raise my eyebrow at him, but Lewis interrupts, “And you’ve only just come back?”

“Well, my mom thought I was too young to come over on my own before,” I roll my eyes.

“Why didn’t she just come over with you?” He shakes his head and holds up his hand. “Sorry, I’m being nosy.”

I shrug at Lewis. “It’s fine. I don’t mind you asking.”

Graeme adds, “It’s a fair question, I think.” He turns to me and puts his fist under his chin. “Did your mother not want to come back to *bonnie Sco’land*?”

“She has bad memories here…”

“How come?”

I’ve walked myself into a corner, but what have I got to hide? What does it matter?

“My father died here,” I answer, looking down at my hands so I don’t have to watch the men pity me.

“Oh,” Lewis says.

“Tragic,” Graeme says, his tone flat. “How did he die, again?”

What a bold thing to ask. I look up, straight into Graeme’s eyes and without realizing it, I’m answering his question. “Car accident.”

There’s a slight flicker of interest in his eyes, but it quickly dims away.

Lewis excuses himself to tend to customers and Graeme and I continue our staring contest. When he breaks first, there's a cooling feeling of relief that comes over me, as if I've been released from a trance.

He leans his elbow on the bar top, rests his cheek on his fist, and looks sleepily at me.

"What?" I ask.

He leans forward and breathes into my ear, "*Morag.*"

I try to keep my composure as my body tenses.

"Liz told you," I say. I roll my eyes in an attempt to seem like I don't really care that he knows.

"No," he says. "It was a lucky guess." His eyes flick away from me and he takes another sip of his drink.

"Yeah right."

"It's a nice name." He rubs leftover whisky along his lips. "Very Scottish."

"No it's not a nice name. It's a fish's name." Maybe I wouldn't have minded so much if my name was Nessie, but I share the same name as the lesser known loch monster of Loch Morar, according to Google. My mother denies the connection.

"You should be proud of your Scottish ancestry."

"I am. Why the hell do you think I'm here?" I'm starting to get irritated by him and his fixed smirk.

"Where did you come from, Florence?" He bites his lip to pretend he's trying not to laugh.

"Florida."

"Oh, yes. The Sunshine State. But, are you sure that's where you come from?" He reaches out to brush his fingers across my cheek. "You don't look like you've seen sunshine before."

I shrug away from him. "I've just got that naturally pale Scottish skin."

He roars with laughter, slapping the table so hard that my glass hops and falls on its side, spilling whisky over the bar top.

I turn away in frustration just as a woman walks through the door. By the looks of her platinum blonde hair and skin-tight dress, I assume she accidently

stumbled into the wrong place, but as she struts across the room in her high heels, she waves at everyone like she's famous. They stop mid-conversation to greet her eagerly. The MSP pushes his chair out to stand, this time managing to slip his thighs out, but she brushes past him, barely acknowledging him.

When she reaches us at the bar, she folds her arms and tilts her head at me.

"Is this man bothering you, hun?" My eyes sting from the smell of her hair product. She turns to Graeme and pouts her lips at him, "Don't bother innocent strangers."

"She's no a stranger," says Graeme. "This is Liz Sanderson's wee niece."

"Oh. Right," she says, giving me a once-over. She places her hand on her chest and goes, "*I'm* Adele," in a tone as if she expects I've been waiting eagerly to meet her.

Lewis whistles to us. He's standing at the end of the bar with a rolled cigarette between his teeth. He motions to Graeme, who gets up and says, "Excuse us, hens."

Adele slaps his arm playfully. "I hate it when you call me that."

Graeme ignores her and walks away without giving me a second glance. For every step Graeme takes, Lewis takes two to keep up with him. They disappear out the door and I wish I could join them, but Liz has returned to the bar.

"Is your wee coffee shop hiring?" Liz asks Adele. She puts her hand firmly on my shoulder. "M's looking for a job."

I stiffen.

"Yes!" Adele exclaims, grabbing hold of my arms. "We're desperate! It's been heaving with tourists since the start of the month. I told Chris we wouldn't be prepared. I told him all summer but he was too cheap to hire more staff."

"Sorry—where is this?" I try to ask politely.

"Leaf Coffee, it's literally around the corner. Making coffees, wiping tables, flirting with cute customers." She winks. "It's easy."

It sounds easy enough.

“Come in tomorrow and I’ll introduce you to Chris. You’ll get the job for sure. Chris will do anything to please me.” She smacks her lips together to make a popping sound.

“Brilliant!” says Liz, clasping her hands together.

I try to smile but it turns into a yawn and Liz takes that as an excuse for us to leave.

“It’s the jetlag,” she explains.

Adele gives us both air kisses goodbye, urging me once more to come into the shop tomorrow morning.

When we walk outside into the alley, Graeme and Lewis are huddled in the corner of the close talking in low murmurs.

“Night boys,” Liz calls.

“Nice meeting you, M,” says Lewis, but Graeme doesn’t say anything.

Before we leave, I turn to look at them once more, but in the dark, all I see are the glowing tips of their cigarettes and distorted shadows against the wall.

The Devil Loves Scotland: Devil Influence in Scottish History and Literature, and *Nickie-Ben's Close*

Section I. The Devil Dwells in Scotland: Representation of the Devil in Scottish Oral Tradition and Literature

Medieval Belief

Henderson and Cowan's research in the text *Scottish Fairy Belief: A History*, suggests that most Scots living in the mid-15th century to the mid-18th century were certain that fairies existed:

> There is arguably as much evidence of one kind or another for the activities of the fairies from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth centuries as there is for the existence of either the Picts, the Britons, the Angles or the Scots during the first millennium of Scottish History. (8)

Henderson and Cowan consider that this long-standing belief is attributable to the unchanging way of medieval life, where "most people still lived on estates subject to the whim of the local laird in his big castle" (13). The belief that "certain landscapes facilitated fairy-spotting was widely held" (18). The Scottish landscape itself is rich with lore, with the likes of fairy glens, pools, and hills such as Schiehallion, "fairy hill of the Caledonians", in Perthshire. In the Borders, we find the settings of popular supernatural ballads such as Carterhaugh forest from "Tam Lin".

It's worth noting *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies,* written in the late 17th century and first published in the early 19th century, as an example of fairy belief coexisting with Christianity within Scotland, as the author, reverend Robert Kirk, was a minister of Aberfoyle, Scotland. In his essay, Kirk details findings and research of subterranean inhabitants and folk of fairyland. Andrew Lang notes in his comment to this essay:

> Thus all Fairydom was commonly looked on as under the same guilt as witchcraft. Yet Mr. Kirk of Aberfoyle, living among Celtic people, treats the land of faery as a mere fact in nature, a world with its own laws, which he investigates without fear of the Accuser of the Brethern. We may thus regard him…as an early student in folk-lore and in psychical research. (16)

With the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century came "revolutionary economic changes [engulfing] both rural and urban Scotland" (13) and concomitant changes in belief, though ancient superstitions are still observable today throughout the country. Horseshoes[1] are still hung on doors outside homes and gold and silver[2] are still gifted to newborn children.

In his book *The Gaelic Otherworld*, folklorist John Gregorson Campbell refers to the Scottish fairies as "the most intimately associated with men's daily life" (1) of all supernatural beings, though they are dark in nature and not servants to humans. Fairies are defined as:

> a race of beings, the counterparts of mankind in person, occupations and pleasures, but unsubstantial and unreal, ordinarily invisible, noiseless in their motions, and having their dwellings underground, in hills and green mounds of rock and earth. They are addicted to visiting the haunts of men, sometimes to give assistance, but more frequently to take away the benefit of their goods and labours, and sometimes even their persons… Their interference is never productive of good in the end, and may prove destructive. (1-2)

In his essay *The Devil and his Folk in Scottish Life and Literature,* Douglas Percy Bliss states that fairies interfere "in the affairs of mortal men more to tease than to destroy" (2). They steal human women and children, raid houses, and shapeshift in order to trick humans. Even the Elfin Queen herself is a trickster, using her beauty as a manipulation to trap the souls of men, as in the ballad "Thomas the Rhymer" in which she tricks Thomas of Ercildoune to enter Elfhame and keeps him there for seven years:

> He has gotten a coat of the even cloth
> And a pair of shune of velvet green,
> And till seven years were gane and past
> True Thomas on earth was never seen. (*Mainly Norfolk*)

[1] Cold iron is believed to ward off fairies.
[2] It was believed that one could buy the safety of a newborn's soul.

Traditional Scottish Border Ballads are dramatic depictions that typically involve themes of tragedy or romance, with intense violence, fatal consequences, and supernatural encounters where the Devil frequently makes an appearance. Campbell states that "[the Devil] is apt to appear to persons ready to abandon their integrity, and to haunt premises which are soon to be the scene of signal calamities" (160). Specific to Gaelic tradition, the Devil has a few titles such as "Am fear nach abair mi" ("the one whom I will not mention") and "An donas," ("the bad one") (160) and Gaelic exaggeration of the Devil's appearance goes so far as to describe him as being a he-goat, with a voice like the bleating of a goat.

The Devil comes from the supernatural world, also defined as the "otherworld". Sarah Dunnigan notes in her essay "*The Scottish Ballads*" that "although an imaginative fascination with the 'otherworld' is found in most popular and traditional literatures, it has frequently been categorized as a peculiarly distinctive feature of the Scottish ballad tradition" (29). In support of this, Gerard Carruthers' article "The Devil in Scotland" claims that "the Scottish ballads of the 14th-17th centuries provide plentiful material on the Devil" (1), citing "The Daemon Lover" as a prime example. This ballad tells the story of a woman's ex-lover who returns after seven years to ask for her hand. At first, the woman refuses to leave her husband and children but when her "ex" proves himself to be wealthy, she immediately changes her mind: "O fair ye weel my ain two babes / For I'll never see you again" ("The Daemon Lover" 1). After they set sail, the man reveals his cloven foot, a classic characteristic of the Devil. "O yon is the mountain of hell,' he cries, 'Where you and I will go" (1) and sinks her in the sea. Dunnigan states: "The ballad is powerful, not least because of the sudden and stark revelation of the Devil's identity and the way in which, in characteristic ballad style, beauty abruptly turns into horror, love into fear" (33). This ballad is a lesson of morality where the Devil disguised as the ex-lover is there to test the woman. Her avarice is quickly exposed and she is punished for it.

Due to the nature of the Border Ballad as – firstly – an orally transmitted tradition, the Ballads' origins are unknown, and they have no original single

author. As Dunnigan states: “Oral transmission, based on change and transformation, suggests a dynamic, constantly evolving kind of creativity” (7). It wasn’t until the 19th century that ballads were first collected, written down and published, in famous collections such the Child Ballads[3] and Sir Walter Scott’s *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*[4].

Protestant Reformation

Scots who believed in the supernatural lived in harmony with it, and fairies “provided a bridge between this world and the supernatural world” (Henderson and Cowan 120), but once the Scottish Reformation began and Scotland broke away from the Papacy in the 16th century these changes elicited a new-found fear of the supernatural:

> As the fear of witches increased, spreading like an epidemic across most of Europe, the fairies swiftly became so enmeshed with witchcraft that it is often difficult to distinguish them from Satan’s unholy regiments. (106)

When John Knox brought Calvinism to Scotland, God became much more accessible to the public, which was revolutionary. Instead of communicating through the church hierarchy and its doctrine, Scots could communicate directly to God, with Bibles, the Word of God, translated into the common language, and in their own home. While this might well sound desirable, Carl MacDougall states in *Writing Scotland*: “In theory, Knox and his followers wanted people to think for themselves, but they had a deep mistrust of imagination. It was the way of the Devil” (137). Theatre and non-religious literature were oppressed in Presbyterian Scotland, therefore supernatural tales such as the Border Ballads were no longer encouraged.

The Reformation foregrounded the relationship between the Devil and the essential evil in human nature because man’s easy access to God

[3] See Francis James Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vol. first edition published 1882-1898

[4] See Sir Walter Scott, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 2 vol. first edition published in 1802.

threatened easy access to the Devil as well. The Devil could be lurking around any corner: “The extreme, puritanically Calvinist outlook sees the world as a fallen, outcast place … a place where all human joy might be read as deceitful trick of the Devil” (Carruthers, “The Devil in Scotland”, 1). Michelle Brock’s research in “Internalizing the Demonic” finds that Scots, even into the early 18th century, still held a strong anxiety over the “Devil’s involvement in their internal lives” (24). She states:

> Reformed Protestant theologians . . . had long articulated the idea that all human beings, due to their innate depravity, were possessed by the Devil. The implantation and enactment of sin was, after all, Satan’s greatest weapon, and people had sinfulness in spades. (35)

People feared that the Devil would take over their bodies. In many accounts of odd behavior, such as shouting blasphemies or invading thoughts of hell, these actions were blamed on Devil’s work over which they had no control: “… demonic experiences, temptation and subversion became Satan’s greatest weapons” (27). For nearly two centuries—from the 16th to the 18th century—the Devil was feared to be everywhere.

James Hogg’s classic novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is a perfect example of Calvinist influence on the Scottish people during the 17th century. *Justified Sinner* is a framed narrative, consisting of the Editor’s objective account of events and the “sinner” Robert Wringhim’s memoir of the same events, from his highly subjective and unreliable point of view. Many of the characters within Robert’s memoir illustrate this Calvinist fear of the Devil with their claims that Robert is haunted by the Devil. We hear it first from Mr. Blanchard, Robert’s first victim: “Believe me, Mr. Robert, the less you associate with that illustrious stranger [Gil-Martin] the better, for it appears to me that your creed and his carries damnation on the very front of it” (102), and later, after Robert murders his brother, his servant, Samuel Scrape claims:

> They say the deil's often seen gaun sidie for sidie w' ye, whiles in ae shape, an' whiles in another. An' they say that he whiles takes your ain shape, or else enters into you, an then you turn a diel yoursel. (151)

Gradually, Robert breaks down as he feels his body is "possessed by a spirit over which it had no control" (141) and he begins to fear Gil-Martin as one would fear the Devil. Robert attempts to be rid of this evil being by running away but Gil-Martin continually haunts Robert, appearing wherever he goes. When he hides out at a printing press, the printers claim to have seen the Devil assisting with the printing. Even in a stable, Robert notes the erratic behavior of the animals "snorting and rearing as if they wished to break through the house" (174), a suggestion of diabolic presence, as it is commonly believed that animals have a special sense for ghosts and other things humans cannot sense, and that their behavior portends warning.

Robert's memoir and his descent into madness are not dissimilar to real "self-writings" (a term coined by Brock) by men and women believed to be possessed by the Devil in 17th century Scotland, as described in Michelle Brock's article "Experiencing Satan in Early Modern Scotland". Brock claims that the authors of these self-writings "presented their lives, and indeed their encounters with Satan, in a very self-conscious way, trying to fashion themselves as the deserving godly they hoped to be" (28). Similarly, in *Justified Sinner*, Robert Wringhim is convinced by Gil-Martin that he is doing right by God by murdering sinners: "When I saw and was convinced that here was an individual who was doing more detriment to the Church of Christ on earth than tens of thousands of such warriors were capable of doing, was it not my duty to cut him off, and save the elect?" (103).

The narrative of Mistress Rutherford from the early 1600's, quoted in Brock's essay, describes Rutherford's preoccupation with the Devil, believing him to haunt her in her dreams and in the form of her deceased grandfather, convincing her that she had committed unforgivable sins. The torment of guilt and fear encouraged Rutherford to consider suicide, though she eventually found peace through "the mercy of God, usually granted while listening to a sermon" (31). In *Justified Sinner*, Robert is equally tormented by Gil-Martin to

the point of suicide, with the hopes that his memoir will provide explanation: “When my flesh and my bones are decayed, and my soul has passed to its everlasting home, then shall the sons of men ponder on the events of my life” (89).

Enlightenment / Madness

From the later 18th century onwards, supernatural belief began to fade. In *The Prince of Darkness*, Jeffrey Russell states that: “The great change [in ideas that diverged sharply from traditional diabology] came not with the Reformation, but with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century” (167). The Enlightenment introduced the scientific method and developed concepts of reason, skepticism, and religious tolerance. This meant that blind religious faith was questioned and “eighteenth-century skeptics pointed to the Devil as an example of absurdity of Christian beliefs” (207). Russell notes how the beginnings of this skepticism provoked “intense psychological reaction against belief in the powers of evil” (168) once people began to question the reality of things they could not see. In time, particularly with the development of psychoanalysis in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, belief in the Devil was no longer seen as a sign of religious faith but as a result of mental illness.

In their “Histories of Asylums, Insanity and Psychiatry in Scotland”, Chris Philo and Jonathan Andrews relate how, during their research in the territory, they discovered traces of a “complex and variegated ‘folklore’ and ‘folk medicine’ around madness, its causes and treatments, arising in ‘the Gaelic areas’ and often connected to natural features such as Scottish lochs, springs and coastlines” (5). Philo and Andrews quote Emily Donoho’s 2012 thesis[5] and state that her research suggests “how in effect a pre-modern world drenched in ‘supernatural madness’ collided with the modern world of lunacy reform occasioned by the coming of the lunatic asylums to northern Scotland from the 1860s” (5).

[5] Donoho, Emily. *Appeasing the Saint in the Loch and the Physician in the Asylum: the Historical Geography of Insanity in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, from the Early Modern to Victorian Eras*, 2012, pp. PQDT - UK & Ireland.

There was, then, a drastic shift in Scotland from accepted folk belief towards perceived madness, as the country began to expand its treatment of the clinically insane. To detail some history of the insane specific to Edinburgh, we look to Allan Beveridge's brief overview of the social and clinical characteristics of the patients admitted to the Royal Edinburgh Asylum while Thomas Clouston was Physician-Superintendent, entitled "Madness in Victorian Edinburgh". His research finds that patients suffering from general paralysis[6] and alcoholic insanity made up a large proportion of those people admitted into the Royal Edinburgh Asylum in between 1873-1908. General paralysis included delusions of grandeur, and the most common type of delusion "was that of persecution followed by that of sin" ("Madness in Victorian Edinburgh Part II", 52). Persecuting the sinners is, of course, the Devil's assigned task, and Beveridge provides a fine example of Scottish supernatural fear in that period as follows:

> William J., a 27-year-old Assistant of Excise, believed his soul was lost, and paraphrasing the words of a song by Robert Burns, maintained "The Deil is really awa' with Exciseman". (52-3)

Thomas Clouston linked alcohol and general paralysis together, "seeing them as products of the vices of urban life, and leading to 'national degeneracy" ("Madness in Victorian Edinburgh, Part II" 139). At the end of Beveridge's study, Beveridge discusses this increase of insanity: Clouston "contended that society was becoming more intolerant of the mentally disturbed; its motto was 'save trouble and get rid of them'" ("Madness in Victorian Edinburgh, Part II" 149).

By observing the streets of Edinburgh today, specifically those nearest homeless shelters, one can see the clear connection between substance abuse and what might then have been termed insanity, but which is the cause and which is the affect is not easily distinguishable.

[6] First identified in the 18th century, "General paralysis" is an organic disease of numerous mental and motor symptoms including mental enfeeblement, delusions of grandeur, a defective articulation of words, and incoordination.

Scottish Literary Examples

The reception of Hogg's *Justified Sinner* is a great example of the development of Devil representation in Scotland. It's reception addresses the shift in belief referred to earlier, utilizing this shift in the novel's presentation of narrative time. Though Robert believes Gil-Martin to be the Devil in the 17th century, the memoir was supposedly found in the 18th century and, as the Editor puts it in his closing thoughts: "With the present generation [18th century], it will not go down that a man should be daily tempted by the Devil" (242).

Justified Sinner gained most of its popularity in the 20th century after French novelist Andre Gide encountered the novel in 1944, and wrote an introduction to a subsequent reissue in great admiration. In Suzanne Gilbert's essay "Hogg's Reception and Reputation", Gilbert quotes an excerpt from Gide's introduction to the 1947 edition:

> How [to] explain that a work so singular and so enlightening, so especially fitted to arouse passionate interest both in those who are attracted by religious and moral questions, and, for quite other reasons, in psychologists and artists, and above all in surrealists who are so particularly drawn by the demoniac in every shape – how [to] explain that such a work should have failed to become famous? (37)

This rediscovery came with a psychological interpretation. In Elaine Petrie's analysis of *Justified Sinner,* Petrie states that this new analysis suggests Robert's story to be "an amazingly accurate exploration of a distraught mind experiencing paranoia, schizophrenia, and eventually complete collapse" (Petrie 50). This reading rather frees Gil-Martin of any of the blame Robert lays upon him in his memoir: "… it is clear that Robert's mind is unstable and that he has both a morbid jealousy of [his brother] George and a perverted attitude towards women and sexuality" (Petrie 50). This interpretation suggests that Gil-Martin is entirely invented, and a further psychoanalysis might suggest that Robert created Gil-Martin out of his memory of his school rival, M'Gill: "the echo of M'Gill's name in Gil-Martin's suggests Robert's guilty conscience at

work" (19). With regard to the Editor's Narrative, the psychoanalytical interpretation encourages the reader to reconsider Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Calvert's accounts. It is probable that the women believed they saw the dead George Colwan as a result of "heated imaginations" (Hogg 65). Petrie agrees: "… it may be that each of the women has seen what she wanted to see" (27).

A further examination of Devil belief and madness in 21st century Scotland is to be found in James Robertson's 2006 novel *The Testament of Gideon Mack*. In an interview with Penguin Random House, James Robertson states that the structure of his novel—the framed structure—is "modeled" ("Reader's Guide" 1) on *Justified Sinner*. Robertson goes on to state that there are even "a few phrases lifted from Hogg that appear in [*Gideon Mack*]" as well as "references to the legends of Scottish folklore" (1). In *Gideon Mack* we find a clear indication of the secularization of Scottish society, as none of the other characters believe that Gideon has actually met the Devil, despite his miraculous reemergence after falling into the rapids of the Black Jaws, and subsequently disappearing for three days. Even Gideon's fellow minister, Lorna Sprott, is more willing to believe Gideon has gone mad than believe in the supernatural explanation: "He was a dear friend who went insane,' she said, 'and not all the prayers and care I could offer could do anything to prevent it" (*Gideon Mack* 365). Gideon is aware of the shift in belief away from the Devil and the unlikeliness of people believing his story, as he tells his reader:

> In the seventeenth century a minister who claimed to have seen and spoken with Satan in the flesh would have been not only believed but, assuming he had given a good account of himself, hailed a hero. In the twenty-first century such a minister is simply an embarrassment. I am not the face the Kirk wishes to show to the modern world. The most plausible way of dealing with me, then, is to find me insane. (36)

In a psychological interpretation, it can be argued that Gideon invents this story of friendship with the Devil to excuse himself from his deceit as a minister who is secretly atheist, thus echoing a guilty conscience at work similar to events in Robert Wringhim's memoir:

> The Devil in the Black Jaws mirrors Gideon's existential crisis and the perception that the world does not need the input from an evil transcendence, because the human capacity for evil is sufficient. (Petrie 162)

Gideon is able to get the answers he wants from the Devil—that God has been missing in action: "The fact is, I don't know where [God] is. I haven't seen him for a long time" (*Gideon Mack* 295). This gives Gideon the reassurance necessary to confess to the town without fear of consequence.

In the 21st century, the Devil's "metaphysical existence was dismissed" (Russell 216) and his role has shifted. He became no longer an actual being, but an archetype, "a symbol that could float free of its traditional meanings" (216).

Belief in the Devil in Scotland may have changed, but the figure himself—this archetype—lives on within Scottish fiction. As Carruthers claims: "Diabolic cover for fanaticism and for avoidance of human rather than supernatural evil have been a strong, valuable and enduring part of the story of Scottish literature" ("Devil in Scotland" 6-7).

The long history of the Devil in Scotland continues to allow Scottish writers to introduce a new perspective, or play with the moments in time when the Devil was welcomed, feared, or indeed psychoanalyzed.

Section II. A Fey in Peckham: Spark's Reimagined Border Ballad

In his essay, *"Fully to Savour Her Position": Muriel Spark and Scottish Identity*, Gerard Carruthers argues that most criticism of Muriel Spark's second novel *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* misses the obvious influence of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*: "It was long an oversight in Spark criticism that the influence, generally, of Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* did not register" (493). Carruthers goes on in his essay to state how interesting it would be to know when Spark "became interested in Hogg" (493), and though we do not know the answer to this, we do know that both writers are connected by the supernatural Border Ballad influence in their work.

During a 2004 interview with James Brooker, Spark explains the crucial influence of Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*:

> The Border Ballads have this feature that they are not like the poems or the stories of any other English literature. They are both lyrical, tender, and savage. All in one verse. All in one piece. And this attracted me greatly and I have a touch of that in my own work, I hope. It was a great influence to me, The Border Ballads, from childhood onwards. (Brooker 1036)

Hogg was born and raised in the Ettrick valley, and his connection to the Border Ballads derives from exposure to stories through his grandfather, a well-known storyteller, and his mother, Margaret, who collected native ballads[7]. This "formed the groundwork of [Hogg's] intellectual being" (MacDougall *Writing Scotland,* 81) and therefore, no doubt, was a great influence in his literary career. In John Veitch's *History and Poetry of the Scottish Border*, he discusses belief in the fairy realm in the time of James Hogg: "no Scottish poet has dealt with the power and the realm of Fairy more

[7] Whilst Walter Scott prepared his ballad collection, Hogg's mother "gave' Scott some traditional ballads and songs" (Dunnigan 56).

vividly and impressively than the Bard of Ettrick[8]" (Veitch 105). Hence, it is possible that the influence of Hogg and the Border Ballads melded into one for Spark.

With *Peckham Rye*, Spark has created a reimagining of the Border Ballad form for the 20th century and onward. This chapter will extend existing scholarship on the connection between *Peckham Rye* and the Border Ballad by illustrating some specific formal, stylistic, and thematic ways in which Spark drew on the Border Ballads.

Although Carruthers finds the critics' "long oversight" to be largely the influence of *Justified Sinner* in *Peckham Rye*, I would contend that the more substantial oversight is the obvious influence of the Border Ballads in *Peckham Rye*. It is unlikely that a true traditional, authorless ballad could arise in the 20th century and onward, therefore Spark created a reimagining of the Border Ballad form with *Peckham Rye*.

Alan Bold supports the argument that *Peckham Rye* is indeed a re-imagining of the Border Ballad in his 1986 text, *Muriel Spark*:

> The ballad techniques can also be recast in prose by writers who plunge rapidly into the action, who use conversational contrasts to advance the narrative, and who habitually allude to other-worldly phenomena. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* develops these devices. (53)

However, with access to previous interviews with Dame Spark herself, we learn first-hand what has been influenced by the Border Ballad in *Peckham Rye*.

To explore this idea further, we look to Martin Stannard, who analyzes a 1960's radio interview between Muriel Spark and S.M. Craig in his essay "The Crooked Ghost: *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* and the idea of the 'lyrical'". It seems clear to Stannard that Craig was unsuccessful in learning Spark's

[8] James Hogg's nickname

intentions behind her second novel *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, though Spark admits to the influence of the word "Ballad" in the title:

> [MS:] the idea of the book occurred to me as a ballad. The environment of Peckham […] did strike me as containing all the elements of the ballads […] from the Border Ballads, folk ballads and the modern type of ballad. And I wanted it to be lyrical and at the same time a bit savage and a bit stark. (Stannard 1536)

Stannard afterwards points out that "Despite Craig's pressing, Spark never defines 'the elements of the ballads' that had influenced her" (1536). In this radio interview with S.M. Craig, Spark admits that, despite the conscious plan to write the novel "in the structure of a ballad" (1536), as she continued to write, she "forgot about that" (1536) shape – perhaps the intention of writing a novel in the structure of a short lyrical poem proved too challenging? Despite this, we can still see the influence of the Border Ballad throughout *Peckham Rye*, whether it was intentional or a more subconsciously driven act.

By analyzing the undefined elements of the Border Ballads, as well another types of Scottish ballads, in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, with regard to the lyrical style, structure, themes, and subtextual meaning, what follows here aims to show how *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* can be read as a re-imagining of the traditional Border Ballad.

Structure and Style

Dunnigan notes the mode of ballad narration as "dramatic, usually beginning at the heart of the story, without any elaborate 'prologue' or introduction" (Dunnigan 15). In *Peckham Rye*, Spark utilizes a framed structure in order to throw the reader straight into the conflict in Chapter One without explanation. The line: "It wouldn't have happened if Dougal Douglas hadn't come here,' a woman remarked" (1) provides the reader with no explanation and leads them to ask what Dougal Douglas did. In the 1997 interview with Stacey D'Erasmo, Spark explains her reasoning behind this: "I realized that suspense is best conveyed when you break it right away: tell the reader, perhaps on page three

or four, what is going to happen, and then they will want to know how or why it happened even more" (1).

Since *Peckham Rye* is a novel, and not a lyrical piece, we can only loosely compare its structure to the design of the Border Ballad. In *The Ballad and the Folk*[9], David Buchan claims that the framing structure of the ballad "grows organically out of the restrictive conditions of oral creation" (Buchan 95). By this, Buchan means to convey that due to the oral transmission of the ballad, the singer must store the ballad in his mind, and the framed structure helps keep him on track with the "interrelations of all the parts of the poem" (95). Buchan uses the example of this layered framing in the ballad "Lamkin"[10], where the beginning and ending frames (Stanzas 1-5 and 23-27) correspond with each other, with the nobleman of the house and the villain, Lamkin, while the three structures of the "central act" do not. The nobleman is absent from the "central act". The "central act" involves the events with Lamkin, who comes into the home of a nobleman while he's gone and kills his baby. Lamkin appears in each stanza frame while the other characters—baby, nurse—are kept in the central act. *Peckham Rye*'s structure is similar to that of "Lamkin" with the first and last chapter corresponding with each other as both chapters where Dougal is not present, but also chapters that, if put side-by-side, are in the same timeline—after Dougal's departure from Peckham Rye. While the middle chapters of Peckham Rye jump back in time from Dougal's arrival to his departure, providing evidence for what the narrator tells us in the first and last chapters. If we compare the chapters to stanzas in a ballad, Dougal is the constant character in each "stanza" of the middle chapters, while the townsfolk of Peckham are confined to snippets of the narrative. The main narrative follows Dougal's experience in Peckham from the moment he enters the suburb to the moment he leaves it, with a brief description of where he goes afterwards.

Other aspects of the Border Ballad's framed structure that relate to *Peckham Rye* are what Emily Lyle describes as the "embedded structure" and

[9] Although Buchan's research is related to North-east Scottish ballads, the ballad's structure will be the same in Border Ballads.
[10] Buchan 137

"incremental repetition" in her study of the Scottish Ballads. Lyle explains a common type of embedded structure as the pairing of question and answer with the example from "Fair Annie" (Lyle 17):

> But what will bake my bridal bread,
> Or brew my bridal ale?
> And wha will welcome my brisk bride,
> That I bring oer the dale?
>
> It's I will bake your bridal bread,
> And brew your bridal ale,
> And I will welcome your brisk bride,
> That you bring oer the dale. (Lyle 17)

Evidence of this question and answer, call and response pairing in *Peckham Rye* is found in the way some of the townsfolk deliver information. For example, Mavis Crewe details a back and forth conversation between her and Humphrey, her daughter's ex-fiancé:

> I said to Dixie, "Whoever can that be?" So I went to the door, and lo and behold there he was on the doorstep. He said, "Hallo, Mavis," he said. I said, "You just hop it, you." He said, "Can I see Dixie?" I said, 'You certainly can't,' I said. I said, 'You're a dirty swine. You remove yourself,' I said, 'and don't show your face again,' I said. He said, 'Come on, Mavis.' I said, 'Mrs Crewe to you,' and I shut the door in his face." (8)

Mavis's "he said/she said" question and answer mirroring not only works structurally like a ballad, but also stylistically. The lack of description allows the character to portray his or her emotions outright through the things they say and how they say it. Spark does not interject the narrator in the above quote, to allow Mavis to perform for the characters and reader, like a ballad singer performs their ballad.

Lyle uses the ballad "Sir Patrick Spens" as an example of "incremental repetition" (17) to explain that, despite slight differences in detail, the same

fundamental meaning comes through to the audience. The last verses of “Sir Patrick Spens” are as follows:

O lang, lang may the ladyes sit,
  Wi their fans into their hand,
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
  Come sailing to the strand.

And lang, lang may the maidens sit,
  Wi their goud kaims in their hair,
A’ waiting for their ain dear loves,
  For them they’ll see nae mair. (Lyle 18)

While these stanzas differ slightly in their words, the general emotion and meaning remains the same. In *Peckham Rye, “*incremental repetition” is suggested by Spark’s reiteration of Dougal’s study of the townsfolk’s morality with each scene. While scenes move from one character to the next, Dougal Douglas remains the constant, either physically present with the characters, or the topic of their discussion. With every scene, Dougal’s motivation is portrayed as the same – he’s there to research Peckham’s “moral character” (Spark, *Peckham Rye* 68).

Buchan identifies three synchronic structuring formulas of the ballads: “stanzaic”, “character”, and “narrative”. With regard to longer ballads, Buchan states that the three structures: “co-exist in a kind of structural counterpoint. In the longer stories they act as checks upon each other, preventing the complexity of any one part of the ballad from getting out of hand” (Buchan 88) and, I believe, by comparison, that *Peckham Rye* contains elements of all three formulas.

“Stanzaic” structure refers to the arrangement of "scenes of a unified group of stanzas” (88). We may consider the scenes in *Peckham Rye* as stanzas, with the way that each chapter contains multiple scenes that usually span no more than two pages. Andersen refers to this feature in traditional balladry as the notion of “leaping and lingering”, to “characterize the typical manner in which ballad narratives focus on single scenes abruptly heaped on top of each other” (59).

If we consider Spark's claim that her first intention was to write *Peckham Rye* in the structure of the ballad, *Peckham Rye*'s first chapter, as a standalone piece, embodies the structure and techniques of a ballad. The narrative events are as follows: The dialogue of Mavis shouting at Humphrey, post-wedding scandal, to leave her house, followed by the narrator explaining who Humphrey is: "He was that fellow that walked out on his wedding a few weeks ago" (5) – telling the reader this in a way that makes it seem as though they already know the story. In between descriptions of Humphrey heading to the saloon bar, the narrator gives us more wedding details. We get a short scene of Humphrey and Trevor fighting at the saloon, and the next scene jumps back in time to when Humphrey leaves the house, this time viewed from Dixie's perspective, discussing the incident with lots of dialogue and very little explanation. The next scene jumps forward again in time, to the townsfolk discussing all the events from the wedding to the fight outside the saloon, and the first chapter concludes with the narrator's explanation of the "legend" of the affair. We don't see this same leaping structure again until the last chapter, which in its turn shows how many layers there are to the framing in this novel—Chapters 1 and 10 frame the novel, but the novel contains a uniquely layered, framed structure within the internal chapters as well.

With regard to Buchan's second formula, "character", he notes how the framing structure is important for balancing the characters' roles within the ballad: "[The] tendency to balance the characters' appearances is not confined to adjacent scenes but is in fact found throughout the story" (Buchan 107). In the internal chapters of *Peckham Rye,* reoccurring characters rarely appear in adjacent scenes. The narrator will introduce a character in a few paragraphs, then move on to another character, and the reader might not hear from the former character for another chapter or two.

In *Commonplace and Creativity*, Flemming Gotthelf Andersen also points out how principal characters in Anglo-Scottish traditional balladry are frequently separated, "their only means of communication will typically be the employment of a go-between to carry the messages that are needed in the attempt to resolve the present conflict" (54). In *Peckham Rye*, Dougal Douglas

is the messenger collecting research into the “inner lives” (15) of Peckham, from different characters, one scene to the next.

The “narrative” formula that Buchan refers to notes that the narration of the ballad is unique to its singer: “By alternating speech and narration the oral maker ‘paces’ his poem; he is able to raise and lower the dramatic tension in his audience by varying the pitch” (Buchan 133). Spark’s pacing plays as the “pitch” of *Peckham Rye*, and its rapidity is a way of manipulating the emotions of the reader. The violence and immoral behavior in certain scenes tend to elicit amusement rather than horror or sympathy due to the pace of it, as when Druce murders Merle: “He came towards her with the corkscrew and stabbed it into her long neck nine times, and killed her. Then he took his hat and went home to his wife” (136). The previously emotional build-up of Merle as a kind friend to Dougal, who the reader might pity due to her affair, reaches this shocking climax, then immediately disappears. Merle is not mentioned again, save a passing comment from Dixie, and we only learn of Druce’s arrest through quick dialogue between Dougal and the police. What feeling the reader had for Merle and Druce is forgotten as Spark moves the narrative quickly along. Carruthers claims: “This death is at once horribly violent, after the manner of the ballads, and mockingly reductive given the suburban weapon of homicide” (“Fully to Savour” 495). The way in which Spark moves from violent death to casual return to domestic life is so ridiculous that it is humorous, and very much a Sparkian trait.

Another important part of ballad structure is the refrain, as Francis Barton Gummere notes in his text *The Popular Ballad*: “… [it] is incontestably sprung from singing of the people at dance, play, work, going back to that choral repetition which seems to have been the protoplasm of all poetry” (74). This echoes the necessity for the ballad to be short and repetitive so that the audience can sing along with those lines they are familiar with. Gummere uses the repetitive refrain in “Sheath and Knife” as an example:

> There is ships o' your father's sailing on the sea,
> *(The brume blooms bonnie and says it is fair,)*
> That will bring as good a sheath and a knife unto thee.

(And we'll never gang down to the brume onie mair.)

There is ships o' my father's sailing on the sea,
(The brume blooms bonnie and says it is fair,)
But sir a sheath and a knife they can never bring to me.
(Now we'll never gang down to the brume onie mair.) (84)

There are two types of repetition that perform as the "refrain" in *Peckham Rye*. One is the repetition of judgmental reactions by the general public. They behave similarly to the chorus or ensemble in a performance, for example when Humphrey calls off his wedding and "The guests in the pews rustled as if they were all women" (6); and later, while Dougal is dancing and putting on an act in the ballroom: "Everyone was talking or laughing. Those who were talking were all saying the same thing. They either said, 'Tell him to take more water in it,' or 'Shouldn't be allowed,' or 'He's all right. Leave him alone" (57). Similarly, in the first chapter when the townsfolk are discussing the scandal at the wedding, a random man in the pub breaks out into song in a ballad-style as if he's about to tell a story: "'There was I,' sang out an old man who was visible with his old wife on the corner bench over in the public bar, 'waiting at the church, waiting at the church'" (10). The people surrounding him tell him to stop, as they later do in the ballroom when Dougal Douglas begins to perform.

The other form of refrain in *Peckham Rye* is the repetition of specific words, such as "immoral" (28) and "ignorant" (41) when describing someone else in a passive-aggressive, judgmental undertone. For instance, Merle calls Druce's marriage "immoral" (28) and soon after, Dixie says Merle's affair is "immoral" (31), and two sentences later, Humphrey calls absenteeism "downright immoral" (31). There's also repetition with Dixie and her mother Mavis, as the two of them constantly correct each other's grammar: "'So I come home.' '*Came* home' Dixie said . . . 'He thinks he do, but it don't go far.' 'Does. Doesn't,' Dixie said." (35). Spark appears to use this type of repetition as evidence in support of Dougal's research of Peckham's moral character.

Dougal plays with repetition by repeating after his boss, Druce: "'Conserve energy and time in feeding the line.' 'In feeding the line!' Dougal said. 'In feeding the line,' Mr Druce said" (14). Druce is too dull-witted to

understand that Dougal is not praising him by repeating his words, on the contrary, he is mocking him. Dougal also mocks Dixie's grammatical corrections, and points out to his employer, Mr Willis, the frequency with which the townsfolk use the words "immoral" and "ignorant" (83) as his way to call out the pretension, immorality, and ingenuity of these materialistic townsfolk in suburban London.

After examining the structural similarities between *Peckham Rye* and Border Ballads, we now look at the similarities in style. Border Ballads were meant to be performed to music with short, rhythmic stanzas, therefore they are usually short pieces, easy to memorize and sing along to, with a "note of simplicity, the use of common words in common order" (Gummere 72). Carruthers argues that the dialogue in Chapter One of Spark's novel "mimics the incremental technique and predictable rhythms of the ballad" ("The Nouveau Frisson" 170). We see this technique and rhythm on the first page:

> 'Get away from here, you dirty swine,' she said.
> 'There's a dirty swine in every man,' he said.
> 'Showing your face round here again,' she said.
> 'Now, Mavis, now, Mavis,' he said. (Spark, *Peckham Rye* 1)

In Ruth Whittaker's text *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark*, she notes how Spark uses techniques of "precision and economy" and "occasionally employs an alternative style which, in comparison, is lyrical and extravagant" (137). Although the techniques Whittaker refers to sound so balladic, Whittaker never mentions the ballad style in this section[11], but focuses on the relationship Spark has with God as the influence behind her fiction.

The impersonality of the narration in Border Ballads is a stylistic element we see in the narration of *Peckham Rye*. As Dunnigan explains:

> There is no trace of the ballad maker's 'personality' or thoughts, nor does the singer impose any comment or judgement on its characters and events. Questions of feeling, whether emotional or moral, are entirely left

[11] Chapter 6 titled: "Structure and Style"

> to us, the audience; the ballad world itself refuses to be drawn on this account . . . Emphasis is placed on the dramatic situation itself ('the story'), on action and dialogue, and much less on other features, such as continuity of narrative or characterization, usually portrayed by a minimum of detail and descriptive setting. (16)

As Spark states that the main difference between *Peckham Rye* and her other novels is that: "I never once mentioned how people feel or think, just what they do and say, and this gives an extraordinary effect" (D'Erasmo 1), her narrative choice echoes the impersonal narration that Dunnigan describes in the Border Ballads.

Spark's narrative choices also echo the sense of immediacy elicited by the balladic structure and style. With regard to "The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry"[12] as example, Gummere states: "A great deal has been made of this leaping, springing movement of ballads, the omission of details, the ignoring of connective and explanatory facts, the seven-league stride over stretches of time and place" (90-1). In one version of this short ballad of only twelve verses, the silkie tells the maid that one day she will wed a gunner who will kill the silkie and their son. The climax of this ballad is immediate, as the very next verse leaps forward in time to when the maid weds a gunner and he shoots the silkie and her son. This ballad's style and structure leaves no room for the story to breathe or for the audience to anticipate how quickly the silkie's prophecy will come.

In comparison, *Peckham Rye's* prose itself flows with a kind of lyrical, quickened pace, rarely stopping for a moment on a scene to fully describe or explain it. In one scene, Dougal Douglas is talking to Humphrey Place in his room, but before we can learn Humphrey's answer to Dougal's question: "If [Dixie] took sick, how would you feel, would she repel you?" (27), the narrative moves onto the next scene, in a new setting where Dougal is taking Merle Coverdale on a walk to a cemetery, where another of Dougal's interrogations is soon to follow.

[12] "The Silkie of Sule Skerry." Scots Language Centre, https://www.scotslanguage.com/articles/node/id/418. Accessed 6 July 2019

However, Spark sometimes strays from this dramatic immediacy to impose her unique narrative voice, when the action slows and things are explained directly to the reader. For instance, Spark summarizes the habits of the townsfolk in Peckham Rye: “In the little shops in the Peckham by-streets, the other customers take a deep interest in what you are buying. They concern themselves lest you are cheated” (16), and again with regard to the girls in the ballroom:

> They had prepared themselves for this occasion with diligence, and as they spoke together, they did not smile much nor attend to each other’s words. As an accepted thing, any of the girls might break off in the middle of a sentence, should a young man approach her, and, turning to him, might give him her entire and smiling regard. (55)

Yet even with these slower, summarizing scenes, Spark still succeeds in the same manner as the singer of the ballad who, as James Porter writes in his essay “The Traditional Ballad: Requickened Text or Performative Genre”, “strives to obey the rule of impersonality of delivery, to maintain a strictly objective stance so that the plotted tale can unfold without the interposing of ‘personal interpretation’” (33).

Another key element to the ballad style is the emotion it evokes. In ballads, “it’s the language itself that has an inimitable magic” (Lyle 15) as the singer moves from the narrative to the lyric for the climax of the story. Though *Peckham Rye* is not an oral work, Spark relies on dialogue and quick responses from the characters for emotional reward. She manages to use the language—what is said, and sometimes also what is not said, ellipsis or silence—to evoke specific emotions.

Performance

One of the more obvious differences between the traditional Border Ballad form and *Peckham Rye* is the question of origin. The anonymity of the ballad’s origins allows singers to put their own personality into their performance. David Atkinson describes it as “a genre associated with performance” which is

"amenable to unlimited successive and evanescent renditions, and can quite readily vary between one and the next" (149). Thus, there is never only one version of a ballad, but multiples, with different verses, words, perhaps even different endings, and different tunes to go along with it depending on the creativity of the performer of the piece. It can be argued that Spark has created a version of a ballad with *Peckham Rye,* perhaps most similar to "The Daemon Lover", as suggested by certain critics such as Carruthers who claims that Dougal "is constructed from…Satan in the ballad 'The Daemon Lover" ("The 'Nouveau Frisson'" 170), and Norman Page, who notes the balladic nature of *Peckham Rye* is similar because said ballad "introduces scenes of death and often of violence and the supernatural" (28). However, Spark's twist in setting her ballad in a modern, secular setting, manages to achieve "a hybrid form, the contemporary English tendency toward domestic realism and the notion of the Scottish supernatural tradition" (Carruthers "Fully to Savour Her Position" 496).

To some critics, the loss of oral performance as the ballads became fixed in text and turned over to silent reading, loses the key connection between singer and audience. Porter claims "There is no question [again] that singing heightens the communicative act in relating a ballad story" (29). While this might be the case, in my view Spark still manages to successfully recreate a ballad of a kind for the silent reader**,** melding the ballad style with prose in a setting for modern times. Spark takes the supernatural ballad and relocates it in the secular 20th century setting, with reactions on the part of the characters who, realistically, refuse to believe in the existence of the Devil. As Norman Page states in his work on Muriel Spark, "Spark is less interested in 'pure' realism or 'pure' fantasy than in the intersection or blending of the two" (31).

Though we know that Spark is the originator of her novel, in contrast to the anonymous ballad composers, Stannard notes how during her interview with Craig "Spark sometimes speaks [of Peckham Rye] as though of a novel written by someone else" (1532). We see this in the aforementioned interview when Craig asks why Dougal is Scottish:

> But perhaps I was thinking of the Scottish Border Ballads and then I wanted an alien – a complete stranger to the environment coming in; and then, of course, in some ways I wanted a rational type. I can't claim that […he] is rational – but he's sometimes more rational than the people around him, I think, although he seems very odd. (1531-2)

This answer certainly reads almost as if Spark is analyzing a piece of work written by someone else, or that Dougal Douglas' character is somehow out of her control.

With this in mind, we can consider Alan Bold's suggestion that "Dougal could be the author of the novel in which he features, a storyteller within a story" (58), similar to the role of Caroline Rose in Spark's novel *The Comforters.* Dougal stands out in Peckham because of his appearance, his behavior, and language. He's a performer in all aspects, just as the singer performs the ballad. Veitch claims that: "There can be no doubt, [that] giving expression to emotion in song was common on the Border of Scotland in very early times" (Veitch 80) and Dougal performs public acts of emotion, such as by crying at work over his recent break-up and saying to Merle Coverdale: "My lonely heart is deluged by melancholy and it feels quite nice" (Spark "Peckham Rye" 27). Additionally, Dougal practically admits that he is a performer when he tells Humphrey of a dream he has:

> I see the Devil in the guise of a chap from Cambridge who does motion-study, and he's the choreographer. He sings a song that goes, 'We study in detail the movements requisite for any given task and we work out the simplest pattern of movement involving the least loss of energy and time.' . . . And of course this choreographer is a projection of me. I was at the University of Edinburgh myself, but in the dream I'm the Devil and Cambridge. (47)

Furthermore, Porter explains that balladic communication "is tied both to the aesthetic manipulation of the singer and the cultural receptivity of the audience" (33). Dougal's "aesthetic manipulation" in *Peckham Rye* receives contempt and discomfort from the townsfolk when he performs "perlocutionary act[s]", defined by J.L. Austin in his lectures "How To Do Things With Words"

as “what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (2). We see Dougal mislead the townsfolk into believing him to be a mythical entity with throwaway lines such as “not without my broomstick” (Spark, *Peckham Rye,* 86) and bringing attention to the cysts on his head, claiming he used to have horns:

> “You supposed to be the Devil, then?” Humphrey asked.
> “No, oh, no, I’m only supposed to be one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls.” (75)

Austin argues that the response achieved by perlocutionary acts can be additionally achieved through intimidation: “It is characteristic of perlocutionary acts that the response achieved, or the sequel, can be achieved additionally or entirely by non-locutionary means: thus intimidation may be achieved by waving a stick or pointing a gun” (5). Spark’s narrative suggests that Dougal’s actions, along with his speech, intimidate the townsfolk. We see this when Dougal performs the Highland Fling in the ballroom and the manager comes after him and asks him for “no more, please” (Spark, *Peckham Rye,* 56). Dougal continues to dance, this time performing mimes with the lid of a dust-bin:

> [Dougal] placed the lid upside down on the floor, sat cross-legged inside it, and was a man in a rocking boat rowing for his life . . . he performed a Zulu dance with the lid for a shield . . . He sprang up and with the lid on his head was a Chinese coolie eating melancholy rice. He was an ardent cyclist, crouched over handlebars and pedaling uphill with the lid between his knees. He was an old woman with an umbrella; he stood on the upturned edges of the lid and speared fish from his rocking canoe. (57)

The 1960’s London townsfolk are uncomfortable with any kind of performance outside of a “cultivated jive, cha-cha, and variants” (56). In response, Dougal gets kicked out of the ballroom.

Elsewhere, Dougal uses physical performance to mock the townsfolk. He derides Humphrey for sneaking Dixie into his room for sex by imitating the

noises he heard at night: “Dougal bent his knees apart, then sprang up in the air. He repeated this several times. ‘Creak-oop,’ he said” (46). He enacts a similar motion while mocking Druce’s potential sexual satisfaction from riding the jerky lifts at the West End: “Dougal sprang into the air” (31). Dougal also teases Meadows, Meade, & Grindley’s Personnel Manager, Mr Weedin for believing him to be a “diabolical agent, if not in fact the Devil” (80) by offering him pills, dancing around the subject of work by talking of cemeteries, and asking if Weedin would like him to comb his hair. Weedin subsequently has a mental breakdown in response.

Supernatural Theme

It is clear that of all ballad types, Spark is most obviously echoing and channeling the supernatural kind. In *Peckham Rye,* we find the elements which Alan Riach states, in his essay “Scottish Gothic Poetry”, animate the ballads: “Mysterious travels, mythical locations, grim portents, potent images and narrative tension that keeps resolution suspenseful” (78). Spark plays with the idea of Peckham as a mythical location by describing the scandal at Humphrey and Dixie’s wedding as a “legend” (Spark, *Peckham Rye,* 11), and in ending the novel with a suggestion of an otherworld: “The Rye for an instant looking like a cloud of green and gold, the people seeming to ride upon it, as you might say there was another world than this” (142). This otherworld could be a reference to Elfland, a setting in the popular ballad “Thomas the Rhymer”.

Additionally, colors in the Border Ballads are highly symbolic: “In myth and literature symbols serve as a kind of imaginative ‘shorthand” (Dunnigan 19), and green is a common symbol of nature, fertility, and the fairy world. Although Spark seems to be using this imagery as a metaphor, the phrase “as you might say” testifies to the modernity and realism of the novel, for Spark adds this phrase to imply to the reader that it’s just an idea of the supernatural and that there isn’t actually “another world than this”. Bold argues that this last line relates to the idea that humans in the urban, realistic setting sometimes look out for and dream of another world they can escape to. Bold also makes note of the use of the word “legend”, along with the quasi-mythical ending to

state that: “Spark appeals primarily to the emotion, rather than the intellect of the reader. Her prose ballad is an atmospheric work, showing an urban landscape under supernatural pressure” (Bold 58). In the conclusion of *Peckham Rye*, it’s implied that although Humphrey and Dixie have just begun an unhappy marriage, the nice, sunny day and the idea of another world gives Humphrey false hope.

The main supernatural element in *Peckham Rye* is the character of Dougal Douglas himself, as a symbol for the Devil. As a Scot with curly red hair, a hump, and an Arts degree from the University of Edinburgh, Dougal is an outsider in Peckham Rye. Carruthers suggests that Spark sends him “to traumatize metropolitan modernity with his very deliberated and very Scottish grotesqueness” (“Fully to Savour Her Position” 494). Dougal plays with his Scottishness, claiming to Druce that he’s “fey. [He’s] got Highland blood” (Spark, *Peckham Rye,* 66)—“fey” meaning he has supernatural powers of clairvoyance, or that perhaps he is a fairy from the Highland tradition. He brings up this clairvoyance to Merle when she questions how he knows about her secret affair with Druce: “I’ve got second sight” (28). Though the reader might assume Dougal is lying, the narrator does not provide any explanation as to how Dougal knows all of these secrets of the townsfolk. Her tactic of omitting thoughts and feelings from the narrative succeeds in creating mystery for the reader, and it forces them to create their own assumptions about Dougal’s sincerity, just as the townsfolk must do.

There are numerous instances in *Peckham Rye* where Dougal refers to himself as the Devil. He encourages Humphrey to feel his head, insinuating that the cysts there are humps remaining from the horns he got removed, relating to the popular idea of the Devil as a two-horned entity. Alan Bold notes that Dougal’s excuse that he won’t cross the river without his broomstick is similar to the witches in Robert Burns’ “Tam O’Shanter”, who “a running stream they darena cross” (Bliss 46).

If it is not obvious from these instances alone that Dougal is meant to be regarded as diabolic through his words and actions, Spark makes it pointedly obvious through the narrator’s descriptions of his shape-shifting, like James

Hogg's Gil-Martin: "Dougal changed his shape and became a professor" (Spark, *Peckham Rye,* 14) or, his aforementioned mimetic performance in the ballroom. Bliss describes the Scottish Devil as fond of dancing, drinking, piping, and flirting: "The Devil, as I have said, entered fully into the spirit of everything. He piped or he led the ring of dancers, and his 'officer' brought up the rear, 'skelping' those who were too slow" (Bliss 22). Dougal's performance in the ballroom, and the dream he relates to Humphrey, are in character with the Scottish Devil as Bliss describes him.

Dougal's diabolic purpose in Spark's ballad is to test the morality of the townsfolk in Peckham, much as the Devil in "The Daemon Lover" tests the ex-lover by seducing her with his wealth, or how the Queen of Elfland seduces True Thomas with a kiss. Each character interaction with Dougal comes with a morality test, which most of them fail.

Dixie is exposed for her "avarice" (27), Weedin has a mental breakdown, Merle's pride and adulterous affair leads to her murder, Humphrey's insincerity leads him to break off his wedding, Miss Frierne's selfishness leads to a stroke, and Dougal persuades townsfolk to skip work: "Is it coincidence, says [Weedin], that absenteeism has risen eight per cent since Mr Douglas came here and is still rising?" (72).

Ultimately for Druce, Dougal is the "grim portent" (Riach 78) come to punish him for his infidelity. Druce is convinced he's spying on him: "I've been greatly taken in by that Scotch fellow. He's in the pay of the police *and* of the board of Meadows Meade. He's been watching me for close on three months and putting in his reports" (134). This paranoia leads Druce to murder Merle, and to his subsequent arrest. These characters who fail the Dougal-Devil's test face a similar fate as those in the traditional supernatural ballad, such as True Thomas, who is kidnapped and taken to Elfland, and the ex-lover in "The Daemon Lover"*,* who is taken on the Devil's boat down to hell.

In further support of Dougal's role as the Devil, we might analyze *Peckham Rye* through Vladimir Propp's analysis of Russian fairytales in *Morphology of the Folktale*, in which he identifies thirty-one "Functions of

dramatis personae"[13] (25), typical of all fairytales, not just Russian. Despite Dougal's likeability for the readers, and indeed some of the townsfolk, considering Propp's narrative functions suggests his behavior to be villainous. When Propp describes the introduction of the villain in the tale, come to deceive his victim, he writes: "[The villian's] role is to disturb the peace . . . [He] may be a devil" (27). As detailed in Propp's fourth narrative unit: "The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance" (28), thus Dougal researches Peckham's moral character. He "receives information about his victim[s]" (28) as the townsfolk are willing to tell him about their secrets and affairs. For instance, Humphrey, possibly Dougal's ultimate victim, admits to Dougal that he's been sneaking around with Dixie to have premarital sex. As Humphrey befriends Dougal, the narrator describes Dougal's gaze: "like a succubus whose mouth is its eyes" (Spark, *Peckham Rye* 25).

The next function of Propp's structural analysis is the "victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy" (30), which we see as Dougal consistently drives a wedge between Dixie and Humphrey in their relationship. The more Humphrey sticks up for Dougal, the angrier Dixie gets. In the end, it's Dixie's rant about Dougal at the altar that causes Humphrey to refuse her hand: "'No,' Humphrey said, 'to be quite frank I won't'" (6). Dougal's influence echoes in Humphrey's words, as he says word for word what Dougal had once acted out:

> "Wilt thou take this woman," [Dougal] said with a deep ecclesiastical throb, "to be thai wedded waif?" Then he put the plate aside and knelt; he was a sinister goggling bridegroom. "No," he declared to the ceiling, "I won't, quite frankly." (112)

There seems to be some debate with critics whether Dougal is the actual Devil. For example, in William Boyd's introduction of the 1999 Penguin Edition of *Peckham Rye*, he responds to this possibility by stating "I don't personally see this novel as belonging to her more allegorical or what we might now call

[13] The characters of a play, novel, or narrative

her ‘magic realist’ mode” (vi). Dougal even admits himself that he’s just a wicked spirit wandering the world for the ruin of souls. The purpose behind Dougal’s posing as the Devil is to portray the extent of the influence he has on the other characters, casting “an almost literal spell over anyone he meets” (v).

The genesis of this diabolic character, Spark tells Craig, was when she read about a couple in Madrid, where the bridegroom refused the wife at first, and she goes on to explain how that was adapted into *Peckham Rye*: “[Spark] ‘thought well, what would make a young man […] do that sort of thing? There must be some devil in him. I don’t mean an evil spirit. Just something disturbing – a disturbing influence” (Stannard 1532). While Dougal may seem like the Devil, Spark is clear in her interview that he is not: “[H]e’s a poser, and he poses as the Devil and people who pose as the Devil have got the Devil in them . . . He’s just mischievous” (1531). However, this admission does not take away from the argument of *Peckham Rye* as re-imagined ballad.

Dunnigan considers in her essay that “sometimes what is most to be feared in the ballad world is simply emotional cruelty, and not supernatural enchantment” (44). She refers to the psychological effect of a supernatural ballad, as over and above the entertainment value of a diabolical character. The purpose of such a character can be just as important for didactic teaching. To further illustrate this point, Riach explains:

> The ballads give Scottish poetry a key coordinate point of Gothic authority, both in didactic purpose and freedom of development, which evades the extremes of, on the one hand, orthodoxies in religious solemnity and piety, and on the other, the ephemerality of frivolous entertainment. What they have to teach does not come in the form of repeatable dogmatic formulae but arises from the experiences they depict through characters in contexts of uncertainty. (79)

The didactic purpose of *Peckham Rye* is surely to show the corruption and immorality of these characters who are overtly concerned with themselves and their desires, but also by how others perceive them. There is no resolution or transformation for the townsfolk’s morality when Dougal departs. Instead, they appear to continue living life as they had before he arrived, especially Dixie,

who does not acknowledge her immature behavior in front of Dougal but instead blames Dougal for her failed relationship with Humphrey and for Druce's murder: "Mr Druce liked him and look what Mr Druce has come to" (139). The irony for Dixie is that she worked so hard to keep up appearances and get married, only to feel as if she'd been married "twenty years instead of two hours" (141)—her husband feels pity for her, and the reader can see that as the beginning of a very mundane life ahead.

Spark's Other Works

We find possible elements of the traditional Border Ballad carried over to Spark's future works. Carruthers states: "a well of Gothic elements is drawn upon throughout [Spark's] oeuvre to inform her rich fictional recipe of horror and ordinariness, terrible lies and terrible truths" ("The Nouveau Frisson" 179). As noted, Spark makes it clear that she purposefully did not include thoughts or feelings in *Peckham Rye.* Although she produces a narration with such interiority in her other novels, there are still elements from *Peckham Rye* that carry over into them. For instance, Spark likes to include violent action and an abrupt scene change without giving the reader time to fully grasp what has happened, which elicits shock from the reader. In her 1974 novel *The Driver's Seat*, Spark gives us another fast-paced, action-filled novel with a non-linear structure. This abrupt and violent reveal appears in the first paragraph of Chapter 3:

> She will be found tomorrow morning dead from multiple stab-wounds, her wrists bound with a silk scarf and her ankles bound with a man's necktie, in the grounds of an empty villa, in a park of the foreign city to which she is traveling on the flight now boarding at Gate 14. (21)

Whittaker notes that *The Driver's Seat* is where Spark begins using present tense, and describes the advantage of present tense as similar to the action-focused style of a ballad: "The present tense gives immediacy and tension to the plot, and an illusion of spontaneous action" (130).

Numerous other examples of sudden shocking incidents handled by Spark in a cursory manner come to mind: in *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), the girls are forced to slip out of a window to escape from the fire and watch as Joanna falls to her ironic death while reciting Bible verses; in *Aiding and Abetting* (2000), a civilized conversation about cannibalism is followed by clubbing Lucan to death: “Such a quantity of blood” (164), says Dr. Karl Jacobs to describe it; in Spark’s last novel, *The Finishing School* (2004), Chris throws a live electric heater into Rowland’s bath in an attempt to kill him.

Similar to the hint of something supernatural at the end of *Peckham Rye*, Spark begins and ends *Slender Means* with the words “long ago”: “The opening words, then, suggest the possible parabolic nature of the novel, within a realistic context” (Whittaker 95). Despite its rooting in the grim reality of post World War II Britain, these words play with time as if we are being told a re-imagined fairytale.

Spark’s 1990’s novel *Symposium* centers around another "supernatural” red-haired Scot like Dougal, named Margaret. This novel contains direct references to Border Ballads, as Margaret’s Uncle Magnus—Mad Magnus—recites Border Ballads to her. Cheyette states that “[w]ith reference to the apparently ghoulish figure of Margaret Damien (ne´e Murchie), *Symposium* continues this use of the ballad tradition as an alternative means of perceiving the world” (119).

We see the Border Ballad influence on Spark as a writer and how she used the essence of the Border Ballad in her work, most evident in *Peckham Rye* through framed structures, quickened pacing, impersonal narration, Dougal’s performativity, and the theme of the supernatural—the Devil. Therefore, as its title states, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* is Spark’s Border Ballad for the modern era.

Section III. The Devil's Advocate: A Self-Reflection

Introduction

It's no surprise that Edinburgh's gothic beauty, rich with history, madness, and ghost stories, encouraged me to write *Nickie-Ben's Close*, but it was also my own connection to its creepiness that fueled this story. My understanding of ghosts and hauntings developed at an early age and has always been tied to the city of Edinburgh – my father was born in Bo'ness, a small town 20 miles west of Edinburgh and my family would visit from the United States often.

In 1995, when I was only three years old, we rented a flat for three weeks on Ann Street in Stockbridge, known for its wealthy residents and as the influential setting for J.M. Barrie's play "Quality Street"[14]. My siblings, barely teenagers at the time, were afraid of the flat and claimed that the walls had portraits whose eyes seemed to follow you, and that old dates were scratched into the windows. My cot was in the living room and my sister would hear me talking in the middle of the night. When asked about it in the morning, I replied "I was talking to my friend." From then on, my family loved to tell me "You spoke to a ghost. You said it was your 'friend'!" To back up this theory, every developed photo taken in that room had a white orb in it—"according to legend", this was true of various cameras from different family members who visited us while we were there. Years later, on another trip to Edinburgh, we read an article in a newspaper in which the owner of this flat claimed it was haunted. (In that same newspaper, we read someone fell off Arthur's Seat and died.)

My own intrigue with the supernatural began as a teenager after watching the movie "Paranormal Activity" in 2009. In that same year, I began to get panic attacks and started taking medication for anxiety and depression. While my anxiety increased in daily life, so did a newfound obsession with the paranormal[15]. It was as if the Devil obsession was my outlet because it was a fear I felt I had control over.

[14] See Tait, *111 Places in Edinburgh That You Shouldn't Miss*, Place 2, Ann Street.
[15] I almost got arrested for trespassing in a famously haunted graveyard in Easton, Connecticut in search of famed phantom, "The White Lady".

During a visit to Edinburgh in 2010, I attended a Vaults ghost tour that required a descent five stories underground (and is the inspiration of the Vaults in *Nickie-Ben's Close*). My aunt joined me and spread the story of my encounter with a ghost on Ann Street through the group of tourists, hoping it would warm their anxieties with the excitement of potential paranormal sightings. I had a panic attack quickly after we reached the Vaults and the guide had to escort me out. This was my firsthand experience of madness and supernatural belief intermingling, as my aunt had led the tourists to believe I was affected by a paranormal presence.

As Allan Beveridge states in his essay "The Presentation of Mental Disturbance in Modern Scottish Literature", Scottish writers tend "to treat disturbing subjects in a comic manner, which is often a way of coping with them" (85), so I would like to think that by teasing the tourists into believing in the paranormal, it was my way of coping with my anxiety. Likewise, writing a disturbing novel about the Devil gives me a sense of control over the fear of things that go bump in the night.

Craft

Two things I knew for certain when I began *Nickie-Ben's Close*: I wanted to write a supernatural story and I wanted it set in Edinburgh. The story of an American girl moving to the city and experiencing something supernatural and dark was there, but the plot was not. First, I wanted M to be a vampire—a *Baobhan sith*—and meet other Scottish mythical creatures in the city. This changed into a modern-day retelling of Burke and Hare, two men that negatively influence M into joining their grave-digging escapades, but I had trouble working out the logistics.

It wasn't until I had read James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* that I created my Devil, Graeme, and after reading Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* that I created Graeme's motives and my Peckham-esque list of characters.

The plot develops quickly from there into what I believe to be a successful supernatural tale. There are many elements that make a good novel, and the

plot cannot carry the novel alone. The way the story is told is just as important, if not more important, in evoking the right kind of atmosphere, and thus emotion from the reader. In this case, I want my story to be suspenseful. I want the reader to question what they know about their reality. If they were M, what would they do? Can they empathize with her or will they scorn her? By making specific decisions about tense, point of view, pacing, and characterization, *Nickie-Ben's Close* fully came to life.

Elizabeth Hand's 1996 article in "The Writer" titled "Writing the supernatural novel" pointed out various aspects of the supernatural novel that I realize are present in *Nickie-Ben's Close*. First, we look at the setting. Hand notes how many fantasy novels rely on imagined worlds but the most successful supernatural novels are the ones set in our own world: "Their narrative tension, their ability to frighten and transport us, derives from a conflict between the macabre and the mundane, between everyday reality and the threatening order – whether revenant, werewolf, or demonic godling—that seeks to destroy it" (1). I believe that the closer the supernatural is to reality, the more exciting the story is, as it lets the reader consider the real possibilities. Therefore in *Nickie-Ben's Close*, I've put a fictional character in a realistic Edinburgh to explore what would happen if she learned that the Devil really did exist. It encourages the reader put themselves in M's shoes, to experience a reality similar to our own and the consequences arising when that reality is undermined. It's more fun when the line between fantasy and reality is blurred.

Edinburgh is the perfect supernatural setting for *Nickie-Ben's Close,* as Hand states that "the roots of supernatural fiction lie in the gothic romances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with their gloomy settings, imperiled narrators, and ghostly visitations" (1). Although my novel takes place in the present-day, the dark atmosphere has remained in Edinburgh's Old Town since medieval times. The city is known, if only to entice tourists, as one of the most haunted cities in the world with accounts of paranormal phenomena and dealings with the Devil on nearly every street of Old Town. What was once home to the tragedy of the Black Death, as it's rumored that plagued people were bricked up in their homes beneath Old Town, is now the site of tourist

attractions and university bars. The city is split upwards and sideways, with buildings stacked on top of one another and bridged from medieval to 18th and 19th century architecture with Old Town and New Town, while the lush gardens of Princes Street Gardens and the Meadows are believed to once have been burial pits. It's no surprise that tourists flock to the ghost tours off the streets of the Royal Mile. The entertainment and the beauty we enjoy in Edinburgh today is a cover over death and suffering, mischief and murder. It's what makes Edinburgh captivating to a modern Devil who wishes to hide in plain sight.

Each and every aspect of Edinburgh made an important contribution in *Nickie-Ben's Close*, starting with the close—a dark, narrow alley, usually with cobblestones that lead towards a steep descent. To walk down one of these closes off the Royal Mile makes you feel as though you've stepped into the past.

The gentrification of the city allows the upper-class and lower-class to intermix—allowing M to travel from her aunt's upscale flat to the Vaults off Cowgate within a thirty-minute walk. The small size of the city allows M to choose who she wants to associate with. If she wants to be a university student, she can, but if she wants to play with the misfits instead, she can run off campus and straight into Graeme's arms. The city makes it easy to run or hide, easy to be whomever you want to be, and that's exactly what M wanted when she left Florida. Not to mention, the city also helps Graeme become a believable Devil.

The decisions of which tense and point of view to use were difficult to make and required many drafts to test out all of my options. Ultimately, first-person present tense was the narration that I felt had the most success in telling the suspenseful story I wanted to tell.

In Rimmon-Kenan's novel *Narrative Fiction*, she discusses the way in which the author uses focalization to evoke the reaction he or she wants in their intended reader:

> The text can direct and control the reader's comprehension and attitudes by positioning certain items before others. Perry sums up the results of psychological tests which have shown the crucial influence of initial

> information on the process of perception. Thus, information and attitudes presented at an early stage of the text tend to encourage the reader to interpret everything in their light. The reader is prone to preserve such meanings and attitudes for as long as possible. (121)

By using first person, present tense narration focalized through my main character, M, I'm able to keep the reader unaware and unsuspecting of what's to come, just as M is, for as long as possible. I begin *Nickie-Ben's Close* just as M lands in Edinburgh and spend Chapter 1 introducing her new surroundings to her while setting up a potentially normal and mundane semester abroad with the talk of getting a job and starting school:

> I consider calling my mother when we get back to the flat to complain, but I stop myself when I realize my mother will probably be thrilled at the idea of something to keep me distracted. (Pierce 21)

Therefore, the motive behind M's visit is never questioned by the reader.

I want the reader to expect a story about M's journey to find her identity, instead of forming hypotheses that might give away the coming surprises, undermining what Rimmon-Kenan notes as the inevitable impatience of the reader, who never waits until the end to understand a text. After all, a story is a story for a reason—there's always going to be a build up to a climax. Rimmon-Kenan says, "From this perspective, reading can be seen as a continuous process of forming hypotheses, reinforcing them, developing them, modifying them, and sometimes replacing them by others or dropping them altogether" (122). In *Nickie-Ben's Close*, I provide small hints that encourage the reader to form hypotheses. These are hints noticed only by M but are usually too insignificant or at odds with her secular worldview for her to consider a supernatural explanation.

M is what Rimmon-Kenan defines in her text *Narrative Fiction* as an internal focalizer: "The knowledge of an internal focalizer…is restricted by definition: being a part of the represented world, he cannot know everything about it" (80). Rimmon-Kenan uses an example of the character-focalizer in a

locked room to explain how the reader would not be able to see anything outside of the room. This sounds claustrophobic for the reader and, ideally, this discomfort enhances the supernatural story.

Hand reaffirms this point when she explains why the first-person narrator is prevalent in supernatural tales:

> it is not enough that the protagonist compel our interest. Readers must also be able to truly identify with him, to experience his growing sense of unease as his familiar world gradually crumbles in the face of some dark intruder, be it spirit or succubus. (2)

Hand also states that in most uncanny novels, the main character's "normalcy is what sets them apart from others. Like us, they do not believe in ghosts, which makes it all the worse when a ghost actually does appear" (2). In *Nickie-Ben's Close*, the 21st century reader should be able to identify with M because she begins the story with a secular view of the world. A 2019 article by Pacific Standard Magazine[16] states that the U.S. Generation Z[17]—M's generation—is the least religious compared to previous generations, so it makes sense that M's worldview is devoid of religion, let alone supernatural magic.

M cannot be so easily convinced that the Devil exists, and I wouldn't expect a 21st century reader to be convinced either so, in turn, M must question everything for the sake of the reader. She ignores small clues in the first half of the novel, such as the odd appearance of Erik Wilson in Leaf Coffee, or the lipstick and heels when M meets Graeme at the university. When the darker, more gruesome events occur, M tries to grasp at any rational explanation for what she witnesses, including drugs, "a paper-mache double" (Pierce 159), or that she's in some kind of dream state. When Hand states not believing "makes it all the worse" (2), I believe she means that the resistance to belief in the supernatural is even more painful and exhausting than accepting the reality that the Devil does exist. Ultimately, the mental exhaustion put upon M by

16 Manning, J. Christel. "Gen Z is the Least Religious Generation. Here's Why That Could Be a Good Thing." Pacific Standard, 6 May 2019, https://psmag.com/ideas/gen-z-is-the-least-religious-generation-heres-why-that-could-be-a-good-thing

17 Born between 1995-2010

Graeme and the other characters forces her to give in to what she believed to be impossible, or rather, nonexistent.

I chose M as my protagonist because she is an impulsive twenty-year old teetering on the line between childhood and adulthood. She's vulnerable and impressionable to anything that encourages her idea of independence. In short, she is the perfect kind of character for a devil to play with. I want the reader to get inside the head of a young adult in her early twenties. From my experience and observation as an American teenager in Northeastern USA, there seems to be an existential change in a person as they transition from teenage years to their twenties. People I know have used their age as their reason behind deserving independence and respect, before they gain any real life experience. Their childhood fantasies determine their starting point, and only with time and experience do they dissipate. M's childhood fantasy is to have a father and live independently in Scotland, which leads her to the irrational decision of giving away her soul for the father of her dreams. I hope that there will be times in my novel when the reader questions M's choices and considers her immature and, even possibly, dislikable. If this happens, then I have succeeded in creating a believable twenty-year old American girl.

It's important that the pacing of *Nickie-Ben's Close* feels immediate, especially during violent scenes like Adele's murder or the attack on No-Chin in Greyfriars Kirkyard to elicit the right response from the reader. In order to understand M's reactions to these scenes, I've reflected on similar scenarios in my own life. One in particular is when my friend fell off a moving golf cart and cut open his head. For a moment, I thought he was dead and reacted with pure adrenaline, unable to reflect on the entire scene until hours later. I took what I remember from that experience and acted out how I believed I would react if I witnessed a suicide, as with when M encounters Alex Bell. The body reacts before the mind can process it, and it's a quick reaction. I took those feelings and wrote them down with shaking fingers as my heart raced, and I want the reader to feel the adrenaline as effect, not the rationality, through the swift pacing of those scenes.

Dialogue also helps quicken the pace of my novel. Since everything is being told in present tense, M has conversations with other characters with little to no reflection in between, and the only descriptions are through M's eyes. Dialogue has been my greatest tool for presenting the characters to the reader. It's my intention for the characters to perform for the reader, instead of the narrator telling the reader who they are. What they choose to say and how they choose to say it are important, especially when their behavior counteracts their words. For instance, Lewis's affectionate friendship with M takes on a new meaning once the reader learns of his loyalty to Graeme:

> "Come back here," he says. He smirks at me as he adjusts his crotch. "I give a shit about you."
> "No, you don't." I give him the finger and walk out the door. (167)

Everything the reader learns about Liz is through her behavior and words, from the way she brags about her materialistic objects to the way she brushes off M's questions about her father. It's obvious, without initially learning the reason behind it, that Liz is self-centered. It was my aim to show glimpses of similar self-centeredness in all of the characters who sold their soul to Graeme. Upon first impression, their behavior is merely strange, and the immediacy of the narration doesn't let M or the reader reflect upon that before the story moves onto the next scene. After the reader learns of their true natures, the reader can reconsider the story and then see the characters' behavior from a different perspective.

Hand states that horror novels "depend heavily upon the mechanics of plot, less-than-subtle characterizations, and shock value [therefore] most horror novels lose their ability to chill the second time around" (1), and while *Nickie-Ben's Close* will obviously lose its shock value during a second reading, I intended the novel to be read again in order for the reader to see the story differently. The reader can see Graeme as the Devil and interpret his behavior in that light. For example, in re-reading, when the annoying drummer in the Meadows breaks his drum, the reader might well see it as a supernatural force from Graeme, and when M sees the lipstick on Graeme's lip, the reader might

consider that it's not from a kiss, but because Graeme had shapeshifted into a woman wearing lipstick and heels.

Ending a story has always been a challenge for me, and ending *Nickie-Ben's Close* was no different. In Douglas Bauer's advice on craft titled *The Stuff of Fiction*, he states that a successful ending "both culminates and at the same time continues the story" (168). I agree with this statement because even though the story the reader is being told comes to an end, the character's story still continues off the page. Just as in reality, our lives are continuous stories with beginning and ending points, often overlapping, and constantly growing.

So—how does one end a story that never ends? In theory, I could keep writing M's story forever, or at least until her death, but that's probably not what the reader wants. The reader wants closure but also the freedom to dream of what happens next for the characters. Bauer argues that after the story's climax:

> the flat-out volume again begins to fall and the harmony starts to simplify, the layers of participation—the elements of the plot—peeling away, leaving those last and once more solitary notes to be sung. (168)

In *Nickie-Ben's Close*'s case, this climax is M pushing her father off the Crags. The pacing then slows down as M is left on her own the next morning for her to reflect on all that's happened and come to terms with it. The narrative jumps forward in time to Thanksgiving, because once M agrees to stay in Edinburgh for Graeme, that is the culmination, as Bauer terms it, of this story. M succumbs to a soulless life, but also begins to rebuild her relationship with her mother Jules. In turn, Jules has grown from avoiding her past in Edinburgh to the willingness to embrace it. To continue the novel, M is now stuck in Edinburgh walking away hand in hand with Graeme. This ending suggests that her priorities have changed and she will be living in Edinburgh, not as a student learning about her heritage, but as one of Graeme's many hopeless followers. It's a bittersweet ending, but mostly bitter.

Inspiration

Inspiration for *Nickie-Ben's Close* came from different sources in Scottish literature and its supernatural stories, most especially James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and James Robertson's *The Testament of Gideon Mack*. In *Gideon Mack*, Gideon asks the Devil why he dwells in Scotland and the Devil replies:

> I do like Scotland, though, I spend a lot of time here . . . I like the miserable weather. I like the miserable people, the fatalism, the negativity, the violence that's always just below the surface. (Robertson 282)

Gideon's Devil makes a fair argument, and I believe Graeme in *Nickie-Ben's Close* would have to agree.

The city of Edinburgh is the main setting for Hogg's *Justified Sinner*, where protagonist Robert Wringhim meets his Devil, Gil-Martin. Despite the iconic locations in the Grassmarket, down the closes off the Royal Mile, and The Meadows, the most influential setting in *Justified Sinner* for writing my novel is that of Holyrood Park, where Hogg sets a supernatural altercation between brothers Robert Wringhim and George Colwan. As George goes up Arthur's Seat alone, he sees a demonic vision in the clouds:

> Gracious Heaven! What an apparition was there presented to his view! He saw, delineated in the cloud, the shoulders, arms, and features of a human being of the most dreadful aspect. The face was the face of his brother, but dilated to twenty times the natural size [. . .] George conceived it to be a spirit. He could conceive it to be nothing else' and he took it for some horrid demon by which he was haunted. (Hogg 32-3)

This scene is particularly successfully set in Holyrood Park, because of its existing combination of beauty and danger. Not many cities boast extinct volcanos with such gorgeous views in the center of it. Therefore, walking up Arthur's Seat is one of the top tourist experiences, but it doesn't preclude the occasional news story of a hiker falling to their death.

It makes sense that Graeme would invite M to partake in this tourist attraction on a surface level, but then the reader learns a deeper meaning behind the Salisbury Crags and Holyrood Park to M, which Graeme knew all along. Graeme enjoys toying with an oblivious M by leading her up the Crags. Much to his amusement, M even asks if anyone has ever fallen off: "Some survive…' [Graeme] pauses. 'Some don't" (51). This journey up the Crags is the catalyst for M discovering how her father actually died, when Adele spills the secret: "Adele continues, 'Keeping secrets. Taking her up Arthur's Seat, after what happened to her da'" (130).

The scene with M following her father up the Crags in the middle of the night pays homage to Hogg's novel: George's encounter with the demonic apparition as mentioned earlier, and Robert Wringhim's encounter at St. Anthony's Well just before he follows George up Arthur's Seat:

> A lady robed in white, who hastened towards me. She regarded me with a severity of look and gesture that appalled me so much I could not address her; but she waited not for that, but coming close to my side said, without stopping: "Preposterous wretch! How dare you lift your eyes to Heaven with such purposes in your heart? Escape homewards, and save your Soul, or farewell for ever!" . . . I persuaded myself that I had seen a vision. (Hogg 122)

When Robert first sees M approach him, he exclaims: "Demon! Get away from me!" (211). M also believes a demonic figure is present through the phantom wind that pushes her and her father closer to the edge. Although Graeme does not reveal himself after M pushes her father over the edge, he confirms her suspicion that he was there by appearing at her window the next morning: "You were there, weren't you? The wind…' He doesn't need to respond" (214).

In Elaine Petrie's analysis of *Justified Sinner*, she notes that this "lady robed in white" who warns Robert is an image "suggestive of purity" and that "in folklore, wells often have supernatural guardians" (39). As Hogg may have used folklore to inspire his novel, I too added Scottish folklore into my novel. The title, and the name of the close, comes from the Scots name for the Devil,

also included in Robert Burns' poem "Address to the Deil"[18], along with the names —"Auld Hornie", and "Clootie" (Burns 1). Scottish folklore also inspired the name of the Green Lady pub, as the name has been taken from the tutelary spirit (guardian of a geographic region), the *glaistig*. Campbell refers to the glaistig as:

> In the shape of a little woman who was thin and grey (tana glas), with long yellow hair reaching to her heels, dressed in green, haunting certain sites or farms [. . .] She is called *a' ghlaistig uaine* ("the green glaistig") from her wan looks and dress of green, the characteristic Fairy color. (82)

The glaistig is just one of many different kinds of otherworldly beings believed to dwell in Scotland's terrain. Ideally, I would've liked to incorporate more supernatural creatures into *Nickie-Ben's Close* but ultimately decided to make the novel Devil-orientated, while paying homage to Scottish myth with the setting of the pub.

Further inspiration for *Nickie-Ben's Close* came from Muriel Spark's 1960s novel, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. The characters who sell their souls to Graeme in *Nickie-Ben's Close* were inspired by the seven deadly sins in Christianity and the "fatal flaws" ascribed to the people of Peckham by Spark's character, Dougal Douglas. As noted earlier, in *Peckham Rye* Dougal arrives from Scotland in the London suburb of Peckham, and exposes the hypocrisy of the townsfolk through pointing out their "fatal flaws", such as "Lacking in vision" (63) and "avarice" (27). There's pride, hypocrisy, envy, greed, and wrath depicted through the characters in *Peckham Rye,* and Dougal brings these failings to the surface. I used such attributes as inspiration for the characters in *Nickie-Ben's Close* who sell their souls in exchange for power, material possessions, control, and a false freedom from their sins. For example, Robert sells his soul to avoid jail, Liz sells hers in exchange for wealth, and Lewis sells his to escape being tied down in a relationship. Other examples include more minor characters such as Keith who gets control of the

[18] Graeme writes this poem on the whiteboard during M's class. (Pierce 136)

Green Lady pub; Adele, who gets eternal beauty; Alex Bell, who gets a man to love her against his will, and Doug Davidson who becomes a Minister due to a fixed election.

Those that Graeme describes as the soulless who don't have the mental stamina, "'It's not so bad not having a soul. Though, some don't have the stamina for it. Those jakeys, for one'" (Pierce 175), have been influenced by the real people I see on the streets of Edinburgh daily. Growing up in an affluent New England town, I had a distinct lack of exposure to homelessness and limited exposure to the incapacitated, outside of my fellow college students on campus. It was difficult to grasp the stark contrast in drinking culture between the United States and the United Kingdom, until I moved to Edinburgh and witnessed people, defined to me as "jakeys", passed out on the street in the early afternoon. A "jakey", I learned, is a derogatory term for an alcoholic, though I've seen the term used in Edinburgh for people who act a specific way on the street, with or without evidence that they are actually alcoholics. They are commonly recognized by their haggard appearance and sketchy behavior. They disappear down dark closes, they huddle together around the corner of Old Town's top tourist attractions, and sometimes they'll shout to each other, or to passersby, as if they're putting on a performance. Just as the general public, including myself now, ignore the "jakeys" in Edinburgh, the characters in *Nickie-Ben's Close* ignore the soulless and their intense suffering:

> "He's putting on a show," Liz warns. "The jakeys are worse than the homeless. They'll follow you down the street begging for money if you give them a second of attention—and they'll just spend it all on drugs." (Pierce 23)

From Beveridge's research that the mentally ill in the Royal Edinburgh Asylum suffered delusions of grandeur, I play with the idea that the "mad" jakeys on the street are not delusional and are, indeed, haunted by the Devil.

The creation of the Devil character in *Nickie-Ben's Close* was a difficult task. As Eva Marta Baillie describes in her work *Facing the Fiend: Satan as a Literary Figure*:

> Satan fulfils a certain function in the narratives he appears in. He is easily recognizable through his physical features, behavioral patterns, and his most famous haunts. He is the stranger we are somehow familiar with because we have encountered him in other stories. (54)

With this archetypal consistency of character function in mind, I am forced to recreate an already-existent figure, and somehow make him my own.

At times during the writing stage, I considered making Graeme appear more humane or more sincere to M, but remembered that Graeme is derived from an archetype, therefore adding morality to him would outright change the character I intended to create. While I agree with the point Baillie makes in her statement regarding the Devil character:

> It seems that at times, the writer or narrator loses control, needing to admit that the satanic character escaped the creative parent to act out the ascribed character traits without restraint. (7)

I take issue with the second half of Baillie's statement:

> One might argue this is the case with any literary figure—and indeed with any creation: the creator can set the seed, can draft and plan the creature, but once it comes to life, he can merely be a spectator. (7)

I believe that non-archetypal literary characters are more fully in the control of the author. What I believe holds fiction writers back is the fear of not sounding "realistic" enough, when, in truth, fiction can be whatever the writer wants it to be. That is what makes fiction "fictional". The idea that a character is shaped into something and then takes control over the writer implies that human beings are predictable—which is absolutely not true. On the contrary, the archetypal character can take control over the author because it is a re-

imagining of an already existing character and not an emulation of a human being.

Most devilish aspects of Graeme came out of a combination of the already existing devils in the Scottish works of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and James Robertson's *The Testament of Gideon Mack*. When writing Graeme, I was deeply inspired by the persuasive and seductive qualities of Hogg's Gil-Martin and Robertson's Devil. I wanted my Devil to be mesmerizing, persuasive, terrifyingly confident, and physically attractive. The reader should be instantly attracted to him, despite what he represents. As Petrie notes in her analysis of *Justified Sinner* in relation to Hogg's Gil-Martin as the Devil:

> We are reminded how vulnerable each of us is since the Devil does not come breathing fire and brimstone: he is personable, eloquent, an adept shape-changer and may pop up in different places without our knowing. (Petrie 49-50)

Robert Wringhim's infatuation with Gil-Martin is instant the moment he meets him: "By degrees he acquired such an ascendency over me that I never was happy out of his company" (Hogg 102). Gil-Martin's masterly seduction manipulates Robert into carrying out the murders of Reverend Mr Blanchard and his brother George Colwan: "He mocked at my cowardice, and began a-reasoning on the matter with such powerful eloquence that, before we parted, I felt fully convinced that it was my bounden duty to slay Mr. Blanchard" (102). In *Nickie-Ben's Close*, Graeme manipulates people into doing what he wants of them. Lewis bends to his every demand, including killing a friend with a cricket bat. Graeme convinces Robert to speak to Jules at the Green Lady, and it's implied during the phone conversation that M eavesdrops on that Graeme is feeding Liz instructions on how to deal with M[19]: "'Okay,' [Liz] says. 'Okay… Yes I know but do you really think she'll—' she pauses. ''Course I trust you. 'Course. I just want it to happen soon'" (119).

[19] Liz and Graeme are working together to get M to sell her soul for Robert's return.

In Robertson's 2006 novel, inspired in part by *Justified Sinner*, the Devil manipulates Gideon through seduction, rather than fear. Gideon's love for his Devil is more reminiscent of an obsession like Stockholm Syndrome, and he's reluctant to return to Monimaskit after the Devil heals him. The Devil encourages Gideon to go back to Monimaskit and write his testament about their encounter: "Do what you have to do", with a promise that they will be reunited and "escape from the world" (297). Despite the threatening backlash that would come when a minister admits he is an atheist and he had just met the Devil, Gideon is willing to do whatever it takes to be reunited with the Devil again. "You're going to miss me, Gideon, you know that?" (296) the Devil says, and he is proved right, for Gideon does not stop thinking of the Devil once he goes back to Monimaskit. He refers to the Devil as "my Devil", "My Devil was suave and fit-looking . . . I went to bed and remembered the way we'd been together. I missed him" (312). Once Gideon and the Devil part, Gideon's main goal is to reunite with the Devil again and run away with him.

Graeme succeeds in manipulating M through seduction. While Graeme's confidence in his ability to bring back her father is extremely convincing to her, her attraction to Graeme also plays a part in her submission. Part of the reason she agrees to make a deal with him is because she is afraid of losing him:

> His answer surprisingly makes my stomach twist with fear. Fear of loss that I've never felt before. Is this what love is like? Am I in love with Graeme? Infatuated? Obsessed? I don't know, but the feeling is so painful that I can't bear it. He's already got his hold on me. (Pierce 178)

M gives into the lack of control she feels, a feeling similar to Robert Wringhim in *Justified Sinner*, who gradually breaks down as he feels his body is "possessed by a spirit over which it had no control" (141). Robert attempts to be rid of this evil being by running away but Gil-Martin continually haunts Robert, appearing wherever he goes. Untrustworthy, manipulative, and all-knowing, Gil-Martin is a terror Robert believes he can only escape through suicide. In contrast, Gideon Mack wants the Devil to haunt him, and it's implied that Gideon's suicide is his way of reuniting with his Devil. In *Nickie-Ben's*

Close, M doesn't receive the happy ending with her father that Graeme insinuated, but she is still complacent enough to stay in Edinburgh afterward. The consequence to selling her soul is the never-ending feeling of emptiness, only fulfilled by Graeme's presence and regard. Perhaps the feeling of being whole is all M has ever desired. Her father couldn't give that to her, but Graeme can.

Graeme's shapeshifting abilities were inspired by the accounts by horrified witnesses in *Justified Sinner* of Gil-Martin as disguising himself as someone else. In the Editor's Narrative, Miss Logan and Bell Calvert are in shock to see Gil-Martin disguised as the deceased George Colwan walking with Robert: "'It can be none other but he. But, no, it is impossible! I saw him stabbed . . . And how is it, how can it be, that we again see him here, walking arm in arm with his murderer?'" (Hogg 64). M has a similar reaction when Erik Wilson comes into Leaf Coffee and does not identify her as the pick-pocket: "The blood drains through my body. Any second now, he'll notice who I am and shout: 'Call the police! This bitch stole my wallet! Arrest her! Send her to jail! Kick her out of the country!'" (Pierce 82). However, it is Graeme shapeshifting into Erik Wilson to mess with M's mind for his own entertainment. M and the reader receive a hint of this uncanniness with the repetition of the phrase "kind establishment" (85) spoken by Graeme in the guise of Erik Wilson, and then reiterated by Graeme in his usual form later that day. At M's university, Graeme becomes a university secretary in order to coerce M into a room alone with him. The reader is given a few hints to this ability, such as the leftover lipstick on Graeme's face and the kitten heels he drags "underneath the table with his shoe" (138) as he's speaking to M. In Chapter 25, M is not fazed when the stranger she speaks to in the bookstore becomes Graeme, and at this point in the narrative, the reader should fully understand, as does she, how it is that Graeme appears there.

While Hogg's Gil-Martin never outright claims to be the Devil, the Devil in *Gideon Mack* refuses to be anything but. I enjoyed the way that Robertson's Devil proved who he was through storytelling and behavior. The Devil claims to have helped some women who believed to have been witches in North

Berwick, “They were burnt for it, poor cows” (*Gideon Mack* 282), insinuating that he was alive during the North Berwick witch trials in 1590, and alive to know John Knox and Robert Kirk. In *Nickie-Ben’s Close*, Liz proves to M that Graeme is immortal by showing her a photo of him in the 1995 looking exactly the same as he does in present-time. Graeme explains to M that he changes his appearance and name every so often: “I’m working my way down the alphabet again” (Pierce 175), referring to the names Duncan, Fergus, and Graeme[20]. Saying “again” implies that he’s been around long enough to have used all the letters in the alphabet for names more than once.

Gideon’s Devil is most like a characteristic Devil when he loses his temper: “I thought the roof was coming down on us and raised my arms to cover my head. It was only as the echoes were dying away that I realized that the roar had come from his mouth” (*Gideon Mack* 281). I’ve taken inspiration from this scene to show Graeme’s darker side. One occasion is where Graeme snaps at a waitress in a “voice that sounds inhuman” (190). Another instance is when he screams at Adele in the Vaults: “The walls shake with the sound like a train barreling through the building. I cover my head in terror and brace myself as the dust sprinkles from the ceiling, but nothing comes crashing in. It was Graeme’s voice, screaming at Adele to get out” (Pierce 170).

In *Gideon Mack* and *Nickie-Ben’s Close,* both set in the 21st century, the devils must prove their identity by actions, when words are not enough. Gideon’s Devil proves who he is by putting his arm “elbow-deep in fire” (*Gideon Mack* 283), and then proceeds to put his hand inside Gideon’s broken leg to fix it. In *Nickie-Ben’s Close*, Graeme proves to M that he has supernatural abilities by killing Adele and raising her back from her purgatorial state.

With Liz and Graeme pushing M to make a decision through a bombardment of mental and emotional torment, M doesn’t have the time or mental capacity to consider the consequences of selling her soul. She clings onto the one spark of hope and happiness—bringing back her father. The

[20] I might’ve, subconsciously, chosen the Devil’s name starting with the letter G to pay homage to Gideon Mack and Gil-Martin

afterlife is only mentioned in regard to Alex Bell, who would've grown up in a more religious time-period:

> When I stop talking and take a deep breath, he says, "Dinnae beat yourself up about it. She believes in Heaven."
> He pulls out a cigarette.
> "Then why did she get so upset?"
> He lights the cigarette, then takes it from his mouth and says, "Because she also believes in Hell." (98)

Other soulless characters are not concerned with the afterlife, possibly implying that they don't believe in it or, more likely, they are more concerned with living a fulfilling present life than suffering in a possible afterlife. Only until after M sells her soul will the reader see the consequence take form as Graeme's invisible, eternal hold on her.

Conclusion

To consider the development of Scottish supernatural and Devil belief, I interviewed my father about his memories of the supernatural while growing up in Scotland during the 1950's. He spoke of "Spring-heeled Jack", a man with springs in his heels who jumped very high and terrorized people in the night. It was a tale my father and his cousins were told to scare them from staying out too late. The first official sighting of Spring-heeled Jack was in 1838 when *The Times* published "a letter from an anonymous 'Peckham resident' who wanted to bring news of a supposedly supernatural attacker to the attention of the authorities" (Bell 1). The attacker was described as "a cloaked being with fiery eyes, who could vomit blue flames from its mouth, and whose sharp metal talons tore the flesh of its victims" (1), and he could shapeshift from ghost, to bear, to devil.

The story of Spring-heeled Jack had traveled and developed throughout Great Britain like a Scottish Border Ballad, as witness accounts turned into: "folklorist accounts, street ballads, several series of 'penny dreadful' stories (and illustrations), other literary texts which co-opted the character for their

own use, journals, magazines, newspapers, comics, court accounts" (19). The first account of the "Peckham Ghost" in Edinburgh came in 1872, as a being possessing "remarkable agility" (37) was able to leap across the Canal and vault over a cab.

With regard to *Peckham Rye*, is this just a remarkable coincidence that Spring-heeled Jack is the "Peckham ghost", or was this tale known to Spark? My father would've heard this story in Scotland at the same time *Peckham Rye* was being written and published—is it possible that Dougal Douglas is Spark's version of the "Peckham ghost"?

What terrified my father and his cousins growing up has become a running joke in our family. Spring-heeled Jack, along with other threatening characters he was also warned about: Jenny Herring-teeth, and Flannel-feet, elicit immediate hysterics in my family for the ridiculousness of their descriptive names, and the idea that a man with springs attached to his heels or a man with flannel wrapped around his shoes could ever be frightening. These characters appear comical when put beside names like "Jack the Ripper".

The development of this character from true threat in the 19th century as a ghost, to children's fable in the 20th century, to humorous family story in the 21st century again illustrates the change in supernatural belief since the 17th century as seen from *Justified Sinner* to *Peckham Rye* to *Gideon Mack* to *Nickie-Ben's Close*.

My family's reaction to Spring-heeled Jack also demonstrates why the Devil trope makes for a great story. We do not believe this character is real but we are entertained, fascinated even. For *Nickie-Ben's Close*, I did not write about the Devil for religious or psychological reasons, but because I felt it would be an entertaining story to read. When stories like my novel teeter in-between reality and the supernatural, they invite the reader to play with their own imagination and ask "What if this really happened…?"

This idea of being between reality and the supernatural is exactly why Edinburgh was essential as a setting in *Nickie-Ben's Close*. As stated earlier, Edinburgh is a city whose history is always present, visible in its landscape and streets. It boasts supernatural tales, both of fiction and of legend. I believe

that *Nickie-Ben's Close* is effective as a supernatural story because of its Scottish location and Scottish characters, especially the Devil himself—a Scottish trickster like Dougal Douglas. Furthermore, Scotland itself and the Scottish characters in supernatural Scottish literature were essential to my writing. These influences are what make *Nickie-Ben's Close* the supernatural story that it is.

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