THE MOTIF OF METAMORPHOSIS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCOTTISH FICTION

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the treatment and the development of the motif of metamorphosis in the works of three major Scottish writers of the nineteenth century. The selected works represent important milestones in the development of the concept from the folk diabolic tradition to the Romantic subjective treatment (internalization) of supernatural phenomena.

Metamorphosis, conceived as a fall into a lower order of life, usually madness, becomes a symbolic counterpoint to the transcendental conceptions of spiritual transformation and the idea of mankind's progress in the nineteenth century. Metamorphosis reflects both fear and fascination arising from this radical transgression of natural order and from the loss of one's own identity or one's own physical shape because the sense of identity and habitual shape can be regarded as a restriction and confinement, as well as a source of one's acceptance in human community.

In James Hogg and R.L.Stevenson metamorphosis operates within this definition; it is presented as an image of the fall and has a significant ethical function, from the means of a rise it becomes the means of a fall.

In George MacDonald's work, however, metamorphosis goes along with spiritual transformation, and expresses a vision of spiritual progress and transcendence. Since MacDonald's fantasy can be taken as a symbolic space of mind, metamorphosis becomes a metaphor of mental processes.

In all the selected texts metamorphosis plays the central structural role. As a major dramatic event, it generates conflicts and unifies the texts thematically.

Historical Background

By 'metamorphosis' I understand a change in substance and form. The word is derived from the Greek root "morphosis" (shaping) and the prefix "meta" (across, over). There is, however, a synonym of Latin origin of the same semantic origin: "transformation", derived in the same way. Both words, though often interchangable, have acquired some specific connotations: metamorphosis is used in biology as a term for the change of a larva into the adult form, for example a butterfly, and therefore has begun to signify primarily the change in physical shape; while transformation is used for abstract processes (e.g.transformation of the consciousness, or of economy). I am going to respect this usage in my work.

Metamorphosis is an ancient concept linked with the animistic mode of thinking, in which nature was believed to be animated with spirits and demons, which were regarded as the cause of natural phenomena.[1] Such a concept implies that the form is something less substantial than the content; the form may be changed while the substance remains unchanged.

The change of shape in primitive societies with animistic beliefs could be simply another form of a continuation of the life of the human soul. In the animistic mode of thinking the major metamorphosis was death, generally understood as transfiguration of the soul, obtaining a different body.[2] Death as a spiritual transformation is also at the very core of most religions.

Another source of metamorphosis, I believe, has its roots in

the concept of magic: people in ancient times believed that they could acquire the needed qualities by imitating and impersonating those who possessed them. This belief is demonstrated in hunting rituals and carnival rituals, in which people took off their social roles and adopted new ones, closer to instinctive nature. At the heart of these rituals was metamorphosis. Even when people ceased to believe in the magic aspect of the ritual, they could still take its communal psycho-hygienic aspect as a release from social pressure and enjoy the exciting new freedom through their symbolic metamorphosis.[3]

Metamorphosis in the arts thus could be traced back to the ancient genre *menippea*, which is characterized by Bakhtin as "dialogic, full of parodies and travesties, multi-styled, and does not fear elements of bilingualism...The liberty to crudely degrade, to turn inside out the lofty aspects of the world and world views, might sometimes seem shocking." [4]

Metamorphosis from the very beginning has had two faces: the face of fear and the face of laughter. Both these faces can be found in Hogg's work, because it grows from the folk mythic tradition, but this duality is missing in Stevenson's major works, and in MacDonald's spiritual fantasies the mocking laughter is transformed into an understanding smile.

The original ambiguity of metamorphosis is reflected in the well-known collection of Ancient Greek and Roman myths, *The Metamorphoses* by Ovid, and in *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius.

Metamorphosis in ancient myths denies definition. It may be the means of punishment or reward, often out of proportion to the nature of the transgression or merit. For example, the virgin nymph Medusa, raped by the sea god Poseidon, was metamorphosed by angry Artemis into a deadly and hideous monster, which petrified anybody who looked into her eyes.

The whole concept of metamorphosis is as slippery and as difficult to grasp as the god of metamorphoses - the sea god Proteus. Greek gods could freely change shapes and metamorphose into all kinds of animals or even elements of nature to pursue their interests among the mortals. The morality was not the strongest aspect of the fluid world of ancient myths. The gods were irresponsible, unstable in their affections, and so were the great heroes.

As humankind with increasing emphasis claimed to be the highest form of life on Earth, the idea of shape-changing began to be associated with a regression, a fall into the lower, animal forms of life. Metamorphosis became naturally an appalling, but also a morbidly appealing prospect. The animistic chaos of the pluralistic pantheon did not conform to the ideas of monotheistic Christianity. The medieval model of society was static, with clearly defined rules and stratification, a result of the attempts to establish an order in the dark and confused age following the fall of the Roman Empire. Metamorphosis was connected with the dark pagan times and attributed to the devil and witchcraft.

Christianity produced two fundamental myths of the metamorphical fall: the fall of Lucifer and the fall of Adam and Eve, resulting in their loss of primeval innocence. The fall of Lucifer includes an archetypal metamorphosis, both in shape and substance, from the most beautiful angel into the horrible dark Prince of Darkness. Lucifer, or the devil, becomes a master of metamorphoses, and so do his servants, evil witches and wizards.

The Renaissance transplants the religious issue of a spiritual transformation into empiric reality. It brings about

a whole revolution in the approach to the outside world. With the dawn of empiricism comes the age of experiments. The Renaissance man wants to understand, explore, investigate, manipulate the forces of nature.

> "That the poet has the power to reform nature, delivering a golden for a brazen world, had been a commonplace of Renaissance criticism."[5]

The quest for transformation finds its expression in alchemy and its search for the secret of transmutation of metals and the search for the Philosopher's Stone, which was believed to have a transformative effect on the consciousness. As a result, a new myth of the Fall is created, which becomes central to the Romantic literature: the myth of Faust. Goethe's *Faust* became one of the most important works of Romantic literature. Hogg's Master Michael in *The Three Perils of Man* is a Faustian character in the very mythic sense. Dr.Jekyll finds the Devil inside his own self, and the story of his fall is a modern version of the Faustian myth, in which science, substituting magic, brings about Jekyll's fall. Stevenson's story follows the pattern which appeared first in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).

The old Faustian legend depicts the rise and fall of an adept of mystic lore, who was unable to control the unleashed powers. The Faustian myth seems to make two major points because it addresses two kinds of audience: the general audience and the hermeneutic one. The general audience is warned in a straightforward way that any pact with the Devil will cost them their soul and that the path of magic is the path to hell. What Faust specifically desired from the devil, may vary in different versions, and it matters less than the fact that Faust took the path which was forbidden by the Church.

For the adepts of mystic lore, the Faustian myth conveys

a warning against the danger the adepts have to face when they open the lid of their consciousness and release the contents of the unconscious and do not master the dark aspects of the self. Carl Jung says that in the twilight zone of the unconscious one meets the shadow and the anima, who are usually personified on the narrative level as the Devil and the soul, or an evil monster and the princess.[6]

During the period of Classicism the supernatural was pushed away into the periphery of literature, as the mimetic modes of the newly established novel prevailed in the 18th century. But already in 1764 Horace Walpole challenged the current literary production by his novel *The Castle of Otranto*, thus originating the tradition of the Gothic novel, which stirred the imagination of Romantic authors of later periods.

Both the Gothic novel and Romantic movement are the product of the eighteenth century sentimentalism and its cult of sensibility. In contrast to reason and empiric science, the Gothic writers as well as the romantic writers emphasize sensation and intuition. But whereas Richardson chose to exploit the more socially acceptable patterns of behaviour, the sensational studies of dark passions and villainy in the Gothic novel opened the door to unconscious fears and desires.

Hart and Punter suggest that the origins of the Gothic novel should be traced back to Smollett's picaresque novels[7]; Punter asserts that "the first important eighteenth-century work to propose terror as a subject for novelistic writing was Smollett's *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753)".[8] It is obvious that Hogg, with his penchant for the grotesque and the ridiculous, owes more to Smollett than to the English Gothic novel. Hart's assertion that Smollett's concept of horror reveals "a revival of

saturnalian fantasy"[9] can be easily applied to Hogg as well, as his *Three Perils of Man* and "The Hunt of Eildon" prove.

Both Smollett and Hogg constitute one typical aspect of Scottish literary tradition, and that is the mixture of rough, savage situational humour, and a metaphysical concern, in their case presented from the 'low' perspective of an everyman, a social outsider. In Hogg, this ironic perspective has to be usually carefully sought, because he hides his true nature behind his characters, narrators, and, as Douglas Gifford points out, behind different personas Hogg had assumed during his literary career.[10]

The sense of the grotesque and frequent use of irony can be found also in English eighteenth-century novel, especially in Sterne and in Fielding, but what they, as well as the English Gothic novel, lack, is the metaphysical, almost "theological" dimension, as Hart has called it:

> "In Hogg, the terror of the diabolic is at once more primitive and more explicitly theological - a mixture we will come to recognize as definitively Scottish."[11]

The fact that there is hardly any metamorphosis in the English Gothic novel is another proof of its difference from Scottish or Irish Gothic novels, which are in closer touch with folk superstitions and the mythic mode of thought. In English Gothic novels one can find only ghosts or villains in disguise. It was Mathew Lewis, an Irish priest, who first brought on stage a tale of sensational diabolism, *The Monk* (1796), in which a demon takes shape of the seductive Matilda in order to bring about a fall of a proud monk.

The Gothic novel became part of the broad spectrum of the

Romantic movement so that it could be considered an aspect of Romanticism. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to attempt a controversial differentiation between the Gothic novel and the Romantic novel. It is generally accepted, however, that the works by Walpole, Beckford, Reeve, Radcliffe, and Lewis, belong to the Gothic genre, while more ambitious and symbolically more potent works of Godwin, Mary Shelley, Scott and Hogg, pose some problems as to their place in the general context, because they lack the essential temporal and spatial distance of the medieval atmosphere and exotic setting. They come closer to the definition of the fantastic than the Gothic, even though these works display the influence of Gothic novels.

Romantic Transformation and Metamorphosis

Romantic literature displays two major thematic tendencies, which are closely linked with the concept of transformation and metamorphosis. Spiritual transformation is the major concern of the trascendental stream, represented mainly by great Romantic poets (Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley), which comes out of the concept of Imagination as a creative and synthetic power.[12] Metamorphosis becomes the thematic concern of the other stream of romantic fiction, preoccupied with the theme of the fall into the darkness of mind; in psychological terminology, with exploration of the unconscious.

The Romantic authors form a very broad creative spectrum. In general, they are dedicated to the exploration and redefinition of man's relation to Nature, because they feel that man had become separated from it in the course of the progress of our civilization. By Nature it is understood not only the natural

enviroment but also the human nature.

> "The romantic poet seeks a way to reactivate the world by discovering in himself the creative perceptiveness which will alllow him to draw aside the veils which men have laid across their senses. He seeks a perception where the false separation of Nature (fixed, external objects) and nature (the living being of the perceiving man) can be reconciled: a new synthesizing vision."[13]

On one hand, under the influence of mystics like Swedenborg, Boehme, and the philosophical ideas of Plato and Plotinus, the Romantic writers explore the organic concept of art, in the attempt to heal the modern split between Nature and Mind and achieve their unity.[14]

In their search for the lost unity of man with nature, Romantic writers also turn their attention to the primitive and instinctive aspects of human nature, as found in folklore or popular tales and myths.

On the other hand, eighteenth-century rationalism provided techniques of analysis and interpretations of phenomena that were considered to be supernatural. John Herdmann stressed G.H.Schubert's influential theory of animal magnetism, which refers to the dark aspects of human mind as the shadow double.

> "In the magnetic trance, the forerunner of hypnosis, there was often startingly revealed a second personality arising from the dark side of the mind, its 'shadow-side' or 'night-side'."[15]

Romantic writers showed a keen interest in science, especially when exploration of the mind often merely tried to translate a mystical experience, coded in a highly idiosyncratic symbolic language, into the rational language of science.

Encouraged by experimental studies of mesmerism and animal

magnetism, they were busy exploring the mysterious space of human mind with its extreme affects, destructive passions, desires and fears, constituting the dark aspects of mind. The fear of the unknown was mixed with human curiosity and excitement. Mesmerists and magnetists provided a semiscientific proof of the objective existence of the second self, while empiric science considered all supernatural phenomena as a product of a hysteric mind.

Ann Radcliffe was the first English Gothic writer who introduced the supernatural as an uncanny product of fancy by offering a realistic explanation. To achieve the uncanny effect, she had to combine the impact of dramatic stage effects with the high sensibility of her central characters. She set up an example for the later Romantic writers.

The metaphysical and psychological duality became a powerful structural source of dynamism of the romantic works, which were built upon the drama of contradictions: reality and ideal, love and hate, beauty and ugliness. The stronger was the light, the darker was the shadow. And thus the desire for a spiritual transformation was contrasted with the fearful fascination with the reverse - the fall into the pits of dark materiality, into moral chaos and animal instincts, which finds its figurative expression in the image of a disturbing metamorphosis.

Before I begin the discussion of the respective works, let me clarify the major terms I am going to use.

Metamorphosis plays an essential structural role in the works under discussion. In the discussion of the structure of the literary work, I rely on Todorov's stratification of the aspects of the literary work: verbal, syntactical, and semantic. He characterizes these aspects in the following way:

"The verbal aspect resides in the concrete sentences which constitute the text. We may note here two groups of problems. The first is linked to the properties of the utterance itself. The second group is linked to its performance, to the person who emits the text and to the person who receives it: in each case, what is involved is an image implicit in the text, not a real author or reader. (These problems have hitherto been studied in terms of "point of view.")

By the syntactic aspect, we account for relations which the parts of the work sustain among themselves (the old expression for this was "composition")..."[16]

The semantic aspect covers the themes of a literary text.

I have substituted the word "verbal" with "pragmatic" because it seems to sound less misleading; literature generally tries to appeal to our reason as well to our emotions, generating fusions of pleasure, confusion, fear, desire, and even hate, especially in the case of fantastic and fantasy narratives.

I have also added another literary aspect which is often omitted in modern criticism: the ethical aspect, involving a consideration of the moral codes, either intentional or unintentional.

These aspects, or levels, are usually difficult to separate from one another; the discussion of syntactical aspects usually involves the semantic level.

There are basically two possible approaches to the concept of metamorphosis: ontological and linguistic. From the ontological point of view, we can consider whether a particular metamorphosis is a supernatural phenomenon or a a natural, psychological fact. From the linguistic point of view, every metaphor is a metamorphosis, because it presumes a transformational process, in which one thing is taken for

another on the basis of a semantic link.

In order to capture the epistemological distinction, Todorov coined a structural distinction which I will use in my work: 'the marvellous' and 'the uncanny'.[17] The uncanny events leave the laws of reality intact and evoke fear while the marvellous creates its own laws. Fantastic literature is largely linked with the uncanny, but it can also include marvellous events, while in fantasy it is just the other way round.

I will not, however, accept Todorov's notion of the fantastic as a principle of uncertainty between the two aspects[18] because it undermines the well-established generic categories of fantasy and fantastic literature. I will use the term 'fantastic' narrative as a generic category, in contrast with 'fantasy' narrative, which I associate with the structural principle of the marvellous. The traditional distinction between fantasy and fantastic literature seems to me to be more operational, even though it can sometimes turn problematic. Fowler's dictionary of literary terms offers a convenient definition of fantasy narratives:

> "Works of fantasy, such as Tolkien's fiction and C.S.Lewis's Narnia series, create their own coherently organized worlds and myths...The reader is invited to feel not bewilderment at but respect for the order of the 'supernatural' world, even awe and wonder."[19]

The author of fantasy is, Tolkien believes, a 'sub-creator'.

> "He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside."[20]

I would define the basic difference between fantasy and fantastic literature in spatial terms as the difference between 'There' and 'Here'; and in temporal terms between "Then" and "Now". Fantasy takes place in other worlds, while fantastic literature takes place in physical reality as we know it, and which is transformed into a reality as we do not know it, into a nightmare.

Fantasy Narratives

The most typical narrative pattern in fantasy is the quest, because fantasy originates in romance, namely medieval heroic romance, in magic fairy-tales and old myths. If fantasy is closer to fairy-tales than myths, as in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, then the goal of the quest is a re-establishment of harmony, a return to the original condition before the fall. The main characters may grow wiser, but rather in the empirical than in a mystical sense of the word. If the story is closer to a myth, then the quest takes the form of a symbolic quest for one's perfection rather than any other concrete goal; the aim is a transformation of one's consciousness. The works of Victorian organic fantasy would belong to this category (MacDonald, Kingsley, and later on Lindsay).

The organic world of fantasy usually represents the mythic mind; read allegorically or symbolically, the motifs and images can be viewed as contents of mind, constituting the thematic structure. No matter how the creation looks foreign to us and strange, its primary effect is to achieve familiarization. Even in the very strange world of MacDonald's *Lilith* the reader finally begins to feel at home.

As usual, there may be some exceptions, which lack the organic aspect and take the reader into some bewildering, strange

'other' reality; as for example the disturbing fantasies of Bulwer Lytton, or the fantasy of nonsense of Lewis Carrol.

Fantasy as a genre constitutes itself in the second half of the nineteenth century. William Morris, George MacDonald and Charles Kingsley started a new tradition, which was continued by Oscar Wilde's fairy-tales, David Lindsay, J.R.R.Tolkien, C.S.Lewis, and numerous followers in America in the second half of the twentieth century. MacDonald appears to be the most original and most accomplished writer of them all.

The authors of Gothic novels, including James Hogg's *The Three Perils of Man* and some of Scott's novels, can be seen as forerunners of fantasy; they draw inspiration from romance and are not concerned with authentic verisimilitude in the mimetic sense. Their picture of Middle Ages is a fabulous creation, trying to capture the haunting atmosphere of an exotic past or of exotic foreign places.

Metamorphosis in fantasy, as Jackson suggested, has a "teleological function". It serves either as a vehicle of meaning within the narrative, as concept, or metaphor, or symbol of redemption."[21] But apart from this function, metamorphosis enters a number of functions in the plot, which generate or solve the conflicts, as the analysis of the texts should reveal.

Fantastic Narratives

Whereas in fantasy we are translated to another world, in which the quest for transformation of an individual or the whole imaginary world takes place, in fantastic narratives it is metamorphosis in its physical form that plays the key role and becomes the key structural principle.

Jackson, beginning with the linguistic aspect of metamorphosis, suggests:

"the movement of fantastic narrative is one of *metonymical* rather than of *metaphorical* process: one object does not *stand for* another, but literally becomes that other, slides into it, metamorphosing from one shape to another in a permanent flux and instability."[22]

Since the act of metamorphosis is a serious transgression of laws of probability, it produces the element of uncertainty by opening a space of dangerous freedom, in which nothing can be taken for granted. The fantastic metamorphosis is set in a world which is presented as our everyday reality. This reality as we know it is metamorphosed into a reality as we do not know it: it becomes 'defamiliarized', strange, incomprehensible. The cause of defamiliarization (the term coined by the Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky)[23] can be objective (the marvellous) or subjective (the uncanny).

As the uncanny requires a more subtle psychological characterization, which also dominates the nineteenth century fiction, the subjective presentation starts to prevail. As Jackson pointed out this process can be traced back as far as the Gothic novel: "the history of the survival of Gothic horror is one of progressive internalization and recognition of fears as generated by the self."[24]

The fantastic is usually defined as a mode opposite to the real and realistic. For example Jackson claims that fantastic narratives deal with the themes which are not dealt with in realistic literature, such as the taboo desires and gnoseological problems of representation and perception of reality.

"The fantastic gives utterance to precisely those elements which are known only through their absence within a dominant

'realistic' order. Fantastic tales proliferate during the nineteenth century as an opposite version of realistic narrative..."[25]

This is, however, not entirely true because even the very realistic fiction at its best (Balzac, Flaubert, Hardy, Turgenev, Tolstoy) finds subtle ways how to treat human desires and the eternal conflict of truth and appearance, illusion and reality. It is a matter of emphasis rather than of complete otherness. Nevertheless it is true that fantastic narratives display "a preoccupation with problems of vision and visibility"[26] with unusual intensity because this is the major source of the epistemological uncertainty. The supernatural can be understood as a psychic phenomenon, a hallucination or a dream. In order to achieve this purpose, fantastic narratives have to put a special emphasis on adequate use of structural and rhetoric devices, such as point of view and the tone (which does not mean that the realistic fiction avoids them).

Fantastic metamorphosis is not only the means of structural dislocation and defamiliarization, but it also becomes linked with one of the most important mental processes: the suppression of undesirable contents of mind. Irving Massey has summed up the Freudian concept:

"objects which have not been brought into the life of the mind, are the ones that create anxiety...the transformation into an object...is a kind of protective imitation".[27]

In other words, a suppressed thing can find a release either in its identification with another object (a metamorphosis) or in the creation of an imaginary object. Thus, for example, the Devil is either a projection of some suppressed desire or fear, or

a real person is mistaken for the Devil and the suppressed contents are projected on him.

This theory has further implications. Jackson noticed the trend toward 'non-signification' in fantastic literature, which she identified with Freud's concept of the entropy as a basic human desire.

> "Unlike marvellous secondary worlds, which construct alternative realities, the shady worlds of the fantastic construct nothing. They are empty, emptying, dissolving."[28]

The dissolution affects primarily the character which serves as the evil focus of the narrative. If we understand metamorphosis as a mechanism of sublimation of the suppressed contents of mind, we notice the undeniable movement from a concrete personification to a vague and abstract presentation. While Hogg's Devil has a definite monstrous shape, Stevenson's Hyde is definite enough to look like a man, but the amount of indefiniteness has increased to such an extent that the characters in the story are unable to visualise Hyde's features, and always describe him as an amorphous being. In MacDonald the Other takes the mystic shape of a shadow, the presence of which stifles all the magic and beauty. In Machen and Lovecraft the personification of the Other becomes a 'nameless thing', the repulsive utmost Other, a relict of ancient times, which is horrible beyond imagination and beyond words.

This kind of movement ends in the literature of silence of Beckett, whose characters got stuck in their grotesque metamorphical situation, or, as Massey put it, in the language of violence. The inability of the characters to produce their own metamorphoses which would give shape to the hidden horrors of the mind is, however, a disastrous failure of the essential role of literature in general: it is a failure to articulate the desires

and fears and thus enact them and exorcise. These modern characters are not able to produce any kind of devil or adversary, they either live a vegetative life or collapse deeper into themselves as the crustaceans in Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*. The mind then becomes a real prison from which there is no escape.

Bakhtin saw the reason for the alienation of the modern fantastic in the fact that "Modern fantasy is severed from its roots in carnivalesque art: it is no longer a communal art."[29]

Fantastic literature with its preoccupation with the extreme states of mind, especially with probing the unconscious sphere, leads to modernist experiments. It takes us inside the mind and presents the mind as the narrative focus, its perspective is highly self-centered, even to such an extent, that the anxieties of the mind create a reality of its own, cutting off the character from the outside world. The outside reality is internalized and transformed into a dream, usually a nightmare, as the border line between the mind and reality is dissolved. Jekyll ends up in seclusion and breaks all his contacts with the outside world as he becomes fully enveloped in his relation with Hyde. Robert in Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions* is also isolated, even Master Michael lives apart from the society, deeply involved in his metaphysical discourse, or, in psychological terms, in the communication with his unconscious.

There is a price to pay if the hero enters the twilight zone of the unconscious: he may get lost in the dark labyrinth, losing the thread of reason, and become forever locked in the prison of madness among the monsters of his own creation, for ever cut off from the caring or uncaring world.

In the course of the nineteenth century we can witness a growing internalization of the experience, particularly in fantastic fiction which more and more builds the suspense on the

hesitation between the real and unreal, while the horrors of the outside world become internalized horrors of a sick or emotionally disturbed mind. James Hogg is a very good example of this: even in his tales of the supernatural he usually steps away from the direct presentation of a supernatural event and he presents the event as a tradition or an account of a single witness.

The Scottish writers of the beginning of the nineteenth century generally avoid the fantastic narrative modes and prefer mimetic modes; D.Gifford talks about "the cult of the local and picturesque as developed by Crabbe and Wordsworth... Many writers seized the opportunity to portray local colour, eccentricity and old-fashioned ways before they and their language forms died out, in the face of urbanization and the railways."[30] And James Hogg was really hailed as a local colour writer, an authentic voice of the country and a pastoral poet. His patron Sir Walter Scott was not very pleased with his later, more ambitious prose works and adviced him many times to return to his simple sketches and poems which had made Hogg so popular.

Hogg's first sketches and stories combined the gift of sharp realistic observation with an interest in folk legends and supernatural tales. And it was the blend of an interesting supernatural tale and realism which produced the best short works of James Hogg. Metamorphosis appears in a number of stories inspired by folk legends. All of them exploit the motif of metamorphosis in a more or less traditional manner. I will focus on one of the longer tales, which is one of the most interesting tales, Hogg ever wrote, "The Hunt of Eildon".

NOTES

1 Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (London and New York, 1991), pp.76-77

2 Ibid.,pp.76-77

3 M.M.Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, 1985), p.26

4 Ibid.,p.26

5 M.H.Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (Oxford, 1971), p.139

6 C.G.Jung, "Concerning Rebirth", in *Four Archetypes* (London,1989),p.57

7 F.R.Hart, *The Scottish Novel from Smollett to Spark* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), pp.13-14

8 David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (London and New York, 1980), p.45

9 Hart, op.cit.,p.17

10 Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh, 1976)

11 Hart, op.cit.,p.22

12 Abrams, op.cit.,p.118

13 Roger Fowler (ed), *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, (London and New York, 1990), p.210

14 see M.H.Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism. Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (London, 1971)
Gareth Knight in his *Magic and Western Mind* (London, 1991),p.142, says that Thomas Taylor (1758-1835) translated into English the works of Plato, Plotinus and Proclus, and others and made them thus available to a wider audience.

15 John Herdmann, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London, 1990), p.3

16 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic* (New York, 1975), p.20

17 see also Sigmund Freud on the uncanny in *Art and Literature*, vol.14 (London, 1985), p.351
Todorov, op.cit.,pp.44-47

18 "The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighbouring genre, the uncanny or the marvellous." Ibid.,p.25

19 Fowler, op.cit.,p. 88

20 J.R.R.Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* (London, 1964), p.36

21 Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London, 1981), p.81

22 Ibid., p.42

23 Fowler, op.cit., p.101

24 Jackson, op.cit., p.24

25 Ibid., p.25

26 Ibid., p.43

27 Irving Massey, *Literature and Metamorphosis* (Berkeley, 1976) pp.63-64

28 Jackson, op.cit., p.45

29 Jackson, op.cit., p.16

30 Douglas Gifford, "Myth, Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914", in Douglas Gifford (ed), *The History of Scottish Literature*, vol.3 (Aberdeen, 1989), p.217

II

James Hogg

THE HUNT OF EILDON

The story represents an important milestone in Hogg's development from his short sketches, retold legends and ballads towards more ambitious and more complex treatment of the legendary material, which finds its monumental synthesis in *The Three Perils of Man.*[1] It is in particular interesting for a postmodernist reader who can approach the text with an open mind, quick to accept all kinds of structural irregularities and semantic gaps.

The metamorphoses that appear in the long-short story, or a legend, *The Hunt of Eildon*, are all supernatural ones. They belong to the ancient mythic stock, in which the ethical function of the supernatural as the means of higher justice is superseded by the pragmatic function, linked with emotions of fear of transgression of mysterious 'divine' rules, the sense of the vulnerability of unstable human situation, and paradoxically, also with the carnival and burlesque laughter, as we could see in the previous chapter on the ancient myths of metamorphosis. The transgression can be disproportionate to the punishment, and this adds a disturbing touch of ambivalence to it.

Metamorphosis plays a central role in the story. Being a source of conflicts it functions as a dynamic structural element: it moves the plot forward.

The story combines a medieval romance form with two layers of myth: that of pre-Christian origin (the world of fairies), and that of Protestant Christian origin (the world of the Devil in persona and the theme of exorcism). This results in a strange cross-section of myth, romance, and possibly a pastoral novel.

This extraordinary story has so far been rather neglected by Hogg's critics even though the story sets the structural pattern of duality for the epic *The Three Perils of Man*, as Gifford pointed out.[2] Scott found the story "the most ridiculous story" he had ever read,[3] an opinion which I can share only in some degree because I see the problem in a different light. The story may be ridiculous from the traditional generic point of view, but what coud be unacceptable for Sir Walter Scott and his contemporaries can become an asset for a postmodernist reader who is familiar with current techniques of fragmentation, unexpected changes of perspectives, and shocking treatment of the reader's expectations based on formal conventions of a genre. Even its structural faults, such as a double ending (Hogg does not seem to know when to stop), thus may become assets and experimental features.

The story gives also an impression of a fragment from a huge fresco; not all the relations become clear as if the author had indended to write a continuation.

In fact, the story itself is a series of continuations: it does not end when one would think it could. This may be irritating to readers accustomed to well-structured narratives, but it can be also an interesting technique, illustrating how to maintain the sense of absurdity and of limits of human vision and understanding.

It is absurd enough when the shepherd Croudy is metamorphosed into a pig and is almost slaughtered for being a witness of a supernatural metamorphosis; it is twice absurd when Croudy, after being saved, accuses an innocent girl of using witchcraft to perform his metamorphosis; and it is thrice absurd when the girl faces execution and can be saved only by being

metamorphosed into a snow-fowl. And finally, it is most absurd and inappropriate, when her metamorphosed lover is shot by a hunter and eaten.

We can read the text, however, in a different way than Hogg's audience could, and also in a way which is probably closer to Hogg's mode of thinking, characterized by wild leaps of imagination. Let us now discuss the space in which the metamorphoses take place and what structural roles they assume in the text.

The Space of the Marvellous

The story is set in the mythic universe of folk myth, in the space of the marvellous. Douglas Gifford is perhaps the first to notice the specific quality of the story and he considers Hogg's tales to be "descendants of an age-old mythology with its own logic and its own organic laws."[4] He notes further on:

> "For the first time Hogg went back to the Middle Ages; not as far as in *Three Perils of Man*, but to James IV, although in both works the "history" is really folk-history, a welter of popular memories, often confused, and conflating deeds of different kings and heroes."[4]

The nature and structure of the space reveals that the text in fact represents a transitory stage between a retold folk legend, romance, and pastoral. Hogg mixes two traditions: the Christian monotheistic tradition with the Devil and witches, and the mythic pluralistic pre-Christian tradition with fairies and demons.

Christianity naturally tried to uproot pagan traditions and substituted demons with the devil and good fairies with angels and saints. Since in Protestant religion the role of angels and

saints as mediators between the unreachable God and people is restricted, their role is often performed by fairies.

But the concept of Fairy Land is an ambiguous one. There are good fairies as well as bad fairies. The Fairy Land is a magic reality of great beauty but also of great perils because it follows a different logic. A single day in Fairy Land usually lasts a whole year. It is another world and therefore not all the encounters can end well. A fairy gift can bring prosperity but also unhappiness and disaster.

Each act of the two fairies is marked with explicit or implicit ambiguity. First of all the reader is kept in uncertainty whether they are good or evil. Their fierce behaviour does not always give the right cues.

First they are seen as white hounds killing a young lady. They shock the reader by saying that she was the twenty-third victim and they are about to complete their task, which is never explained and remains a mystery of the other world.[5] Only much later can the reader piece the scattered cues together and assume that all these victims were probably witches. Then they metamorphose the silly shepherd Croudy into a pig just because they do not want him to interfere with their plans and thus almost bring about his death. When one of the fairies metamorphoses Croudy back at the very last minute to save him from being slaughtered, she does it not because she would pity him but because she is moved by his faithful dog who displays genuine sorrow for his master. She shows more concern for the animal than for the man.

Another example is their last magic intervention: metamorphosis of the pastoral couple Pery and Gale into moor-fowl, intended to help them escape from prison, seems to be a rather controversial decision. Was it really necessary? Why

could not justice prevail? Such a metamorphosis has a rather disturbing effect and does not seem bring about any happy ending, especially when the author in the cynical epilogue informs us about the further unfortunate fate of the pastoral pair: the male bird is shot and eaten at a dinner party.

In the end the two fairies pronounce a strict denunciation of the world when Clara asks her sister whether she wants to live with the king or leave the bonds of reality.

> "Sooner I would be a worm that crawls among these weeds, than subject to the embraces, humours, and caprices of such a thing - happiness, truth, and purity of heart are there unknown - Mention some other tie to nature, or let us bid adieu for ever without a sigh."[6]

This is a remarkable example of moral and spiritual disillusionment, as well as an expression of desire for transcendence of unsatisfying material reality, worded in a strong, expressive language.

The mythic mode is the space of the marvellous, magic is presented as an integral part of the world. This fact is reflected in the narrative perspective. The metamorphoses in the story are presented as real objective facts. A number of witnesses could see Croudy's metamorphosis from a pig into a man. Hogg also makes no attempt to subjectivise the fairies. They are real. They are present in both the characters' discourse (Croudy tells Gale about the metamorphosis on the Eildon Hill[5]) as well as in the authorial discourse (e.g.the scene at the end in which the fairies are presented directly without any witness.[6]

Even though the story is set in a mythic space, from the formal point of view it is neither a legend, nor a fairy tale. With regard to the material, the plot and characters and setting,

it is like a fairy tale. But the treatment is to a great extent realistic. Hogg writes a fairy tale in the fiction manner. The story lacks typical magic formulae even though it opens with

> "the initial wager/condition common to the Ballads and *The Three Perils of Man,* with a fairy-tale betting.the bet contains magic numbers and ingredients which medieval listeners loved to hear repeated."[7]

Crawford says about Hogg:

> "...he was an inveterate, almost a compulsive mixer of genres - 'pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical--comical-historical-pastoral'(Hamlet, II.ii.404-6) - and that the dominant one, though he almost always blended it with others, was Romance."[8]

The story can be seen as a forerunner of modern fantasy - it takes place in the medieval world and places the plot in the space of the marvellous while treating the topic in a fairly realistic manner.

Structural duality

The concept of the supernatural is a product of an ancient ontological duality and becomes an extremely powerful pattern of thought in medieval literature. Many renowned critics have discussed extensively the significance of duality inherent in Scottish psyche and society in terms of dissociation or split.[9] It is not the purpose of my work to deal with these complex problems; I want to refer briefly to the structural duality of the text in relation with metamorphosis.

Duality is the main structural principle which unites the story and is sustained with an amazing consistency, though it is

hard to say to what extent it has been applied consciously or unconsciously. The duality will offer a structure in which we can study metamorphosis.

The story has two loosely interconnected narrative lines: the 'low' world of pastoral narrative and the 'high' world of romance. The former describes the events in the world of lower classes including the misfortune of Croudy, the latter takes us to the royal court. The pattern of two parallel narrative lines, which are connected thematically, was later used in *The Three Perils of Man*. The vertical duality of 'low' and 'high' is supplemented by the horizontal duality of the real and the supernatural (the world 'beyond').

These basic dualities are further subdivided. The low vertical duality contains the contrastive pair of shepherds, Croudy and Gale. Croudy is a primitive, superstitious, comical, and at the end even a grotesque character, speaking Scots; while Gale is an example of a learned shepherd, speaking English. Croudy is associated with burlesque ridicule: he represents the really 'low' and 'base' in the 'low' world, while Gale is just the opposite, as a true pastoral character he represents the 'high' of the 'low world': he remains faithful to the unfortunate Pery and refuses to believe the accusation that she is a witch.

In the 'high' world, the king is opposed by lord Douglas.

In the supernatural world, the world of fairies is put in opposition to Devil. Two fairies are contrasted with two witches that come to the court and accuse the fairies, now changed into white hounds, of kidnapping young people.

The black-and-white duality is one the oldest and most primitive narrative techniques. It is interesting to notice that Hogg's duality is rather ontological or social than moral. Croudy comes to play the role of a villain out of ignorance and

superstitious fear. Most ambiguous are, however, the characters at the court. What should we think of the king's witch-hunting? What should we think of the 'objective' methods of detection of witches when they fail to prove the innocence of the poor maid Pery? Even the good, learned shepherd Gale is not spared some irony, though the irony comes through Croudy who considers Gale's education and language as a barrier which prevents him from perceiving the supernatural.[10]

And this method of introducing ambivalence and moral uncertainty becomes one of the traits of Hogg's fiction. It may not be always an intentional feature; sometimes it may be simply Hogg's failure to make up his mind about the characters.

The Role of Metamorphosis

In the mythic mode, metamorphosis plays a double role: it is part of a collective ritual (a carnival) during which social roles are discarded and people descend onto the animal level to get a release from the accumulated social pressure;[11] it is, however, also a magic performance which reminds us of the existence of a higher order of existence, transcending the material world, and of the terrible power it can exercise over human lives if they happen to cross or obstruct the mysterious course in a wrong way. In this respect it does fulfill the ethical role of the agent of justice.

This double-edged nature of the story accounts, together with certain structural faults, for certain disturbing effects and the negative reception it has received.

Metamorphosis is an important structural element in the

story. As a dynamic element it brings about conflicts and also helps to solve them. It serves as a disguise, a means of removal of the unwelcome witness, or as punishment and escape.

On the symbolic level, metamorphosis is an image of a fall. Groves has noted that while in Hogg's early work we can find both kinds of symbolic movements, the descent and ascent, in his prose after 1816 "in general Hogg begins to cultivate greater realism...and also to emphasise mainly the lower half of the circle, the journey of descent."[12]

Metamorphosis in romance operates as a traditional motif of disguise, as in a comedy of manners. The fairies and the Devil 'disguise' themselves in order to get access to the king and achieve their objectives. Metamorphosed into white hounds, they can easily chase their human victims in a deer's shape and kill them. (The number of their killings is equal to the number of the missing people which suggests that they do not kill any real deer). The Devil disguises himself as an old knight as he tries to turn king's suspicion to his favourite hounds.

In the Pastoral narrative, we can find two major contrastive metamorphoses: Croudy changes into a pig and back to his human shape, and the pastoral pair of lovers, Pery and Gale, change into moor-fowl. The metamorphoses operate as means of punishment and escape respectively. Each metamorphosis comes as a shock for the reader because it does not follow the logic of the story and represents a gross dislocation challenging our expectations.

The simple shepherd Croudy becomes a witness of the metamorphosis of a dead body of a lady into a dead roe deer, killed by the king's hounds, who turn out to be fairies. The

whole metamorphical scene is treated with great ambiguity.

> "I saw the twa white hounds a' the gate, but nae appearance of a deer; an' aye they came nearer an' nearer to me, till at last I saw a bonny, braw, young lady, a' clad i' white, about a hunder paces frae me, an' she was aye looking back an' rinning as gin she wantit to be at the Eildon Tree. When she saw the hounds comin on hard behind her, she cried out; but soon o'ertook her, threw her down, an' tore her, an' worried her; an' I heard her makin' a noise as gin she had been laughin' ae whilen' singin' another, an' O I thought her sang was sweet."[13]

At this point the sympathy of the reader will go with the white lady; her white dress suggests innocence, but the modern reader may overlook the fact that the white lady tries to reach the Eildon Hill, a haunted place. To add to our confusion, Croudy reports that the lady made sounds as if she were laughing, but this may be only his lack of comprehension since he is presented as a thick-headed simpleton. The overheard conversation is also rather mystifying and does not shed much light on the whole mystery. The fairies say: "...she is the twenty-third, and soon our task will be dune."[13] Only later on can we deduce that the lady was the daughter of a witch and was killed by the fairies (hounds) on the order of some mysterious higher metaphysical authority, probably to redeem their own sins.

Becoming an unwelcome witness of a mystery, Croudy has to be cleared away and mythically punished for his curiosity. Man is not expected to be a Peeping Tom.

Croudy's Metamorphosis as Punishment - the Fall

Metamorphosis into animal, a being of a lower order of life, is a symbolic expression of the Fall. It comes usually as a punishment for some offence against the universal laws because the nature of such a punishment requires a supernatural force.

Croudy is metamorphosed into a huge boar in order to prevent him from interfering with the plans of the fairies. He is saved from being butchered only by a last minute rescue metamorphosis when one of the fairies takes pity on him, not because of Croudy himself, but because of his faithful dog that shows a genuine distress. The fairies and the author reveal a disconcerting lack of concern for Croudy who at this stage has not done anything really bad and his only offence seems to be his thick headedness and ill-fated curiosity which made him an unwelcome witness of the game of those who wield power.

Croudy's metamorphosis serves two basic purposes in the narrative: it introduces other burlesque comical situations into the pastoral storyline and operates thus within the context of the genre *menippea* with the aim of liberating one's self from the social conventions by means of a spontaneous, uninhibited fun (metamorphosis, masquarade) which is derived from an unusual perspective. It also serves a technical purpose on the syntactic level of the plot: the metamorphosis of Croudy into a pig the fairies clears away an unwelcome witness and the fairies can go on unhindered with their plans.

A gentle reader may find it rather a cruel joke when Croudy is to be slaughtered, just because he happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and overhears the fairies. But the world of myth as a metaphoric reflection of ancient human situation was often like that. (See the unfortunate characters in Ancient Greek mythology.)

On a symbolical level, Croudy's metamorphosis reveals his coarse nature. One would expect the story to end at this point, but Hogg goes on as if he thought he did not display fully Croudy's character. And so when Croudy is back in human shape, he

immediately accuses Pery of witchcraft because she was helping to hold him when he was about to be slaughtered. What looks at first like a joke, develops into a tragedy. Pery is put on trial and witch marks are found on her body by the royal expert on witches.

From this development we can see how important his metamorphosis is in the structure of the story. Naturally, also the character of Croudy becomes increasingly prominent in the story. He turns into a grotesque character, a prototype of a dangerous superstitious primitive who is blinded by fear and hatred and is unable to see the true nature of things. He does not rise from his fall and remains a being lower than a beast, because he lacks human reason as well as animal instincts. Croudy belongs to the family of religious fanatics which haunt Gothic novel and Romantic fiction, such as *The Monk* by M.G.Lewis, *Wieland* by Ch.B.Brown, *The Devil's Elixir* by E.T.A.Hoffmann, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by James Hogg.

Metamorphosis of Gale and Pery - Escape

The final metamorphosis which can stand as an example of the ascent in contrast to Croudy's descent is the metamorphosis of Pery and Croudy's young neighbour, shepherd Gale, into moor-fowl. It is a rather controversial ending. The reader would rather expect that the unjust accusation of witchcraft would be lifted and Pery would be set free.

If Croudy's metamorphosis into a pig represents the Fall, what about the metamorphosis of Gale and Pery into white fowl at the end of the story?

Theoretically it should also signify a fall because it is a metamorphosis into a lower form of life. But the couple is

expected to achieve happiness on this level, which they were unable to achieve in human shape. Their flight, a movement upward, could represent an ascent because it brings them a release from prison and death, even though only a temporary one.

Hogg obviously decided to transform the legend into a hoax and make it pseudoauthentic. Therefore he adds a rather cynical remark that the hen, that is Pery, was shot by a hunter.

One would think that the story will end with the escape of Pery and Gale by means of metamorphosis, which would be a rather disturbing but impressive ending. But Hogg again does not seem to know where to stop, and adds a fairly grotesque mystifying epilogue which is hard to accept for 'the gentle reader'.

The author tells us that the hen was not only shot but also eaten and even gives an exact day of the dinner, "on the 20th of October, 1817, and that was the final end of poor Pery, the Maid of Eildon."[14]

The supernatural escape of the two lovers by means of metamorphosis thus proves to be an ironic failure because once again the supernatural plans are obstructed by the human factor. The bird was ceremoniously eaten, with strange effects on the minds of the guests at the dinner:

> "The effect on these gentlemen has been prodigous - the whole structure of their minds and feelings has undergone a complete change, and that grievously to the worse; even their outward forms, on a near inspection, appear to be altered considerably."[15]

Hogg does not specify this kind of metamorphosis and continues with a completely irrelevent comment on the surviving cock who after two hundred and fifty years ought to be a unique eye-witness of "the history of the hunting, the fowling, fishing, and pastoral employments of that district..."[15]

The end comes like a slap. The epilogue betrays a shocking lack of concern for the separation of the two lovers. It is hard to say whether it is a structural flaw or Hogg's ironic intention to have a laugh at romantic love stories. How should we read this metamorphical feast? Is it just another example of Hogg's amazing lack of sense of proportion and generic discipline, which, however, adds an authentic touch to the story?

At the end Hogg uses his favourite device of stepping in in the role of an editor of authentic material, a device he frequently uses. The chaotic and incongruous effect the story produces enhances the illusion of authenticity, as if the author only mediated the strange, chaotic flow of life, in which the good and sincere lovers may not be rewarded, counter to our expectation and desire. Events in human life seldom reveal a structural pattern.

The grotesque end reintroduces the issue of human involvement in the world: once again it is a blind, insensitive human character who crosses the path of the metaphysical Providence and obstructs Its course.

In fact all human interventions in the matters of metaphysical nature lead to disaster. If Croudy had not tried to interfere with the supernatural world of the fairies, he would not have been metamorphosed into a pig. If he had not been metamorphosed, then Pery would not have been accused of witchcraft. If the king had not been keen on witch-hunting and left it to the supernatural agency, Pery would not have faced death and would not have been metamorphosed into the snow-fowl. If the hunter had been more careful and better informed about the magic birds in his hunting region, Gale in the bird shape would not have been shot and separated from his beloved Pery.

And thus we can see that there is some kind of moral logic

in the deep structure of the tale, which is again derived from the folk mythic thought which provides Hogg with some elemental foothold in his protean world of changes.

> "In other words, the mysterious has primarily a *human* and *social* significance, on this earth. All of Hogg's major figures must confront this chaos, and their response to it defines their moral condition. The honest characters endure the descent with some equanimity and avoid judging others by appearances, while immature characters try to escape from mystery..."[16]

The tragedy is caused by human lack of respect and understanding for the deeper existential undercurrents of life. The end seems to be intended as satirical comment on the nature of modern society and its rationalism, which still paradoxically can not escape atavistic murders and cannibalism. If one does not recognize the danger, if one remains blinded by emotions or ignorance, then one crosses the metaphysical law of the nature and has to suffer the punishment in the form of metamorhosis as a fall into the chaos and non-differentiation. In symbolic terms, man metamorphoses into a beast, in reality he becomes less than human.

This harsh satirical comment is reinforced by the ending, when the two fairies decide to leave the human world for ever and escape into some kind of higher existence, finding no virtue among people and dismissing even the king as "a block"[17] As a result of that, the story does not end in any kind of fall or rise, but in a simple disappearance from our world. This strange romantic compromise again proves the unsteady metamorphical nature of Hogg, who struggled between his mythic cultural heritage and current cultural trends - rationalism and romanticism. Metamorphosis therefore serves as a symbolic vehicle for his twists of moods and views as well as a vehicle for his belief that one should never trust appearances and be open both

to reason and intuition, because the true nature of things is often hiding behind masks and veils.

Metamorphosis' is a supernatural phenomenon; as such it invokes the thrilling feeling of encounter with the other and thus it reminds us of the presence of mystery in life.

> "In fact his ghosts, brownies, visions and dreams always carry a symbolic and thematic significance, whatever their real status in the real world. Hogg's brownies and kelpies are a device to invoke the inexplicable, to keep alive different possibilities, and to save readers from a single vision that demands either literal-minded belief or disbelief."[18]

The reading of Hogg becomes an adventure which demands an active participation of the reader who has to fill the gaps and elipses of meaning. Such an author invites us to a world of which he pretends to be rather a 'translater' than a creator.

The story gives the appearance of a fragment from a huge pseudohistorical fresco, it gives us only a glimpse of the vast complexity, it seems to be a mere episode. We get only glimpses of the life at the royal court, we hear only rumours of the plotting and intrigues, we get glimpses of the higher orders of life, of the magical Outworld, of the eternal struggle between the corrupting forces of evil and not always clearcut powers of the good, we meet characters who become an easy prey, victims of the mysterious powers underlying the reality. We are back in the world of myths though the moral borders are often uncertain and the innocence and good intention is not necessarily rewarded in the proper, conventional way, in short, we are in a world which we do not fully comprehend, and that is, I suppose, a very modern human situation.

NOTES

1 On the other pole of this creative period there would be the story *Basil Lee*, evidently an attempt to imitate Defoe's ficticious autobiographies, written in much more realistic idiom even though it also involves supernatural scenes.

2 Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh, 1976), p.87

3 Ibid., p.88

4 Ibid., p.85

5 James Hogg, "The Hunt of Eildon" in: *The Tales of James Hogg, The Ettrick Shepherd*, vol 2 (London-Glasgow, 1884), p.6

6 Ibid., p.24

7 Gifford, op.cit., *p.85*

8 Thomas Crawford,"James Hogg: The Play of Region and Nation" in: *The History of Scottish Literature*, vol 3 (Nineteenth Century), Douglas Gifford (ed) (Aberdeen, 1989), p.93

9 e.g. Muir, Gifford, Hart.

10 "The Hunt of Eildon", p.2

11 see: M.M.Bakhtin: "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" in: *The Dialogic Imagination*, Michael Holquist (ed) (Austin, 1985),

12 David Groves, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.92

13 "The Hunt of Eildon", p.6

14 Ibid., p.14

15 Ibid., p.23

16 Groves, op.cit., p.89

17 "The Hunt of Eildon", p.24

18 Groves, op.cit., p.93

III

James Hogg

THE THREE PERILS OF MAN - WAR, WOMEN AND WITCHCRAFT

The Three Perils of Man (1822) is Hogg's longest and most extravagant novel. It can be taken as a forerunner of modern fantasy, and it is undoubtedly one one of the most extraordinary prose works of European Romanticism. It is both feat and feast of metamorphoses. It would be very hard to find a British book which could compete with its variety and quantity of metamorphoses. They constitute an essential dynamic structural element and convey a symbolic meaning - the fall of man into a lower level of being as under the spell of war, women and witchcraft.

Compared to *The Hunt of Eildon* the metamorphoses acquire much wider variety of roles, but still remain within the space of the marvellous and do not acquire the psychological dimension we find in *The Private Memoirs and Confesions*.

Each respective theme of the title is symbolically associated with real or metaphoric metamorphosis. War and courtly love reduce men to raving beasts and fools. Witchcraft does the same; it literally changes people to beasts and deceives the senses with all kinds of tricks and charms. All the three dangers put man 'into a Fallen State'.

Metamorphosis also provides a very powerful stimulus for Hogg's creative imagination. Hogg is evidently at his best when he deals with the supernatural, as Simpson claims.[1] The encounter with the supernatural ignites Hogg's creative imagination.

His extensive use of metamorphosis suggests fascination with physical change which defies the laws of reason and reminds us of the mythic fact that life is a mystery and any attempt to exploit it or control it ends with a terrible fall. The protean world of

metamorphoses is a manifestation of his inherited mythic uncertainty with regard to the world of appearances, which brings Hogg very close to the postmodernist reader.

But the greatest peril of the reader of this book is actually none of these things, but his own expectations of what a true romance or fairy-tale should look like and how it should be experienced. We should read the book rather in the tradition of the provoking literary experiments of sound, unsentimental vitalism to be found in the works of Lawrence Sterne, and to some extent in those of Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding. But the most important source of inspiration lies in the rich Scottish folklore of the Border area.

The Dual Narrative Space

Before I begin the discussion of the types and roles of metamorphosis in the text, I want to clarify the structural space of the text which heavily leans on the principle of duality.

The book is Hogg's most ambitious and also his most successful synthesis of Border folklore and medieval Romance. If in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1817) Hogg mixed together a popular ghost tale and historical romance while operating within the framework of the uncanny, in *The Three Perils of Man* he decided to separate the uncanny and the marvellous. As in *The Hunt of Eildon* he chooses two narrative lines.

The first narrative is an ironic version of medieval romance. It describes the siege of Roxburgh castle taken by the English, showing a metamorphosis of the initial chivalry at the beginning to the war frenzy at the end. As in *The Three Perils Of Man*, this narrative line could be called 'high romance', because it contains main characters of high aristocratic origin.

The other narrative is closer to folk legend and myth than romance and is also peopled with a variety of lower-class characters. The narrative describes the embassy of a brave knight, Charlie Scott, with his motley band seeking advice from a mighty wizard Master Michael Scott at his Aikwood castle whether their lord, Border baron Sir Ringan, should join the forces of lord Douglas or remain neutral. Typically of Hogg, the decision is considered on purely pragmatic terms: what is more profitable for the House of Sir Ringan and whether the cause is worth wasting lives of his men.

The Roxburgh narrative line operates within the uncanny. The dynamic structural role of metamorphosis is substituted with disguise, a favourite technique of the comedy of manners since Shakespeare. Apart from disguise, a kind of metaphorical metamorphosis appears occasionally. It is usually used to describe the extreme states of mind; in other words, madness. When the starving English soldiers are changing into a raving mob and refuse to surrender, they are compared to people possessed by devil: "demon of animosity and revenge has been conjured up".[2]

The Aikwood narrative line is on the other hand situated in the space of the marvellous, and metamorphosis plays a key role in it. The following part deals with the structural role of metamorphosis of the characters and the setting on the syntactic and semantic levels of the text.

The Role of Metamorphosis

On the syntactic level, metamorphosis generally creates conflicts and operates as a dramatic, dynamic element. The whole Aikwood narrative is full of metamorphoses: metamorphoses of characters and animals. Most of these metamorphoses do not play

a really significant role in the overall structure of the novel. There are, however, three major metamorphoses that play a key role in the plot and in the semantic level of the text. They produce three climaxes around which the narrative is pivoted and thus operate as cohesive structural elements.

The first such climax is a cataclysmatic metamorphosis of the setting. It occurs as a climax of the metamorphical contest between the friar and Michael. It actually brings the narrative to a contraversial impasse, when the heroes become imprisoned in the tower as a result of the metamorphical contest of power between the friar and Michael.

On one hand the impasse offers an opportunity of learning something more about the present characters through their story-telling contest. Each episode is told in a distinct diction and narrative idiom, a technique of realism which Hogg frequently exploits in his work (his characters are often characterised by their manner of speech).

On the other hand in its sheer extent the story-telling contest is hugely out of proportion even for the eighteenth-century standards of digression. It is almost as if the author chose to ignore the major narrative concerns and indulged himself in the pleasure of the traditional Decameron story-telling situation, or of the later *Canterbury Tales* as Gifford noticed.[3]

In fact, this kind of provocative lack of concern for the reader who generally demands a linear order of the story, is again a typical postmodernist feature.

The second dramatic climax is again closely connected with metamorphosis, but in this case with the metamorphosis of character which provides an allegorical key to the other impasse in the Roxburgh narrative where Douglas finds himself in a deadlock, not being able to take the castle.

And finally, metamorphosis as an example of the supreme control over nature and its underlying supernatural forces generates a mythic climax of the book in the account of the last battle of Master Michael commanding the forces of Nature against Satan with his armies of supernatural demons and monsters. Michael's dramatic fall from the heights of power and pride replays the drama of the Faustian metaphysical fall.

The metaphysical fall of the magic superman is contrasted with the social and moral rise of Charlie, an honest hero with a gentle heart, the embodiment of a simple mythic Scot, though even he is not spared occasional irony and is closer to a peasant than to a fearless medieval knight of aristocratic conduct.

Metamorphosis of the Setting

In contrast with *The Hunt of Eildon*, there are two basic types of metamorphosis - apart from metamorphosis of characters there is also metamorphosis of the setting (which is absent in *The Hunt of Eildon*) in *The Three Perils of Man*. Such a type of metamorphosis naturally provides a dramatic spectacle which complements the metamorphosis of the character. It broadens the context of metamorphosis, showing the threatening extent of the power which reaches beyond the individual and disrupts natural laws and thus can affect the enviroment of the whole region.

The first metamorphosis shows the potential of power, the second one the consequences of its abuse. In the first case, Master Michael splits The Eildon Hill into three peaks during the power contest with the friar. In the second case, the narrator gives a description of the region around the Aikwood castle plagued with evil and looking like a fairy tale land of evil.

The first metamorphosis reveals the extent of magic power and suggests symbolically the price one has to pay for it. The other metamorphosis can be taken in the Romantic sense as a metaphor of the mind corrupted by evil, it articulates the extent of damage both in physical (a wasteland) and metaphysical sense (witches and evil creatures).

When the embassy led by Charlie is coming near the Aikwood castle, they observe:

> "It seemed as if the breath of the enchanter, or his eye, had been infectious, and had withered all within its influence, whether of vegetable, animal, or human life."[4]

If this observation is presented in the characters' discourse as a comparison ("as if"), there is another, even more sinister description presented as a direct fact by the narrator Isaac:

> "But ever since Master Michael Scott came from the colleges abroad to reside at the castle of Aikwood, the nature of demonology in the forest glades was altogether changed, a full torrent of necromancy, or, of witchcraft, deluged the country all over, - an art of the most malignant and appalling kind,"[5] "...daughters were turned into roes and hares, to be hunted down for sport to the Master. The old wives of the hamlet were saddled and bridled by night, and urged with whip and spur over whole realms. The cows were deprived of their milk, - the hinds cast their young, and no domestic cat in the whole district could be kept alive for one year."[5]

The metamorphical image of the country 'polluted' with magic industry, the natural balance disturbed, and Nature abused, reinforces the main thematic concern - showing the perils of witchcraft, or the peril of revolts against God and Nature. The greater the rise, the greater the fall. One should stay firmly on the ground as Charlie does or stick to religious faith as the friar does.

All the metamorphoses are linked with the Faustian figure of

Master Michael Scott, an authentic historical character who was a major medieval scholar of international status in the thirteenth century. Hogg's presentation of Michael as a wizard who made a contract with dark spirits to achieve access to the mystery of nature and to gain control of the elements, is, typically of Hogg, very far from the real historical person. The historical Michael Scott was probably very much like the friar: a pious scholar of European status, rejecting magic as such even though he was alledged to have made also experiments with magic.[7]

Master Michael grows into a great tragic figure of a Faustian hero whose brave and heroic quest for ultimate knowledge and his final defiance wins our sympathy in spite of his pride, conceit and lack of concern for the suffering of the individual. Hogg lets him go through a peripety of doubt, despair and humiliation when Master Michael stretches his powers to their limits and has to send his three demonic servants to split the Eildon Hill. At these moments of helplessness he displays human emotions.

> "...but they had scarcely well ended their hymn, when he rushed again in among them, with wildered looks, and his hair standing on end, seeming glad to take shelter among those from whom he had so lately fled with abhorrence."[8]

This cataclysmatic metamorphosis has serious syntactic and semantic effects on the further development of the plot. Each transgression of limits of the mythic space of human life causes essential conflicts. Due to the friar's transgression - he blew up the beastly steward Gourlay keeping the keys - they are imprisoned in the tower, facing death by starvation; due to his metaphysical transgression, Master Michael is exposed to demons who come to drag him away. His act results in appearance of the devil in person. When the metamorphosis of The Eildon Hill is completed, Michael recovers his magic powers but can not get rid

of the devil any more.

Their struggle begins and achieves a breathtaking mythic scale at the very end of the novel when Master Michael commanding the forces of nature successfully beats the armies of Hell, only to be snatched from behind by the Devil in the form of a fiery dragon and symbolically falls from heights and shatters himself on the very ground he strove to subdue.

> "The whole northern hemisphere, from the eastern to the western horizon, was covered with marshalled hosts of the shade of gigantic warrioirs...They were all mounted on the ghosts of crackens, whales and walruses: and for bows and quivers each had a blown bladder on his back as large as the hills of Ben-Nevis."[9]

On the semantic level, each metamorphosis of the setting represents a symbolic violation of the natural world, an act of wilful violence and pride through which Michael separates himself from Nature and from salvation. The extent of his anti-natural twist is revealed in his reversed aesthetic judgements - what is beautiful repels him, and what is ugly, deformed or grotesque attracts him.[10] That is the reason why he finally chooses the grotesque Gibbie as his new steward and not the beautiful maiden or the boy. Anyway, if the mere idea of bringing an innocent girl and a boy as a "payment" for his advice seems to be a morally dubious choice, then actual sacrificing of the two would have thrown a dark shadow on the embassy, particularly on the sincerely pious good friar and friendly hero Charlie.

Metamorphosis of Character

To understand the metamorphosis of characters means to explore its syntactic function in the plot and its semantic significance, which are often difficult to separate from each

other.

Metamorphoses of characters can generally have different syntactic functions in the text. If in *The Hunt of Eildon* metamorphosis is used as a device of disguise, punishment, and escape, here it is used also as a sport. On the whole, metamorphosis is used in a more playful manner. Even though the metamorphosis can become a cruel game, it does not have fatal consequences for the victims. Neverthless, the consequences can be far-reaching.

All the metamorphoses in *The Three Perils of Man* come out of the mythic store but at the same time they are treated in a more complex way with the resulting sense of peculiar ambiguity which constitutes a special, morally disturbing quality of Hogg's work which is both sophisticated and savage.

The first real metamorphosis which appears in the novel can serve as a good example. It operates primarily as a device of punishment but at the same time it shows, in a dramatic shortcut, the nature and potential danger of the power which is used for metamorphosis, and, once invoked, it demands to be used and spent, or it would turn against the one who invoked them.

> "Give your master there a toasting for his insolence," said Michael. The pages giggled for joy; the seneschal kneeled and roared out for mercy, and, as a motive for granting it to him, said the strangers were at the gate. The pages had already laid their fangs on him; but the master, on the arrival of the strangers being brought to his mind, ordered the imps to desist. This they did on the instant; but, without delay, rushed on Michael himself, as if they would tear him to pieces. He threated, cursed, and dared them to touch him; but they seemed nothing daunted by all he said visit, but danced around him with demoniac gestures, crying still out with one voice: -
>
> *"Work, Master, work we need;*
> *Work for the living, or for the dead:*
> *Since we are called, work we will have,*

for the master, or for the slave.
Work, Master, work. What work now?
"Miserable wight that I am! cried the mighty Master.[11]

On the pragmatic level metamorphosis disturbs our sense of mechanistic consequential order which requires a sense of proportion. Gourlay's minor offence is out of proportion with the cruel punishment as the example above shows. He is punished for referring to the old witch Henbane as "the old witch Henbane" instead of "your worthy and respectable housekeeper"[11]

Michael has in fact no other choice but to allow the three imps to chase Gourlay and torture him in all of the three metamorphoses he has to undergo.

Thus the metamorphosis as a punishment operates in a complex way and covers more than one role; it is a way to get rid of the 'surplus energy', how to employ the dangerous supernatural elements. In *The Hunt of Eildon* metamorphosis has a single function (e.g.Croudy is metamorphosed in order to be prevented from interfering).

On the other hand, the disproportion between the offence and the cruel punishment informs us of the ruthless character traits of Michael and also of the limits within which he has to work and which ironically undermine his power. A mighty wizard is rendered helpless as the three imps dance around him and demand work. In this ironic way Hogg reveals the problematic nature of power.

We should keep this contextual complexity in mind when we discuss the respective roles of metamorphosis - disguise, escape, contest and code.

Metamorphosis as Disguise

Metamorphosis as a disguise hides the true self for various purposes. Metamorphosis is generally used by the Devil and witches or wizards in their evil schemes with the aim of deceiving the victim by false appearance, or it is used for terrorizing the country in some beastly shape. In this way a moralistic message is conveyed: do not be misled by pretence and false appearances. This is a recurrent theme in Hogg's fiction and later Victorian fiction. But while in Victorian fiction the theme is put in the social context, Hogg still works in the metaphysical mythic context which the Devil is part of.

The Devil appears in the novel disguised as an abbot. He arranges the release of the group locked up in the tower because he is afraid that the friar might try to win Michael's soul. Therefore the friar is made to leave with the innocent girl Delany while the rest of the group with other soldiers of Sir Ringan await the prophesy.

The deceptive disguise plays a very important role because it creates the ironic tension between the authorial discourse, which makes the Devil quite obvious, and the characters' discourse who suspect something but do not know for sure. Later on the devil and Michael stage a metamorphical orgy in which they metamorphose ugly old witches into pretty maids who seduce Charlie's companions. In this way the men are corrupted through sins of fornication with witches and drinking with the Devil, which a true folk hero should try to avoid at any cost because it exposes him to the power of evil.

On the other hand a 'disguise metamorphosis' can also function as a practical joke even though on second thoughts it may have a certain practical purpose in the plot. Michael metamorphoses three hundred rats into an army of servants, presumably because he decides to have some fun. He feels

especially attracted by the two most grotesque members of the group - Gibbie and Tam.

Metamorphosis as Sport?

While the previous metamorphosis is quite harmless and funny, metamorphoses of Gibbie at the end of Charlie's quest at the castle become a horrid form of sport. It can not be punishment because Gibbie has done no evil, he has only been chosen by Michael as a new steward in exchange for the prophecy Charlie came to seek. Michael uses Gibbie and Gourlay as some kind of a toy for the three spirits to keep them busy and have more time for his studies and experiments.

> "...through fatigue and want of feathers I dropt close to the castle whence I had set out, and the three falcons, closing with me, first picked out my eyes and then by brains. I was stabbed as a salmon, hunted as a roe-buck, felled as a bull, and had my head chopped off for a drake. The dinner was made of me. I supplied every dish, and then was forced to cook them all afterward."[12]

Gibbie is a comic character. But his metamorphical experience is treated with Hogg's typical morbid sense of drastic detail and ironic detachment. This unusual rough mixture can be found in some eighteenth-century fiction (Sterne, Swift, Smollett) but Hogg can be more savage. The detail referring to the concrete form of torture suddenly transforms the comic account and switches it into grotesque horror. These violent twists always produce uneasy feeling as if amidst laughter the reader was suddenly punched in the face. One has to ask: isn't it rather too much? To die manyfold death is horrible enough, especially when the poor victim is completely innocent.

But Hogg's world is still a savage world in this book. It is the world of myths and legends which express the historical,

social and psychological experience of people in the country who had to deal with various forms of violence and misfortune, and often became innocent victims in the conflicts they did not fully comprehende. They could easily become a sport in the game of men of power.

The metamorphical chases do not lack the quality of a bad dream - people being chased, humiliated, killed and yet appearing in new shapes, suffering from fear and pain and yet somehow immortal, being not so far away from their cartoon relatives like Tom and Jerry, involved in the eternal game of chase which becomes the whole meaning and content of their existence.

Metamorphosis as a Code

Metamorphosis is the cohesive structural element of the novel which constitutes the essential link between the two narrative lines. Charlie and his group finally receive the prophecy coded in a very original form: being corrupted by fornication, drinking and feasting with Devil and witches, they are metamorphosed into a herd of oxen.

This metamorphosis operates on all three levels, the syntactic, pragmatic (ethical), and semantic (symbolic) and fulfils several purposes.

First, this metamorphosis serves as a revenge of Michael and the Devil, and as a display of power over the laws of Nature. In this way they can make up for the previous defeats in conflicts with the friar. The friar is not able to return men to their human shape because he cannot undo magic. But the Devil shows up as a gentleman and changes Charlie's group back to human shape.

Second, the metamorphosis into bulls has an ethical

function: it allegorically reveals man's low nature and gives Michael an opportunity to pronounce his sarcastic view of humanity which, under a careful scrutiny, is not so foreign to Hogg's nature as a writer.

> [the devil]"...knows you will fume, and bully, and fight for a few short years, sending one another home to his ample mansions in myriads before your time. Both he and I would scorn to take farther advantage of being so blind ignorant and inconsistent, than suits our amusement. We only love to mock you, show you your own littleness, and how easy prey you would be, were there a being in the universe that watched for ever your destruction."[13]

It really does seem to me that Hogg loves to mock his characters and the reader, showing the littleness of man and how vulnarable he is to the deception of appearances.

Hogg displays an ambivalent attitude to Michael. On one hand he seems to sympathise with Michael's attempt to reach the heights of human spirit and knowledge, and on the other hand the folk mythic tradition within which he writes makes him expose the perils of pride. Hogg is split between Romantic sympathy with the exceptional hero who stands apart haughtily from the society, and the ethical demands of the mythic mode in which Michael is doomed to fall because he takes the forbidden, deadly path of Faust - that of pride and ultimate knowledge which summons powers which the individual is not able to control.

Christianity brings ethical order into the fluid, unstable and often morally ambivalent world of myths. In the mythic mode which works within the Christian value system, Michael is a sinner and a man morally corrupted by his pact with the forces of the dark, as Hogg shows many times.

Third, metamorphosis provides a symbolic key to the impasse at the siege of Roxburgh. It literally shows how to conquer Roxburgh Castle. The Scots are to imitate the act of

metamorphosis by disguising themselves as cows which the starving English in Roxburgh castle are keen on capturing.

In other words, in order to win the war instigated by women, they have to turn to beasts and imitate the guile of the devil. Thus in this metamorphosis with symbolic significance all the three themes become united.

Metamorphosis as Escape

It is interesting that unlike *The Hunt of Eildon* there is no metamorphosis in the role of escape in *The Three Perils of Man*. When Gourlay or Gibbie are metamorphosed into animals they can never escape their merciless persuers. They are chased and hurt just for fun.

The ancient mythic metamorphosis as escape becomes unacceptable in the Romance mode which operates in the medieval Christian universe. Metamorphosis can no longer bring about an escape into another type of existence within the order of Nature; it remains only a symbolic image of man's fall.

Metamorphosis as Fall

This is the essential symbolic function of metamorphosis in general, to which all the other functions are subordinated. The story of Michael's fall is the Faustian version of man's fall through his alienation from God and Nature because of his pride and 'abuse' of reason. Master Michael as a proud seeker of absolute knowledge and understanding of metaphysical forces underlying the reality, is doomed to failure.

Besides Michael's titanic fall, there are a number of small falls that are always associated with metamorphosis. The

metamorphical feast can be performed only because the hungry group forgets to say a prayer before the meal. When the friar does so, the meal is revealed in its true shape - something like a frog's leg instead of a greasy lamb joint. After the friar's departure with the innocent maid Delany, Charlie and his companions undergo a metamorphosis into oxen, which is again made possible only because through their sins they lost their divine protection.

Whereas their fall was only temporary, the greedy Tam's fall becomes definitive. He is the only one who sells his soul to Devil in exchange for material welfare: that is plenty of fat meat. Since the meat he gets is not a real meat but another metamorphical trickery, he remains always hungry. His fall comes about through the sin of gross materiality.

My final consideration concerns the pragmatic level of metamorphosis, which reveals itself through the other two levels. It is related to the ethical role of metamorphosis and supernatural effect. The supernatural in general has an ethical function in Hogg's work. "Hogg's demons are agents of justice...They tempt and lure the wicked to destruction."[15] Ghosts in folk tales and ballads often appear as agents of justice and conscience.

Groves draws our attention to a deeper function of the supernatural, working on the unconscious level:

> "In fact his ghosts, brownies, visions and dreams always carry a symbolic and thematic significance, whatever their real status in the real world. Hogg's brownies and kelpies are a device to invoke the inexplicable, to keep alive different possibilities, and to save readers from the single vision that demands either literal-minded belief or disbelief."[14]

Groves emphasized the significance of the myth of descent in *The*

Three Perils of Man as an instructive lesson for the main hero Charlie. Charlie falls through the sin but emerges as a more experienced man and "tries to find universal meaning in his experience of descent."[15]

There is no doubt that Charlie rises while Michael falls. But Charlie's rise is rather social than metaphysical. He has gone through the perils of man and succeeded. I do not think, however, that he emerges from his metamorphical fall as a changed man as Groves argues.

> "The act of of dressing in ox hides is the turning-point in the romance, the action that leads from despair to triumph and harmony: allegorically, it implies that mankind may reascend to its rigthful place in an improved world only after fully accepting its universal, common bond in the physical or animal side of its nature."[16]

As usual, Hogg's treatment is more controversial than it seems. It is true that Charlie uses his wisdom to break the impasse but it causes another bloodshed. As I mentioned above, in war men inevitably 'fall' into bestiality: Sir Ringan's men can win the war only if they perfectly exploit the guile of evil and make a good use of the fall. Charlie's victory is that he returns unchanged from his metamorphical experience and remains what he was before - Hogg's image of an archetypal Scottish folk hero who has deep respect for the inexplicable (even to such an extent that he sometimes makes himself ridiculous), is brave and has a good heart.

To survive a fall, one has to be like Charlie, to avoid the fall, one has to be like the friar, a product of the cartesian split, who draws a sharp line between the empirical world of science and the metaphysical world of forces alien to man.

NOTES

1 Louis Simpson, *James Hogg: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh, 1962), p.62
2 James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Man* (Edinburgh, 1972), p.76
3 Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh, 1976), p.115
4 Hogg, op.cit., p.141
5 Ibid., p.325
6 Ibid., p.326
7 See: Lynn Thorndike, *Michael Scott* (London, 1965), pp.11-22
8 Hogg, op.cit., p.193
9 Ibid., p.461
10 Ibid., p.150
11 Ibid., p.146
12 Ibid., p.450
13 Ibid., p.345
14 David Groves, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.93
15 Ibid., p.102
16 Ibid., p.103

IV

James Hogg

THE PRIVATE MEMOIRS AND CONFESSIONS OF A JUSTIFIED SINNER (1824)

In this novel Hogg put the supernatural fully to the use of the psychological, producing as a result one of the most original works of the nineteenth century, which makes Sir Walter Scott look like a pleasant, understanding entertainer (this is not meant to diminish his significance and huge influence as a founder of the historical romance offering important insights into the Scottish society and psyche). Hogg, on the other hand, presents himself as a deviously disturbing author, for whom metamorphosis becomes a key symbolic image of human fall through excessive pride and gnoseological self-confidence.

Hogg is disturbing because he has a disturbing theme to communicate: he consciously preaches the need for mythic humility of Everyman when facing the mystery of life and the world. The Wringhims fall into sin, because they assume a totalitarian pose of those who feel equal to God. Rational understanding implies manipulation and rigid categorization which inhibits the flow of life. The Wringhims, having become 'elevated', lose their hold on reality, and they live in the hermeneutic space of dogma. And finally, unlike the gentleman Scott, Hogg, drawing his inspiration both from folklore and the Gothic novel, offers a disturbing picture of reality and human ambitions as he reveals the horrors that lurk under treacherous appearances, conscious or unconscious pretensions.

Nevertheless, the folk mythic outlook gives Hogg a firm platform, which other Romantic writers like Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, had to construct 'in the air' - on the

spiritual grounds of neoplatonism or deism. In Hogg we can always find the characters, like Charlie, the friar, Robert's servant, who, being firmly footed in their natural down-to-earth outlook, form a positive contrast to the great sinners. If they fall, it is never so serious that they would have lost their humanity.[1]

Each new book by Hogg is a new attempt in terms of genre and form as Hogg tried to succeed as a serious writer. If *The Hunt of Eildon* is situated within folk myths (the space of the marvellous), in the romance *The Three Perils of Man* one narrative is set in the space of the marvellous (the supernatural), while the other narrative in the space of the uncanny (the plausible).

The Private Memoirs and Confessions are structured along two interrelated narratives, but in a much more sophisticated manner than in his previous works. Each respective narrative cleverly blends the uncanny and the marvellous and maintains an ambiguity which, according to Todorov, is the essential structural feature of the fantastic.[2] This hesitation and uncertainty becomes the ultimate concern of the text on the highest level of abstraction. It comes out of the clash between the narrative voices representing two radically opposed perspectives: the editor's narrative, which is told in a sober and rational manner; and Robert's narrative told in a highly subjective and emotional tone.

The sophistication of the form proves that Hogg drew inspiration not only from folklore and the type of historical romance Scott had established, but also from the tradition of the English Gothic novel and the German Romantic novel, which display an increasing interest in excesses of the abnormal mind. Carey mentions Hoffmann's Gothic novel *The Devil's Elixir* (1816),

translated by Hogg's friend R.P.Gillies, and "arguably related to Hogg's novel"[3]. Hoffmann, in turn, was inspired by Lewis's *Monk* (1796), a powerful story of the moral and metaphysical fall of a gifted preacher.

Metamorphosis, apart from its supernatural character and ethical and pragmatic function, becomes also a psychological phenomenon; Robert can be haunted by a supernatural agent as well as by a spectre of his sick and disturbed mind.

Metamorphosis becomes an extremely important and significant device of ambiguity in the structure of the book. The supernatural is confined within the psychological limits ingeniously grounded in folk diabolic tradition: the Devil has no power over good people and has to use guile and deception in order to win their souls. Even though both Robert and Gil-Martin fire from their golden pistols, it is Robert who kills Mr.Blanchard.[4] Similiarly, it is Gil-Martin that initiates the duel but it is Robert's rapier that is seen to pierce George.[5] As the Devil cannot metamorphose Robert, he has to apply psychological means of subtle persuasion. He has to seduce Robert. In other words, Robert has a romance with the Devil.

As a result of that, there is no instant supernatural metamorphosis of the main human protagonists, with the exception of Robert's mysterious companion, Gil-Martin. Robert's 'metamorphoses' remain by and large symbolic, and document various stages of his metaphysical fall, and of his psychosomatic decline and mental disease.

I differentiate between symbolic images and metamorphical changes in his case. The symbolic images are thematically linked and highlight the respective stages of the fall (for instance,

eagle, sword, spider, fly). Metamorphical changes imply a physical and psychic change, and do not exclude a possibility of a supernatural involvement: shadow, spectre, zombie.

All these metamorphical changes have one common denominator: the loss of free will and split of the organic mythic duality of body and soul. Shadow is bound to the body to which it is attached; the spectre is an extention of the shadow which appears independent of the subject, but in reality is linked with the subject; and zombie is a material projection of the independent shadow: a physical form animated by a foreign force - by the power of the Other.

Robert's rise through pride and his consequent fall into chaos and materiality is situated into the context of the eighteenth-century religious schisms in Scotland and represents a pastiche version of the Faustian fall. Robert's motivation and aspiration is much more limited and rather base. He does not aspire to a higher understanding; he accepts the role assigned to him by his father:

> "...Lord, I give him into Thy hand, as a captain putteth a sword into the hand of his of his sovereign, wherewith to lay waste his enemies."[6]

It is one of the many subtle ironies in the text that Robert does become the sword of his sovereign, but of the other one.

Metamorphoses of Gil-Martin, either supernatural or imaginary, follow the devious pattern of seduction and punishment, represented by the following stages: the double, amorphous self, victim. Each stage has specific ethical, pragmatic, syntactic and semantic functions and meanings in the text, which will be the subject of the following discussion.

Discussion of metamorphosis presupposes the recognition of

a supernatural reading of the text. The text is, however, presented in the form of two main narratives told in different perspectives: the editor's narrative and Robert's first person narrative. Robert's narrative begins in the uncanny and shifts towards the marvellous; even though all the metamorphoses might be, if one stretched the limits of ambiguity, interpreted psychologically as phenomena of a hysterical or sick mind. The editor's narrative, on the other hand, includes events which are presented as being natural phenomena (the magic lantern effect on the top of Arthur's Seat)[7] but which can also be interpreted in most cases as supernatural events.

1/ The Editor's Narrative

The choice of the narrator-editor as a solid rationalist naturally eliminates the explicit supernatural interpretation and presentation of the facts. Even though the editor's narrative appears to have no metamorphoses of characters, the narrative includes three dramatic situations which constitute three major dramatic peaks of the narrative. All these scenes involve some kind of powerful metamorphical change of the protagonist or the setting. It is not a mere metaphorical change; it is a dramatic change in physical shape and substance and thus it comes close to metamorphosis.

The editor's discourse should be kept separate from the characters and plot discourse which often present views and facts which are not compatible with the editor's views. In the editor's discourse metamorphical events are presented as uncanny events. If he is to deal with events which are more openly suggestive of a supernatural nature, he steps back and presents the events in the characters' discourse and refrains from any comment. The circumstances, however, in which the events take

place, always undermine the absolute validity of reported supernatural facts, because such events always occur in situations of inferior visibility and emotional excitement.

The editor's narrative is conceived as an account of a conflict between two families, which is placed in a broader social and political context of early eighteenth century Scotland. The conflict originates in the family of laird Colwan, split by fundamental differences between the old laird and his young, bigoted wife.

> "The laird was what his country neighbours called a 'droll, careless chap,' with a very limited proportion of the fear of God in his heart, and a very nearly as little of the fear of man...his lady was the most severe and gloomy of all bigots to the principles of the Reformation."[8]

The conflict is 'inherited' by the two children - George Colwan and his illegitimate brother Robert Wringhim, apparently a child of Mrs Colwan and her adored friend - the fanatical minister Wringhim. The conflict between Robert and George is triggered off at the tennis match, the first of the three dramatic peaks of the editor's narrative. The second dramatic metamorphical scene takes place on the top of Arthur's seat. The third scene involves the night duel in which George is killed.

These scenes are treated in a much more complex manner that the rest of the narrative which uses primarily the technique of 'telling' about things, in other words, a simple summary of events. Each scene either corresponds to some kind of physical and mental transformation of Robert, or it initiates such a significant change. In the scene of the match Robert appears as a dark, sinister shadow; on the mountain as a shadow monster; and finally, due to his full involvement in evil, as a zombie.

The Shadow

The scene at the tennis match shows the origin of the animosity between George and Robert. Robert is envious of the social success his step-brother enjoys, and decides to bring about his social fall, and later on his physical fall - death. First he becomes a nuisance, then after succeeding in provoking a violent reaction and consequent guilt, he turns himself into a haunting figure and follows George on every step.

During the first dramatic confrontation George hits a black-clad boy who has been deliberately obstructing the tennis match and sneering at George. When George learns that the boy is his own brother, George publicly offends him by saying that Robert is an illegitimate child of his mother and Reverend Wringhim. What he says is thought to be a much worse thing than the physical assault. Robert assumes the attitude of a hurt child - he exposes his bleeding face in an obvious effort to raise the feeling of guilt in George and sympathy in people standing around.

There seems to be nothing supernatural about the whole scene, but the narrator drops some dark hints referring to Robert.

> "...the same devilish-looking youth attended him as constantly as his shadow ...and ever and anon his deep and malignant eye met those of his elder brother with a glance so fierce that it sometimes startled him."[9]

This example illustrates well the interaction of the editor's explicit discourse and its implicit connotations, and also shows how the supernatural element is introduced. The supernatural is introduced in the form of metaphors and comparisons which the reader or some of the characters take literally.

The rationalist editor chooses to present 'the malignant eye' as a fact and does not go beyond the empiric description in this case. In fact, there is no need to refer to the supernatural connotation of the 'evil eye' because it was a well-known connotation which every reader could understand at this time.

What is a mere metaphor for the editor, becomes real for George; the reality is changing into a nightmare as Robert sets his mind on a psychic and spiritual vendetta. He is transformed into a haunting figure which keeps following George at every step. He manages to discredit George in front of the public and drives him by constant attendance to seclusion.

> "...the attendance became more and more constant, more inexplicable, and altogether more alarming and insufferable, until at last George was fairly driven from society, and forced to spend his days in his own and his father's lodgings with closed doors...The attendance of that brother was now like the attendance of a demon on some devoted being that had sold himself to destruction; his approaches as undiscerned, and his looks as fraught with hideous malignity. It was seldom that he saw him either following him in the streets, or entering any house or church after him; he only appeared in his place, George wist not how, or whence."[10]

It is as if Robert underwent a metaphysical metamorphosis; he follows George at every step and seems to be able to read his thoughts: "...this unaccountable being knew all his motions, and every intention of his heart, as it were intuitively."[11]

The suggestion of the supernatural nature of Robert's metamorphosis is reinforced by other facts: first, Robert begins to haunt his brother in silence;[12] second, when George decides to make a reconciliation with his brother, he achieves a temporary rest. But when he "began to indulge in a little more liberty"[13] the demon is back as the following scene on the top of Arthur's Seat proves.

Thus an ironic tension is created between the rational presentation of the facts by the editor and between their implicit meaning, created by their metamorphical quality - a familiar thing is turning into the terrifying and exciting unfamiliar one - the Other. Robert, a spiteful religious fanatic, is turning into a haunting shadow which may grow into a monster as the next scene reveals.

The Spectre on the Mountain

The scene on the mountain finds its climax in the appearance of a frightful giant apparition which takes the likeness of Robert as if the omnipresent shadow, which spoils all the fun in George's life, were metamorphosed into a monster.

This scene is covered in both narratives, and in both narratives it serves as a *peripeteia*, the last chance of reprimand. George offers another reconciliation but his offer is spitefully turned down by Robert.

The episode provides powerful motifs which are semantically linked with the themes of the novel: the tricks of lights with the deceptive nature of appearances, the opening pit with the theme of the Fall, the image of the web reappearing later as the central image of Robert's existential situation, and finally the motif of shadow linked with guilt and fear.

The whole metamorphical episode is again presented as a natural event with supernatural overtones. The episode on the mountain is also a fine example of Romantic writing, situated in the dramatic scenery, on the top of Arthur's Seat, overlooking Edinburgh, with George as a young, lonely protagonist facing the overwhelming beauty of nature and its 'magic' performance of colours, light, and shadows.

Hogg begins with a direct account of by the editor of how

George went for an early morning walk after the troublesome days when he had been haunted by his malicious brother. The whole scene is laid out with great care, with the aim of introducing the factor of uncertainty of perception; all images of nature are interlinked with states of mind in a sophisticated manner revealing the influence of Romanticism.

The spectacular scene is full of metamorphoses.

> He is "involved in a blue haze, like a dense smoke, but yet in the midst of it the respiration was the most refreshing and delicious."[14]

Even within the space of one sentence, we can observe protean changes. The blue haze is followed with a dense smoke, which has connotations of danger, fire, suffocation, but also the positive connotation of warmth, human presence. The next observation brings to attention the aspect of a positive transformation - recovery and appetite:

> "The grass and the flowers were loaden with dew; and, on taking off his hat to wipe his forehead, he perceived that the black glossy fur of which his chaperon was wrought, was all covered with a tissue of the most delicate silver - a fairy web, composed of little spheres, so minute that no eye could discern any one of them; yet they were shining in lovely millions."[15]

The dew on the sinister black fur of his chaperon forms some kind of protective halo produced by 'magic' of nature. A natural web does no harm, but symbolic webs of human lies and pretensions make a trap into which Robert is falling.

Hogg uses with great skill a juxtaposition of nature and human mind. If the mind is clear like a mirror, it reflects the beauty and order of nature; once the mind becomes distorted with fears and 'unnatural' emotions and ambitions, it can also project them into objects of fear: into spectres and monsters.

While George experiences the unity with the beauty of the morning nature and behaves with respect, he is safe; he cannot undergo any kind of metamorphosis.

The allegorical image of a web, implying a trap and a spider, returns in another context at the end of the novel, when Robert becomes trapped in the net of the weaver and hangs upside down.

A lovely sight of a halo of light is contrasted with a darkening haze; now more like a dense smoke, which seems to be rising from the bottom of the valley, looking like a "pit of darkness"[17] And out of a pit of darkness all sorts of dark things may come.

Setting the scene full of tricks of light which deceive the eye, the editor ends the first part of his vivid evocation with a passing remark which cleverly introduces what is to come: "The little wee ghost of the rainbow."[18]

At this singificant moment the editor chooses to break the account and remark that:

> "Such was the description of the morning, and vivid shades of the hill, that George gave to his father and Mr.Adam Gordon that same day on which he witnessed them;"[19]

Once the concept of the ghost is mentioned and anchored in the subconscious, it can be easily transformed into an image, that image becoming a vision, apparition, ghost, especially when George's union with nature is disturbed by recollections of his brother's frightening looks, which are associated with feelings of guilt. And precisely what he feared happened.

The whole apparition looks like George's brother metamorphosed into a huge terrible monster.

The subjectivity of the whole scene is emphasized by words indicating perception and mediation through the hero's senses,

"he saw every feature...nothing but its brow and eyes were seen...George conceived it to be a spirit."[20]

The huge ghost disappears only when George runs into his brother, who is crouching behind him.

The reader is left in uncertainty - was it a ghost, or was it a mere hallucination, or was it a projection of Robert's mind?

In case the reader is unable to find a natural explanation of the event, he is offered one in order to provide ambiguity. I suspect that Hogg created the character of the honest and good Mr.Adam Gordon only for the sake of giving a rational intepretation of the event. Mr.Gordon explains the whole experience as a trick of the light, while George resolutely denies it. Having done his job, the character is dropped and never appears again.

In the episode on the mountain, Hogg strikes a skillful balance between the uncanny and the marvellous effect.

The Duel - Robert as a Zombie

The third most significant dramatic scene is the night duel in which George is killed. It includes two eventual metamorphoses: that of Robert's mysterious companion into George's friend with whom George had a quarrel, and a physical transformation of Robert, which makes him resemble a zombie.

Hogg in this scene again maintains ambiguity in a brilliant way. Once again a supernatural metamorphosis may be involved. The whole scene is described by one of the two witnesses, Mrs.Calvert. She is inclined to seek a supernatural interpretation of the events she witnessed.

She believes that George was not killed by his friend but by Robert in a cowardly fashion, from behind, while he was busy

fighting with a person who looked like George's friend, but it could not have been him, because she saw him leave, with no grudge against George and heading in another direction.

> "... one of them was extremely like Drummond ... I was certain it was not he, because I had seen the one going and the other approaching at the same time, and my impression at the moment was, that I looked upon some spirit, or demon, in his likeness."[21]

The editor does not present his views; the whole situation remains ambiguous - she may be right but she may be also wrong, due to the deceptive visibility at night.

The question of seeing is a key factor with regard to the aspect of hesitation in fantastic literature , as Todorov argues:

> "Either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its life."[22]

Todorov distinguishes hesitation between the real and illusionary as an error of perception, and between the real and the imaginary as a confused perception.[23]

If a writer wants to introduce such an ambiguity, he has to create the conditions which undermine clear perception, either objective or subjective. Thus the duel takes place at night when the sight fails and our imagination can play tricks. Furthermore, Mrs.Calvert does not make the most trustworthy witness - first, she is a prostitute, second, she is a thief, and finally, she is a woman, as a witness considered less reliable than a male witness in that time. On the other hand, she does not lack a certain dignity.

The fact that Robert's mysterious companion resembles the accused person may be a confused perception (a failure of sight), or it may be a skilful disguise.

It can be also a metaphysical metamorphosis of Robert's

demonic companion, whose mysterious chameleon-like qualities are confirmed by other witnesses.

Robert seems to pass through the symbolic stage of George's dark shadow and leaves the scene as a sort of zombie, a clumsy corpse animated by some evil power:

> "He walked as if he had been flat-soled, and his legs made of steel, without any joints in his feet or ankles."[24]

This spiritual and mental side of this change receives due attention in Robert's narrative.

2/ Robert's Narrative

Robert's narrative offers a fascinating insight into his inner world and presents the events from his perspectives. His account fills in some gaps in the editor's narrative. It offers an account of his first evil childhood pranks and acts (for instance the way how he managed to have his rival M'Gill expelled from school). We can get a full picture of the particular stages of his fall.

We can follow his account as a fall into the chaos of mental illness and moral disintegration due to his faulty logic of predestination and consequent guilt, or as a pastiche of the Faustian pride and a fall due to association with forces of the dark.

Metamorphosis plays an even more dominant role here: apart from the symbolic images (web, spider or fly) and metaphors or personifications (sword in God's hand, eagle), Robert undergoes metamorphical changes, which were discussed above. Nevertheless, he does not seem to undergo a metamorphosis in the traditional sense. The traditional metamorphosis is connected with the character of his mysterious companion Gil-Martin, who engineers

Robert's fall.

The editor's narrative presented three symbolic metamorphical images of Robert: shadow, spectre, and zombie. With regard to the symbolic images, Groves emphasizes the image of the net or web as a central symbol,[25] which implies a spider and a fly or a weaver, fisherman and fish. In other words, a hunter, his trap and a prey. The metamorphoses of Gil-Martin are closely related to Robert's stages of fall because of the mysterious link which grows between them. This is the theme of the following discussion.

Metamorphoses of the Mysterious Stranger

The Mysterious Stranger, a favourite disguise of the Devil in folklore, engineers Robert's fall. In order to achieve his goals, he makes use of metamorphoses as a disguise and means of deception. He appears in these basic forms: a double, a person with a familiar amorphous face, and an oriental magician. As a double he impersonates Robert and his victims.

Before we can discuss the role of these metamorphoses and their significance, we should try to clear the mystery of the origin of the Mysterious Stranger, who chooses to call himself Gil-Martin.

Who is Gil-Martin? It is not easy to find a satisfactory answer. The easiest answer is the Devil.

> "...but if he *is* the Devil, Hogg's representation of him is highly effective. He avoids the old traditional picture of a horned monster and presents a suave, attractive double-dealer..."[26]

The Devil is also the master of disguises and delusions, the master of seduction.

If he is the Devil, then we face problems at the end of Robert's narrative, when Gil-Martin shows signs of distress and despair:

> "How changed was now that majestic countenance, to one of haggard despair - changed in all save the extraordinary likeness to my late brother."[27]

Why does does he drive away the demons that attack Robert? Is it another trick to make Robert do what he wants? Why does he mirror Robert's state of mind and body? He repeatedly stresses their powerful attachment: they have become inseparable.

> "I am wedded to you so closely, that I feel as if I were the same person. Our essences are one, our bodies and spirits being united..."[28]
> "I have attached myself to your wayward fortune...and it has been my ruin as well as thine."[29]

This can be easily explained within the uncanny in the psychological interpretation: Gil-Martin as a haunting double is the product of Robert's mind and reflects the stages of his fall. Gil-Martin, however, is more than a mere double or part of the self:

> "On the other hand, Gil-Martin become an independent figure by virtue of his sense of humour, which constantly escapes Wringhim..."[30]

This interpretation leads to another supernatural explanation: Gil-Martin is, as the name suggests, the avenging spirit or character M'Gill, Robert's rival from school, who was expelled from school because of Robert's scheming and disappeared. M'Gill was a son of a witch. The name Gil-Martin echoes M'Gill's name, using the surname as his first name. Robert can be held responsible for his spiritual fall when he deprived M'Gill of the opportunity of becoming a decent person.

This would explain the growing dispair Gil-Martin displays

at the very end of the story because he has to pay for the power he has acquired from the forces of the evil to achieve his aim. In this sense his end and desperate fight with the demons is reminiscent of Michael's last battle, even though it lacks the monumental mythic scale.

Gil-Martin does not receive much attention in the editor's narrative; he was evidently developed by Hogg in the course of writing the story. His existence is first reported by Bel Calvert in the last part of the editor's narrative. She and her lover eye-witnesses of the night duel. She describes Robert's companion as a supernatural being, completely in charge of the situation. He looks exactly like George's friend Drummond in his highland clothes. There are especially two peculiar features which make him a strange, disturbing character if not the Devil in persona.

During both encounters with Mrs.Calvert he is aware of her presence while anxious Robert is not. He actually seems to play a double role and tries to expose Robert.

> "I thought all this while I was closely concealed from them, and wondered not a little when he in tartans gave me a sly nod, as much to say, "What do you think of this?" or, "Take note of what you see..."[31]

The second disturbing feature is that the stranger enjoys the event. When Robert kills George and the lover of Mrs.Calvert shouts at them in anger, in protest of the foul play, "the unnatural fiend in the tartans answered with a loud exulting laugh".[32]

There are two previous situations in which an anonymous figure plays the important role of a catalyst, and which could be connected with Gil-Martin. During the first case a 'stranger' tells George that the young man obstructing the game is Robert. Angry George publicly offends Robert by referring to him as an

illegitimate son. During the other case an anonymous person stirs up a mob against George and his friends. In Robert's narrative both acts are done by Gil-Martin.

After his appearance at the scene of the night duel, Robert's companion assumes an important role in the rest of the narrative, the role of the Devil or an evil being which is in control of Robert. Their interrelation becomes the subject of Robert's narrative.

The only full metamorphosis is connected with the mysterious stranger Gil-Martin. If Hogg allowed a metamorphosis of some of the human characters he would destroy the careful balance between the two interpretations, swaying the story decisively toward the marvellous.

The first metamorphosis of Gil-Martin takes the shape of an identical double.

Identical doubles were in fashion long before Stevenson and Hogg. Karl Miller gives an outline of the development of the concept of the double, which can be traced back to the ancient mystic duality of spirit and body. Miller locates the rise of interest in doubles into the eighteenth century:

> "Mesmerists or Animal Magnetists went in for an experimental separation of the second self and the romantic writers went in for its cultural exploitation."[33]

John Herdman brings attention to one of major figures in the field of what is today sometimes called parapsychology, G.H.Schubert, who coined the notion 'animal magnetism':

> "In the magnetic trance, the forerunner of hypnosis, there was often startingly revealed a second personality arising from the dark side of the mind, its 'shadow-side' or 'night-side'."[34]

'night-side'."[34]

Mesmerists and Magnetists regarded doubles as objectively existing beings of another order of life. On the other hand the rationalists proclaimed the supernatural phenomena to be delusions of a sick mind. These two epistemologies inspire the epistemological ambiguity in much of Romantic literature.

Also Robert's double can be a psychological projection of a split mind, a symbolic representation of free will; or, it can be a supernatural being (devil or ghost) or the character of M'Gill endowed with magic.

The moment of appearance of the stranger reinforces the traditional moral aspect of the story: the stranger appears at the moment of the highest elevation of pride, when Robert feels to be above the whole world as he was proclaimed a justified person.

> [I was] "a justified person, adopted among the number of God' children - my name written in the Lamb's book of life, and that no bypast transgression, nor any future act of my own, or of other men, could be instrumental in altering the decree."[35]

This moment of blinded pride, when man set himself apart from laws of morality, brings about the beginning of the terrible fall. And this is also a moment of a metaphorical inner transformation, as the chains of morality are loosened, the beast inside, Hyde or Steppen Wolf, is set free.

The first stage of the fall is the Narcissus stage - courting the self. The hero falls in love with his own beautified image, with his idealized self. The other self is in every respect more efficient and capable, it prompts the means of gratification of the self. It offers all the forbidden fruit and all the excitement.

Robert returns from this first encounter fatally transformed and bound with the other self; he "was to stick to me for good or for evil."[36] Even his parents notice that he is changed. But when Reverend Wringhim hears that the stranger adheres to the religious principles in which he had brought up Robert, he becomes convinced that everything is all right.

The second time Robert meets the stranger, he finds that the stranger assumed a new appearance, which he can not figure out. The stranger reads a book which looks like a Bible but it is written in a foreign language and is filled with red lines and verses. This is an obvious cue for the reader, but not so much for Robert, whose senses and reason are allured. The stranger is also able to read Robert's thoughts. He offers Robert a semi-scientific explanation of his chameleon ability as some kind of an absolute empathy.

> [It]"is a natural peculiarity in me, over which I have not full control... by contemplating a face minutely, I not only attain the same likeness, but, with the likeness, I attain the very same ideas as well as the same mode of arranging them..."[37]

What is the significance of his chameleon, or protean, quality?

Groves argues that "The theme of the novel is the relativity of the human self, which is shown to be a function of time, process, nature, and society."[38] What Gil-Martin can do is beyond human limits, beyond science. The fact that Robert believes the stranger is another proof of his blindness caused by his unlimited faith in dogma. He loses the touch with reality. By pride he raises himself to dangerous heights of abstraction and thinks that he can perfectly understand other people and can

judge them and put them to death. His fall is inevitable.

Gil-Martin assumes shapes of other characters as well. During his third metamorphosis he changes into a moderate, pious priest, Mr.Blanchard.

He appears out of nowhere, which is quite common for Hogg, simply because the character is needed at this stage of the story. This only proves Hogg's lack of concern for a careful composition. Subsidiary characters come and go and rarely play any significant role they might play if Hogg paid more attention to plotting and casting the characters.

Mr.Blanchard is needed for a number of reasons: his murder is Robert's first murder and serves as an initiation into the evil: Mr.Blanchard is also another witness of the physical existence of the stranger: Mr.Blanchard is one of those good people who warn Robert not to trust his evil companion.

In the case of Mr.Blanchard the metamorphosis seems to be only a display of power, another signal which Robert misses, unlike the reader.

Other metamorphoses into doubles are merely functional on the syntactic level of the text. Gil-Martin metamorphoses into a young priest who is seen with pistols leaving the spot of crime and who is later found guilty and executed for the murder of Mr.Blanchard.

The same trick is evidently repeated by Gil-Martin on the night duel: Gil-Martin assumes the shape of George's friend with whom George had a quarrel and who is therefore accused of killing George.

The last type of metamorphical double is the haunting double connected with ethical metamorphosis.

After the murder of George, Gil-Martin assumes the likeness of George, which is noticed also by other characters in the novel, and thus constantly reminds Robert of his crime.

Again the same pattern is repeated: the stranger selects a victim, confuses the circumstances and lets other characters or institutions to commit the act of injustice and crime. As a true metaphysical agent he can only provoke and has to win the sinner by guile, and not by sheer power.

The Fall

The Fall is the central theme of the book. Metamorphosis is a symbolic representation of the Fall. Let us now explore the use and treatment of metamorphosis from the overall perspective of the spiritual fall.

Who is in a fallen state? Reverend Wringhim through his doctrine of predestination; Lady Dalcastle, who leaves her husband and child, has an illegitimate child with Wringhim, and holds false religious views; the noble prostitute and thief Bell Calvert; to some extent also George, due to his treatment of his brother and lifestyle which deprived him of spiritual protection.

The essential fall for us is the fall of the major protagonists: Robert, George and the editor.

Robert's metamorphosis is essentially symbolic even though it is marked by mental and physical changes due to his metaphysical fall and psychosomatic disintegration. Because of its symbolic nature which operates in both the supernatural and natural epistemology, Hogg had to pay much more attention to the psychological aspects of the story and to the clusters of

thematically linked images. He had to be much more subtle than in his previous books.

The theme of the symbolic metamorphosis of Robert into a helpless black fly caught in the web of delusions is interlinked with both physical and abstract images of the Fall from a height into a pit of darkness.

Petrie has made a number of useful observations during her close reading.

> "It is significant that the lady retires to the upper part of the house for, throughout the book, the Wringhim doctrines are described amiguously as 'high' and 'elevated'. The Wringhims may aspire to heaven but they have also lost any down-to-earth ability to relate their beliefs to daily life. Furthermore, towards the end of the book we are reminded that the Devil is also called 'the prince o' the air'."[39]

At the tennis match Robert actually brings George down on the ground even though he himself gets knocked down too when George ran into him. Robert pays with his own fall, both in the physical sense and the metaphysical sense. This pattern is only repeated later on. Gil-Martin seems to be doomed together with Robert and at the end of the novel they seem to share the same fate, unless we consider it another trick of the Devil who tries to bring Robert to suicide - another serious crime, considered an act of utmost defiance of God.

This idea is also formulated by the editor as a theme at the end:

> "...but in this day, and with the present generation it will not go down, that a man should be daily tempted by the Devil, in the semblance of a fellow-creature; and at length lured to self-destruction, in the hopes that this same fiend and tormentor was to suffer and fall along with him."[40]

Robert's feelings of high elevation find their expression in the comparison involving the image of an eagle:

"I felt as if I could have flown in the air, or leaped over the tops of the trees. An exaltation of spirit lifted me, as it were, far above the earth, and the sinful creatures crawling on its surface; and I deemed myself as an eagle among the children of men, soaring on high, and looking with pity and contempt on the grovelling creatures below."[41]

And the very moment he ceases to be 'in touch' with reality, he is 'seized' by the Devil. At this moment he meets the agent of the dark who was invoked by Reverend Wringhim's blasphemous proclamation that "All the powers of darkness...shall never be able to pluck you again out of your Redeemer's hand."[42]

George's elevation on the mountain is the exact opposite of Robert's elevation. He does not separate himself from the world and the general order; on the contrary, he experiences unity with nature.

His sense of harmony and unity is disrupted by the thought of Robert and his haunting looks. The apparition he sees emerges from a dark cloud below him, which lies on the valley:

"...but the cloud of haze lying dense in that deep dell that separates the hill from the rocks of Salisbury, and the dull shadow of the hill mingling with that cloud, made the dell a pit of darkness."[43]

Similarly, Robert is emerging from the darkness below. Once again George runs involuntarily into Robert and they both fall down near the edge of the cliff. This physical touch breaks the spell for both of them; being brought down to earth in the physical sense they are returned to reality. George again hits Robert in an outburst of anger but when he comes fully to his senses and sees his brother reduced to a pitiful figure, he offers another reconciliation. But Robert refuses it when he realizes that his life is not in danger.

Robert consciously denounces physicality under the influence

of most orthodox puritanic conventions - he hates women, he is a scholarly type in contrast to George. His true nature, however, sublimates and reveals itself during his fits of amnesia and split personality when he finds himself accused not only of other murders but also of drinking and sexual abuse.

Down-to-earth realism seems to be the best cure and protection against Robert, who metamorphoses into some kind of demon. Another example can be found in the scene when he discovers Mrs.Logan and Mrs.Calvert hiding in a thicket. It is again a physical conflict which brings him down from the heights of his pride as the two women overcome him easily and bind him with straps of garter. Mrs Calvert reports the metamorphosis they could witness:

> "If a demon could inherit flesh and blood, that youth is precisely such a being...The depth and the malignity of his eye is hideous. His breath is like the airs from a charnel house, and his flesh seems fading from his bones, as if the worm that never dies were gnawing it away already...
> While we were handfasting him, I felt his body to be feeble and emaciated..."[44]

Yet these healthy falls cannot prevent the spiritual fall and his mental and physical disintegration which results in a social fall as well, and makes Robert an outlaw and outcast until he decides to escape his suffering by the last 'elevation' or uplifting: the suicide by hanging himself.

Hogg's work is thematically coherent because it draws the the narrative conventions from ancient folk tradition and from already established conventions of the Gothic novel. Carey mentions Lewis's *Monk* and Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixir* as sources of inspiration.[45] Both these books have a religious fanatic as the main hero who becomes corrupted through excessive pride. Medard and Ambrosio become corrupted through the power of

speech, Robert through the power of thought (a doctrine). Hoffmann's tale is situated within the uncanny, his metamorphoses are in reality disguises and the supernatural doubles turn out to be twins. Lewis's tale takes place in the space of the marvellous and the supernatural.

.Hogg tries to synthetize the two epistemologies and allow for both of them. This does not mean, however, that he would not present his point of view, no matter how distant he makes himself from the text. His own view comes out from the thematic ontological clash of the two contrastive narratives and the ironic epilogue. The editor presents the events as natural ones but ends up in uncertainty as many critics have already noticed; he is not able to cope satisfactorily with the facts in Robert's diary and refuses to treat the story as a record of reality:

> "...I account all the rest either dreaming or madness; or, as he says to Mr.Watson, religous parable, on purpose to illustrate something scarcely tangible, but to which he seems to have attached great weight."[46]

For instance Petrie asserts:

> "Despite his rational education, it is the Editor who is left confused about what actually happened and how to avaluate it."[47]

In fact, the editor does not end up in confusion as the following example may show. The editor simply discredits his sources and the tradition, saying that the tradition originated in the first printed version of the text and claims the facts to be fiction.

> "...and the numerous distorted traditions, which remain of that event, may be attributable to the work having been printed and burnt, and of course the story known to all printers, with their families and gossips."[46]

The ontological theme is the fall through pride which leads

him to believe that he can be like God. Robert's fall is clear, but what shape does the editor's fall take?

The editor 'falls', or fails, what he prides himself in most: the ability to understand the reality. In his rationalism he misses the metaphysical dimension of being. And not only that, he fails to understand the story even as a fable when he admits:

> "With regard to the work itself, I dare not venture a judgement, for I do not understand it."[48]

In this sense he is reduced in status compared to the slightly ironic, self-assured tone he assumed at the beginning. He decided to dismiss Robert's narrative as pure fiction, lacking any real substance.

In this respect he behaves like the modern rationalist man before his Faustian Fall, discarding or re-interpretating all what is beyond the rational grasp. A subjective account, like Robert's narrative, is taken as fiction, something which may have some meaning and message but because it is not thought to be real it is found to be insignificant.

And thus the rationalist walls himself against all that is foreign and strange and confines himself into the city of reason and science. The fall of the rational man finds its powerful expression in haunting image of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*: one day an orderly man wakes up metamorphosed into a huge insect. What was suppressed has broken the barriers and invaded the confined space of the city of his own self. But that is another story, and another fall: fall through suppression and ignorance.

NOTES

1 For example, Robert's servants or Mr.Blanchard

2 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Genre* (London, 1973), p.31

3 John Carey, "Introduction" to James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Oxford and New York, 1990)

4 James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Oxford and New York, 1990), p.141

5 Ibid., p.78

6 Ibid., p.122

7 David Groves, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.115

8 Elaine Petrie, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Aberdeen, 1988), p.21

9 Hogg, op.cit., p.21

10 Ibid., p.37

11 Ibid., p.36

12 Ibid., p.38

13 Ibid., p.38

14 Ibid., p.39

15 Ibid., p.39

16 Groves, op.cit., p.124

17 Hogg, op.cit., p.40

18 Ibid., p.40

19 Ibid., p.40

20 Ibid., p.41

21 Ibid., p.74

22 Todorov, op.cit.., p.31

23 Ibid., p.36

24 Hogg, op.cit., p.80

25 Groves, op.cit., p.123

26 Petrie, op.cit., p.14

27 Hogg, op.cit., p.228

28 Ibid., p.229

29 Ibid., p.234

30 Carey, op.cit., p.xiv

31 Hogg, op.cit., p.75

32 Ibid., p.78

33 Karl Miller, *Doubles* (Oxford, 1987), p.49

34 John Herdmann, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London, 1990), p.3

35 Hogg, op.cit., p.115

36 Ibid., p.119

37 Ibid., p.125

38 Groves, op.cit., p.121

39 Petrie, op.cit., p.22

40 Hogg, op.cit., p.254

41 Ibid., p.116

42 Ibid., p.115

43 Ibid., p.140

44 Ibid., p.90

45 Carey, op.cit., p.xxii; Petrie, op.cit., p.19; Groves, op.cit., p.121

46 Hogg, op.cit., p.254

47 Petrie, op.cit., p.14

48 Hogg, op.cit., p.253

Robert Louis Stevenson

THE STRANGE CASE OF DR.JEKYLL AND MR.HYDE

In his story *The Strange Case of Dr.Jekyll and Mr.Hyde* (written 1885) Stevenson has created the most powerful image of metamorphosis in the nineteenth century.

The metamorphosis signifies a Faustian fall of Jekyll into Hyde, the personification of all that is base, amorphous and evil: he is 'the Other', opposed to everything that the humanistic tradition of western civilization represents. The story can be read as an allegory of the fall which becomes inevitable when the hero gives up the eternal spiritual struggle between the good and the evil in human soul and 'goes to the Devil',[1] or it can be read as a symbolic case study of a split by means of metamorphosis due to the traumatic pressure of moral duality.

Metamorphosis plays an essential structural role in the story. It is the source of narrative conflicts and it also provides the narrative pattern by creating the central mystery of the strange relation between Dr.Jekyll and Mr.Hyde. As a result, the story takes the form of a mystery tale with the lawyer Utterson as a private investigator and his friends as witnesses, providing various narrative voices.

The shift of emphasis from authorial discourse to characters' discourse introduces an element of subjectivity which, along with realism in the characterization, produces a certain ambiguity between the allegoric and the symbolic psychological reading of the story, especially with regard to the symbolic role of the major protagonists: Hyde need not appear

evil, and Jekyll or Utterson need not appear so positive. Such a critical approach means, however, a serious manipulation of the semantic level of the text, which deconstructs the Calvinist allegory in the text, and deprives the latter of an important moral base.

The metamorphosis is situated in a context different from that of Hogg. The new context reflects the changed social and spiritual climate of late Victorian society. As the Romantic movement ebbs away from the literary scene, the mimetic modes begin to prevail in the middle of the nineteenth century, and the supernatural is exploited solely for sensational purposes, as the works of Wilkie Collins or Sheridan LeFanu prove.[2] Further significant impulses in fantastic literature come from Russian and American literature (Gogol, Dostoevsky; Poe, Hawthorne, Melville), of considerable psychological refinement.

But already in the 1850's the situation starts to change, which is manifested by the formation of two influential artistic groups: The Oxford Movement and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Another signal of the changing tastes of the readers is the growing public acceptance of fairy-tales such as the exotic and sensuous *The Arabian Nights* (1846) or melancholic tales of Hans Christian Anderson.[3]

The last decades of the century also witness an immense rise in 'psychic' research and popular interest in supernatural phenomena, which once again receive attention of science, namely the re-established clinical psychology and psychiatry.[4]

In the early 1880's Stevenson became involved in the campaign against the prevailing descriptive realism of the English novel and mechanistic model of the society and the cold

scientism of naturalism. Against novel he advocates romance, against the careful characterization he emphasizes action, as Kiely has argued.

> "In the early 1880's, when Stevenson rose to the defence of the romantic novel in three of his most famous critical essays, Scott, Marryat, and Kingsley were dead, and Charles Reade was an old man. The novel of romance had all but gone out of vogue, and what George Saintsbury called the "domestic and usual novel" had taken its place...But in the decade of the 1880's there were signs of a small but vigorous countermovement in Great Britain."[5]

In romance, according to Eigner, "the theme or the vision comes first"[6], while according to Kiely the action matters most.[7] Evidently in some of Stevenson's works the thematic concern prevails while other works follow the logic of the adventure. In the case of *The Strange Case of Dr.Jekyll and Mr.Hyde*, the former assumption would be a better starting point.

In his campaign against descriptive realism and naturalism Stevenson went so far as to draw a sharp line between life and art.

> "No art - to use the daring phrase of Mr.James - can successfully "compete with life";...Life is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt, and poignant: a work of art, in comparison, is neat, finite, self-contained, rational, flowing and emasculate."[8]

Stevenson in his search for action and spirit of adventure was naturally drawn to such popular genres as the novel of adventure, ghost story and mystery tale. Metamorphosis in the full sense of the word, to my knowledge, appears only in two longer moral fables, written approximately at the same time, *Markheim* (1883-5) and *The Strange Case of Dr.Jekyll and Mr.Hyde*,

and then in the strange brief fairy-tale "The House of Eld".

In each work metamorphosis plays a different role and is presented in a different epistemology. In "Markheim", narrated as a ghost tale with a touch of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* but without his soul-wrenching, metamorphosis is presented in the typical romantic ambiguity of the uncanny: hesitating between the supernatural and psychological interpretation, and having the moral theme of conscience as a binding link. The metamorphosis is a purely ethical mechanism as in most folk tales: the evil ghost, which tries to push the hero further and deeper into crime, turns out to be a beautiful guardian angel personifying his conscience, when Markheim refuses to give in to further seductive persuasion and repents.

"The House of Eld" is a remarkable, weird tale in which metamorphosis is presented as a supernatural act. In order to free his countrymen from the chains they carry, Jack has to kill an evil wizard, who takes the forms of the persons Jack loves: his uncle, father and mother. In the end Jack achieves nothing. People do not care for freedom because they have got used to their chains and sores. Moreover, coming home Jack finds his beloved parents and uncle dead. Metamorphosis is used as an instrument of deluding the hero. On a symbolic level, the story offers a fascinating vision of the world and a grotesquely fatalistic view of life. Any attempt to bring about a change in the world is doomed to failure. The evil wizard who cripples and confines the free movement of people is in all of them. They all are the evil wizard. There is no way of eliminating him unless people decide to throw away the deforming chains.

In *The Strange Case of Dr.Jekyll and Mr.Hyde* metamorphosis is presented as a scientific experiment. The metamorphosis operates as a release mechanism from the moral trauma, which can

be read as an allegory of the eternal struggle of good and evil in the human soul, or as a symbolic tale of conflicting pressures of suppressed desires and respectability.

The Strange Fall

> "When we have fallen through storey after storey of our vanity and aspiration, and sit rueful among the ruins, then it is that we begin to measure the stature of our friends: how they stand between us and our contempt, believing in our best; how, linking us with others, and still spreading wide the influential circle, they weave us in and in with the fabric of the contemporary life..."[9]

The fall of Jekyll takes place in a space which is different from that of Hogg. The religious and mythic metaphysical space of Hogg's tales of fall is transformed into a primarily moral metaphysical space. Hogg's heroes abandon God and come to serve the Devil, while Jekyll's fall is primarily a moral issue presenting the situation of a man who cannot cope with his own moral conscience, the moral pressure of the society and his own dark side. Hogg's sinners may know guilt but not the overwhelming feeling of shame which frustrates Jekyll.

From the changed context follows a further significant metamorphosis of the concept and role of metamorphosis: it involves a further reducement of the Faustian ambition and consequent artistic metamorphosis of the man's adversary, the Devil. Even the Devil undergoes a metamorphical fall: from the imperious lord of demons disguised as a person of social status (old knight, abbot, oriental magician), from the romantic archetype of a rebel, the figure of the Devil is transformed into the amorphous Other, defined in terms of a negation of all that

is considered civilized.[10] The mythic Devil as we know him from Hogg's work, is an imposing character of sublime skills of deception and persuasion; he can make himself attractive. The metamorphosis of the Devil into something loathsome, base, ancient, becomes central to horror tales by Machen, Lovecraft, Stoker, and others.

Also the Devil's disciple has changed. Whereas Master Michael was a scholar and magician with an ambition to penetrate into the mysteries of the universe and to control the elements of nature, Robert's ambitions were much more narrow in their scope. In fact, at first he presented himself only as an ambitious student expecting a splendid career; his destructive ambitions were implanted in his mind by his father, Reverend Wringhim and later on by Gil-Martin. Jekyll is a different case. In some respects he is closer to the Faustian scholar seeking the mystery of the universe than to the naive and passive Robert:

> "And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental, reacted and shed strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members."[11]

But his ultimate goal is much more modest: he wants to find peace with himself, he is tired of hiding, he is tired of the war among his members. The nature of his ultimate concern is moral, but the consequences of the metamorphosis are almost metaphysical: metamorphosis means a symbolic transgression of the mythic sphere of man. Like *Frankenstein*, Stevenson refers to a new dangerous path to power, instead of magic, it is now science. The science usurping the role of God or Nature, brings man to his fall, which takes the form of metamorphosis, a physical and spiritual degradation. This is the primary level

of the story.

The moral message is rather austere: the presence of Hyde has to be acknowledged: we should be aware of the dark aspects of our own mind and should not try to avoid the eternal battlefield on which our better side struggles with the worse side. As in Hogg, the attempt to elevate oneself over the humankind leads to a metamorphical fall.

The Uncanny Space of Metamorphosis

The space of the metamorphosis is the space of the uncanny, with no trace of witchcraft or ghosts. The metamorphosis of Jekyll is presented as a solid fact with no explicit suggestion that the metamorphosis might be a delusion. Dr.Jekyll is no magician: he is a well-respected doctor and researcher even though his research takes a dubious turn. Unlike Hogg's sinners, he is not a lonely figure, he has some very good friends. The favourite romantic ambiguity between the uncanny and the marvellous, between the psychological and the supernatural interpretation, is essentially abandoned. The supernatural of the marvellous is substituted with science, like in the classic gothic romance *Frankenstein*.

I say 'essentially' because the explanation of the metamorphosis in terms of a delusion is not entirely excluded: the act of metamorphosis is presented in the characters' discourse, namely Lanyon's and Jekyll's letters, and both the witnesses were dead when Utterson (and the public) read them.

Instead of ontological ambiguity the story allows two levels of reading: the allegorical and psychological. I find these two

levels complementary: the allegorical level being of primary structural significance because it lays the thematic foundation of the story. Without the allegorical level the story can never appear sufficiently coherent: attempts to reread the symbolic role of major protagonists stretch the text beyond its limits as follows further on.

Metamorphosis is the structural focus of the narrative and generates the basic thematic links. It is the primary cause of all the events in the narrative. All the episodes and all the images are subordinated to it and are intended to prepare the ground for the revelation of Jekyll's and Hyde's strange case.

The central theme is the duality of human nature, which is personified through metamorphosis. The theme of duality and doubles is cleverly maintained in the narrative by 'doubling' motifs and images. The motifs of duality prepare the ground for the metamorphical link between Hyde and Jekyll. Since the duality has been extensively discussed elsewhere, there is no need to do it here, and therefore I will refer to it only in so far the duality is related to the main argument.

Right at the beginning, Mr. Utterson, a cold, reticent man, "yet somehow lovable",[13] a lawyer by profession, who assumes the role of the investigator of the mystery, is introduced in contrast with his distant kinsman Richard Enfield:

> "the well-known man about town. It was a nut to crack for many, what thse two could see in each other, or what subject they could find in common."[14]

Later on Utterson pairs himself up with Hyde, as he decides to solve the mystery, "If he be Mr Hyde...I shall be Mr Seek."[15] Jekyll himself used to be paired up with Dr Lanyon but their

friendship broke up when Jekyll entered his fatal relation with Hyde.

The most ingenious part is the beginning of the story wherein the symbolic motifs and images convey the theme of contrastive duality: the contrast of the nice street and the shabby neighbourhood and the strange Jekyll's house.

> "...the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanness and gaity of note...and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; it showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper;... "[16]

This short description communicates many important messages: it introduces a haunted locale, which is naturally connected with some haunting event. The choice of the locale reveals the transformation of the gothic novel: instead of a haunted castle we have a haunted house inhabited by a middle-class doctor. The building gives an impression of being shapeless, aggressive; it 'thrusts forward its gable'. Furthermore, it is personified as a human head which is, significantly, blind, showing no windows on the front side, hiding its face. The house is presented as a metaphor for Jekyll who lives there as it turns out. The only way how to unveil the mystery of the house is to enter it, get inside the head.

The door both metaphorically and literally lets Hyde out. Seeing the door, Enfield is reminded of a horrible incident he witnessed, in which Hyde made his first appearance on the stage. After the incident with the little girl, Hyde disappears through this door into the house. The people watching the incident are completely transformed by the powerful emotions, in stark

contrast with Hyde's coldness.

> "He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running."[17]

Hyde provokes metamorphical reaction in people. His mere presence deprives them of reason and balance of mind and incites them to irrational hatred and fear. Even a Scottish doctor who appears on the spot, "the usual cut-and-dry apothecary, of no particular age or colour...and about as emotional as a bagpipe"[17] is extremely upset by Hyde:

> "...every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turned sick and white with the desire to kill him."[17]

The second metamorphical situation which prepares the reader for the real metamorphosis is the dream sequence of Utterson. His mind becomes haunted by two images: the image of Hyde, seeing how "that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams"; and the image of the sleeping Jekyll who becomes controlled by "a figure to whom power was given".[18] This is a significant fact because it shows metaphorically what is to come: Jekyll is to lose his free will and Hyde will gain the upper hand.

The defamiliarized city becomes a labyrinth in the nightmare, in which Hyde moves with the swiftness of a shadow, and there seems to be no escape from him. The image of Hyde as a Juggernaut conveys the sense of fatality, there is no way of stopping him, there is no escape from him as he appears on every corner of the night city, which becomes a metamorphosed labyrinth of streets.

"and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly...even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamp-lighted city, and at every corner crush a child and leave it screaming. And still the figure had no face..."[18]

Hydes moves with the indifference of a zombie, animated by some dark, mysterious power.

The first part culminates in the chapter 'Search for Mr Hyde', in which Utterson finally meets Hyde face to face and we can see for the first time his own reaction. He presents Hyde as a mixture of a savage and a beast; Hyde hisses like a snake and snarls like a beast, and laughs sarcastically when Utterson tries to teach him better manners.[19]

The following parts lack the subtle use of symbolic images; the author focuses only on the plot and each short episode shifts the narrative closer to the dramatic climax, or, rather, to a series of climaxes, because the last part of the story is presented in the form of three narratives: the authorial narrative with Utterson as the focus, Dr.Lanyon's narrative, and finally Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case, which ends the story without any authorial comments whatsoever.

Although this chapter brings the real narrative climax in a form of dramatic action at night, Utterson is still unaware of the metamorphosis. After he breaks into the laboratory, disregarding Hyde's desperate pleas, he finds Hyde already dead on the floor. There is no trace of Jekyll. The mystery would have remained unsolved if it had not been for the two letters. One cannot understand the mystery of human psyche unless one gets inside a man's mind.

Metamorphosis as a Split

The first key to the mystery is held by Lanyon. It is in his narrative, that we finally learn that Jekyll and Hyde are one person. This is the shocking revelation which is mentioned by Chesterton:

> "The real stab of the story is not in the discovery that one man is two men; but in the discovery that the two men are one man."[20]

Lanyon agrees to become an eye witness of the metamorphosis of Hyde into Jekyll. The metamorphosis blasts his concept of science and reality to pieces and soon after their meeting he dies as a broken man. What exactly broke him, is left unexplained. It is up to the reader to decide. Lanyon's death seems to be a denial of the lesson he has received. He is unable to cope with the revelation of the dark shadow of the self.

The whole scene of the metamorphosis has a touch of diabolic atmosphere. We can witness a sweeping change in Hyde's behaviour once he has prepared the elixir. Like Mephistopheles, he challenges Lanyon and appeals to his scientific curiosity and offers him an insight into the phenomena which transcend the limits of science.

> "As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if you shall prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you, here, in this room, upon the instant; and your sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan."[21]

The scene of metamorphosis for the first time openly

introduces the modern version of the Faustian myth, similiar to that in *Frankenstein*, showing the dramatic transgression of the existential space given to man. Any attempt to cross the invisible border of the natural limits causes a fatal transformation and brings about his fall. Master Michael enters the forbidden space of magic, Jekyll abandons the space of natural sciences and by metamorphosis violates the laws of nature. His attempt at creating a pure essence of man by separating the 'dirty' elements produces a monster, like Frankenstein. Jekyll's experiment is reminiscent of the alchemist's search for the philosophers' stone which is supposed to have transformative effects on the self.

The modern versions of the Faustian myth show the failure of science and the limits of science which cannot, and should not, try to find final solutions to moral problems. As Chesterton put it, "The surgical operation is fatal in the story. It is an amputation of which both parts die."[22] The second failure of science is in the method of the experiment. The metamorphosis is a product of chance, Stevenson's favourite weapon in the battle against scientism[23]. The stuff the nightmare is made of, the metamorphosis, is impure. This fact makes Hart conclude:

> "It was impure; it made no separate identities. The two remained bound, linked to each other, for Jekyll is the person, while Hyde is only a part."[24]

The fact, that the drug was impure, also shows that the whole experiment was a matter of chance and could not be repeated once the unique impure drug was exhausted. Metamorphosis has remained beyond the possibilites of science.

Jekyll's statement provides us with the subjective background of the case. His narrative gives us a chance to understand what led him to the metamorphosis and what followed it. Hart considers shame as the motivating power: "...the feeling critically examined is shame", and, "The archetypal act of shame is to hide..."[25]

> "Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of: but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations, than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was..."[26]

In the psychological sense, Hyde is the monster of shame, of all that was repressed in Jekyll. Jekyll's tragedy is that he had set up his moral standards too high and was unable, as a pure Victorian, to meet them. Metamorphosis was a means of solving the traumatic duality. His conscience prevented him from enjoying the dark aspects of life, and his desire for the forbidden made him unclean in his own eyes, living in constant fear that he would not live up to his public image.

Allegory or a Case Study?

There is, however, a gap between the allegorical level of the text and the symbolic level, due to the realistic and psychological treatment of the characterization, allowing some touches of ambiguity, which serve as a platform for attempts to reread the story as a case study of a personality split. Hyde may raise our compassion in the end, while some of Utterson's traits may not be viewed so favourably.

As a moral allegory, the work depicts the struggle of good and evil in the human soul. By the metamorphosis Jekyll falls into the low, evil form of existence personified in Hyde.

There are basically two ways of reading the psychological conflict: one approach follows the mythic moral logic and the other thinks of Jekyll (or Utterson) and Hyde as two essential principles constituting a dynamic balance of the self (avoiding or subverting the moral duality. The former approach considers the metamorphosis as an escape mechanism from the traumatic duality, while maintaining the traditional duality of positive values embodied by Utterson and to some extent even by Jekyll, and negative values embodied by Hyde. Jekyll's major fault then appears to be in his desire to escape from the conflict and find an easy shortcut.

The latter approach reformulates the duality as a dynamic balance between two aspects of life, the instinctive and the rational. This approach tends to eliminate the moral dimension of the story by opening a semantic ambiguity in the major protagonists. Thus Hyde is found to be a victim of suppressive Victorian society, for he is from the very beginning denounced as a hideous outcast, producing in people strong emotions of horror and hate not because he would be so evil but because he embodies everything they are ashamed of and hide it deep inside. He is made evil even though in reality he is not, argues Eigner:

> "The *Strange Case of Dr.Jekyll and Mr.Hyde* is not an allegory of the evil in man swallowing up the helpless good: rather it is a story of a whole man driving one part of his nature to depravity until the entire ego is destroyed."[28]

Eigner's assertion operates simultaneously on the literal and the symbolic level: in his opinion, Jekyll and other

characters have rejected Hyde, who consequently turned violent. The same is implied on the symbolic level, Jekyll had been repressing Hyde so long until he took a shape and emerged as a monster.[29] Eigner supports his argument by references to Hyde's development. Quoting the incident with the little girl, he asserts:

> "Hyde does not appear purely evil in this adventure, but he does seem to bring out all the cruelty and malice in those who judge him...Enfield, the bystanders, and the other narrators are rejecting a part of themselves when they reject Hyde, and the more strenuously they excise him, the more thoroughly they come to resemble their notion of him, and the more profoundly they are affected by the encounter."[30]

While in the first incident Hyde is still indifferent, after two months of confinement he begins to relish the murder.

> "Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow;"[31]

Hyde turns violent because he has been rejected and kept in the prison of the mind for far too long.

Massey is even sharper in his re-evaluating of Hyde, seeing Hyde as 'the single self', which cannot communicate with the conventional world, "if it is forced to communicate, it communicates with a blow. That blow is all its speech and its refutation of language".[32]

> "The scene of Hyde's walking straight on over the body of a small girl whom he most improbably bumps into on the streets late at night, evidently invented to prove how evil Hyde is, is so artificial and unrealistic as to appear merely ridiculous. His two other acts of violence are similiarly

unsatisfactory."[33]

Such an approach is made possible by a subtle manipulation of the text, which goes against the primary allegorical level. It is true that at the beginning Hyde appears indifferent and later on becomes more consciously wicked; but the key to the interpretation does not lie in the extent to which his acts are evil, but in the powerful unanimous reaction of the witnesses. Hyde is not a person in the physical sense, he is the essence of evil, he does not need to do anything, his mere presence is powerful enough, as Enfield's comment proves: "It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man..."[34] Stevenson wrote in a letter about Hyde:

> "[Hyde] is the essence of cruelty and malice and selfishness and cowardice, and these are the diabolical in man..."[35]

In fact, even the scene with the girl is not so 'ridiculous'. One has to see it in the context of care which penetrates the novel, or 'obligation', as Hart puts it:

> "Hyde is no 'ordinary secret sinner', for Stevenson has no interest in such sins. Hyde is 'inorganic', 'indifferent', unreal in that he is a total denial of the bonds of obligation'. This is what Jekyll has sought."[36]

All concerned people show a considerable amount of care about Jekyll: Utterson, Lanyon, Enfield care for Jekyll and try to help; people care for the girl knocked down by Hyde and call a doctor. Hyde's indifference is in a sharp contrast to them, and, his indifference is rather strange; casual, absent-minded indifference would not have provoked such a violent reaction. He is literally like a Juggernaut, more a zombie than a man,

animated by some dark force. The accident can give only a superficial glimpse of the depth of darkness the characters sense. Hyde's essence does not change, only the way how he exploits it changes.

Even the seemingly unambiguous, evidently positive figure of Utterson has some traits which open the way to negative rereading. This latent ambiguity has its origin in the realistic characterization, and partly it is created by a modern re-evaluation of Utterson's character.

Utterson is no mythic hero; he is a real-life character with his own little human faults as the conventions of realism demand. In some respects his characteristics at the beginning of the narrative anticipates Jekyll's affair.

He is described as 'cold', 'dreary', yet 'loveable'. "He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages;"[37]

Almost as if he were killing his pleasures because he was afraid of giving a chance to his own Hyde deep inside; all the more since he feels attraction to this dark side:

> "But he had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with an envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds;"[38]

He can be seen as Jekyll before the metamorphosis, only with a tighter control over his emotional and dangerous self. He is the one who does not listen to moving pleas of the desperate Hyde (anyway, why should he when he suspects Hyde of murdering Jekyll!) For Massey, Utterson is the one who has to learn a lesson.

> "Utterson is Hyde's true double; Jekyll merely mediates between the two...Utterson is the tragic character in *Jekyll and Hyde*; it is he who is called upon to find his way to reconciliation with Hyde (not vice versa)...His is finally shown to have been the unjustifiable position..."[39]

The question is, however, whether Utterson needs any lesson at all.

As a lawyer, he must be well aware of the dark side of human nature. He is undoubtedly a decent, tolerant man, "in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove. 'I incline to Cain's heresy,' he used to say quaintly: 'I let my brother go to the Devil in his own way."[40]

He is the type that is not in danger of metamorphosis. Utterson does not aspire to rise to any kind of social sainthood. He keeps his own Hyde chained. He does not collapse into metamorphosis because he is able to find ways of sublimation and compensation: he seeks the company of his friend Enfield because he is different; he does not avoid 'down-going men'[41] and proves helpful to them; he keeps offering his help to Jekyll, as a form of sublimation and compensation, he goes for long walks, which Jekyll does not. Jekyll isolates himself in a closed space of his house and his mind (his house was compared to a head).[42]

In putting a different focus on the character traits we can make Hyde appear as a victim and a person which is rather uninhibited than evil, and Utterson may come out as a suppressive character.

To suggest this means to go beyond the epistemology of the text. The horror effect of the story is in the subconscious fear that there is an unknown depth in man of which we can get only glimpses, that even the worst crime is not horrible enough with this unimaginable and uncommunicable Otherness, which may extinguish the divine spark in us. This kind of horror becomes

a new subject of fantastic and horror literature of writers such as Machen, Morris, Lovecraft, and even partially in Buchan.

The metamorphical fall has become a fascination and offers new thrills. It means, however, less sophistication and less psychological realism, which was characteristic of the Russian and German fantastic literature, and it shifts such a literature to the literary periphery. Stevenson had also been pushed there even though his metamorphosis does not aim to raise only sensations but draws attention to important issues of human duality, with a suggestion of plurality in the mind. It repeats the ancient theme that the desire for perfection and social or moral rise leads to terrible falls because the hero becomes one-sided: Master Michael eliminated the good because he thought only the evil powers could provide what he had desired; Robert came to believe that he could not do wrong and did not notice that he was falling, deluded by metamorphical disguises and tricks of the Devil; Jekyll wanted to split himself by metamorphosist in order to experience both the rise and fall.

The scientific, semi-natural metamorphosis has produced a monster. Jekyll wanted to soar high in the pure sky as well as exploit the prospects of the fall. Metamorphosis serves as a vehicle that fails him. This is a new role of metamorphosis which has been so far used as a device of disguise or punishment, eventually an escape. Metamorphosis on a symbolic level expresses two moral fallacies: that one can escape the duality and conscience by a fall into vice, or by cutting himself from the darkness in man and abandoning the eternal struggle in the soul between the low and the high, between evil and good, between the instincts and reason.

NOTES

1 R.L.Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (London, 1979), p.29

2 see David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (London and New York, 1980), pp.223-238

3 "When, in 1846, Hans Anderson's tales were translated in no less than five volumes, they took England by storm. In: Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy* (Hassocks, 1979), p.5

4 see John Herdmann, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London, 1990), p.19; and
Edwin M.Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition* (Princeton, 1966), pp.30-33

5 Robert Kiely, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure* (Cambridge Mass., 1964), p.21

6 Eigner, op.cit., p.39

7 Kiely, op.cit., p.38

8 Ibid., p.28

9 Francis Russell Hart, *The Scottish Novel From Smollett to Spark* (Cambridge Mass., 1978), p.301

10 see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (London, 1973), p.139

11 Stevenson, op.cit., p.11

12 see the study by Herdmann
see also Karl Miller, *Doubles* (Oxford, 1987)

13 Stevenson, op.cit., p.29

14 Ibid., p.29-30

15 Ibid., p.38

16 Ibid., p.30

17 Ibid., p.31

18 Ibid., p.37

19 Ibid., pp.39-40

20 Eigner, op.cit., p.160

21 Stevenson, op.cit., p.79

22 G.K.Chesterton, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York, 1928), p.54. In: Eigner, op.cit., p.160

23 Kiely, op.cit., p.25

24 Hart, op.cit., p.300

25 Ibid., p.299

26 Stevenson, op.cit., p.81

27 Irving Massey, *The Gaping Pig. Literature and Metamorphosis* (Berkeley, 1976), p.140

28 Eigner, op.cit., p.160

29 Ibid., p.161

30 Ibid., p.158

31 Stevenson, op.cit., p.90

32 Massey, op.cit., p.105

33 Ibid., p.104

34 Stevenson, op.cit., p.31

35 Letter to John Paul Bocock, 1887, quated in George S.Hellmann, *The True Stevenson: A Study in Clarificiation* (Boston, 1925), p.129

36 Hart, op.cit., p.300

37 Stevenson, op.cit., p.29

38 Ibid., p.29

39 Massey, op.cit., p.103

40 Stevenson, op.cit., p.29

41 Ibid., p.29

42 Ibid., p.30

VI

George MacDonald

PHANTASTES and LILITH

For George MacDonald metamorphosis becomes not only an image of the Fall, but essentially an image of the ascent and spiritual transcendence.

I want to focus on the two major spiritual fantasies, *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895), because they stand as a unique contrast to the versions of the fall, as found in fantastic literature. The two fantasies are situated in the space of the marvellous, created by 'imagination'

The two works also frame the time span of the author's work, *Phantastes* were written at the very beginning of MacDonald's creative career, while *Lilith* can be considered as his literary testament because it is the last work he published.

Both these works should be placed in the context of symbolism, a powerful cultural stream of the end of the century, which has never ceased to inspire artists of all periods. As true works of symbolism, *Phantastes* opens the questions of the relationship between art and life, while *Lilith* explores dream and reality, merging them into one

At the centre of the fantasies is a symbolic metamorphosis of human consciousness. The narratives take us on a mythic journey which should transform both the hero and the reader In fact, the whole story can be taken as a process of metamorphosis

In both fantasies, I will explore the role of metamorphosis in three thematic groups: Metamorphosis as a door, as a fall, and as an organic, spiritual growth.

If in Hogg metamorphosis was generally a manner of disguise

and deception, and served as a means of punishment, moving from the mythic space of folk legend and ballad into the space of the fantastic: in Stevenson it became a symbolic expression of a basicaly moral conflict and led to the moral fall into the dark chaos of Hyde. What Stevenson offers is a vision of an eternal struggle with our own Hydes inside of each of us, but without the sense of a metaphysical redemption.

Thematically, Stevenson's tale is a neo-Calvinist version of man's fall which can be traced back to medieval allegorical disputes between soul and body, presenting human mind as a battle-zone. Any attempt at an escape leads to death or a fall into the hell-zone, situated within the mind.

MacDonald, on the other hand, uses metamorphosis in both ways: the falls finally lead to the transcending metamorphosis, involving a spiritual rebirth

Metamorphosis as a Door: Opening

Metamorphosis serves as a door. There is a fundamental difference not only in what it opens but first of all how it opens the door in the works under our discussion

In Hogg's mythic space, metamorphosis is essentially Devil's technique of deception and manipulation, or a symbolic process of a fall of the character: Robert's flight on the wings of pride symbolically ends in the net of delusions and lies, hanging upside down like a black fly or a black bat. The doors of his symbolic metamorphosis open to hell or madness

Metamorphosis in Stevenson's space of the uncanny externalizes the opening of the dark chamber in the human mind and the releasing of the suppressed aspects of the self, in other

words, the shadow. The story, however, focuses rather on the consequences of the metamorphical release, than on the factors which led to it, even though the metamorphosis remains the structural focus and all the motifs and images are linked to it.

MacDonald's metamorphoses may also open the door of madness, darkness, and chaos, and bring about a temporary fall: but in their final effect they produce transcendence and signify the spiritual rise. Apart from subsidiary metamorphoses linked with symbolic contents of mind, we witness a slow process of a symbolic transformation of the hero's consciousness, as the hero follows the twists of fortune on his mythic journey for 'regeneration', if I may borrow the term from Douglas Gifford's essay.[1]

Metamorphosis in *Phantastes* opens a whole magic world, Fairy Land. As we shall see, metamorphosis is performed by the sheer power of imagination and becomes a symbolic enactment of artistic creation. Such a genesis is very different from the pseudoscientific presentation of metamorphosis in *Jekyll and Hyde*: there the metamorphosis is described as a chemical experiment, and can be interpreted as a symbolic image of a real-life psychic mechanism.

In *Lilith*, the main protagonist, a young aristocrat Mr Vane, enters the other reality through a magic object, the mirror. This favourite Victorian device, is not the only way of entering the other world in the novel. Later on anything can serve as a door. The magic reality is, in fact, occupying the same space, and the unveiling is only a matter of imaginative seeing: as for example the scene, in which Mr Raven tells Vane that "that tree stands on the hearth of your kitchen" [2]

Phantastes emphasizes the different, dream-like texture of

Fairy Land and often tends to blur the notion of reality and fantasy, as seen in the uncanny scenes when the magic of Fairy Land seems to be rather an illusion than a cold fact. On the other hand, *Lilith* draws a sharp line between the reality and fantasy, but finally makes the reality seem less real than the fantasy world, thus subverting the categories.

The metamorphical creation involves several elements: the mood, the fairy-Muse (personification of Imagination as a power of transformative vision) and the poet. The proper mood invites the Muse whose magic performs the metamorphosis of the real world into a world of a higher order, into the space of imagination, in which the mythic quest for spiritual transformation can take place, and of which the poet gives a poetic account. The space of Fairy Land, being the space of imagination, is the space of the mind, and the events to a greater or lesser extent correspond to mental processes of the self.

The proper mood requires of the author to pay a careful attention to the psychological treatment of narrative situations, in order to carry out convincingly the magic act of metamorphosis.

There is a number of well-chosen images which introduce the moment of the encounter with the magic world. The most significant would be the images of a key, a dark chamber with a 'black box', "web of a story", "fossil ..charred by passion and petrified by tears".[3] They all imply the notion of a secret and of a discovery of something hidden.

On his twenty-first birthday, the narrator Anodos is given the keys to his father's study, which has been locked since his death. In order to penetrate into the heart of the mystery of

'the black boy' of his father's private life, Anodos has to lift a number of veils. Inside the locked room there is a locked oak cabinet, inside the cabinet a little cupboard, and behind it a secret space which hides the heart of the secret, as the narrator senses:

> "But the door of a little cupboard in the centre especially attracted my interest, as if there lay the secret of this long-hidden world. Its key I found."[3]

He finds there "a little heap of withered rose-leaves" and "a small packet of papers". There is nothing else there. It is only when he leans back in his chair, and regards these things for a moment, and allows his imagination to light up that the Muse appears:

> "...when suddenly there stood on the threshold of the little chamber, as though she had just emerged from its depth, a tiny woman form, as perfect in shape as if she had been a small Greek statuette roused to life and motion."[4]

This scene ingeniously introduces through the three symbolic objects the important thematic issues of the narrative: rose-leaves refer to nature; papers to literature; the act of metamorphosis of the statue into a live being may be taken as a symbolic expression of the act of true creation, which does not produce dead, immobile forms of the fancy but life as a process of imagination. In fact, all the three objects are related to creative writing: leaves of nature imply the Book of Nature in which the poet reads; leaves of paper imply its translation into the human language.

The concept of the world as a book points to the medieval concept of the world, as Robb claims.[5] The true poet is merely

a reader of the Book of Nature and there is nothing new what he can reveal. The process of creation, like in Plato, is a process of recollection and evocation.

> "Is not the *Poet*, the *Maker*, a less suitable name for him than *Trouvere*, the *Finder*?...The bringing forth into sight of the things that are invisible [is] the end of all Art and every art."[6]

But it is the third element in the cupboard that brings the dead rose-leaves of the Book of Nature to life and gives the narrator symbolic material to bring it forth into sight and to put it down on paper. Significantly, the fairy comes, as she says to Anodos, evoked by his wish to enter Fairy Land[7], the space of creative imagination, in which the poet can find a story and wander freely and grow until he is ripe for the final metamorphosis.

In this sense even the narrative form has a symbolic role of being a metaphor for the creative process which springs out from imagination, the transformative quality of seeing which invites objects of nature to reveal their true, hidden essence.

Robb has made a strong case out of the role of memory in MacDonald's works: memory is the mirror in which Cosmo, a character from the tale Anodos read in the palace, can see the reality as more beautiful and meaningful. "All mirrors are magic mirrors. The commonest room is a room in a poem when I turn to the glass."[8]

But what the narrator has done so far is only the first step in the act of creation: he opened the door of his unconscious, and in the right sort of mood, full of expections, evoked his Muse. And the Muse gave him a glimpse of the magic space of Fairy Land by inviting him to look into her eyes:

"They filled me with an unknown longing. I remembered somehow that my mother died when I was a baby. I looked deeper and deeper, till they spread around me like seas, and I sank in their waters."[9]

The image of diving into the sea as well as the image of the statue coming alive become the key motifs in the story: they are a thematic link for this episodic narrative.

As Anodos slowly wakes up into reality, watching the sea, now "still as death and hoary in the moon", change into "a low bog burnished by the moon",[10] he expresses explicitly his desire for the sea of Fairy Land:

"Surely there is such a sea somewhere!"

And, "A low sweet voice beside me replied - "In Fairy Land, Anodos."[11]

Thus his subsequent wandering about Fairy Land has a goal, even though he does not seem to be aware of it: it is the search for the sea and the transformative power it can exercise over him. The first part of his wanderings reaches its symbolic climax when Anodos finds a rest from the Shadow in the Fairy Palace. There he discovers a pool which changes into a magic sea. The first part of his journey ends "on the shore of a wintry sea...It was bare, and waste, and gray"[12], referred to as "the tumbling chaos"[13]. There, having lost his White Lady again and having left the Fairy Palace, Anodos resolves to end his despair by throwing himself into the sea.

In both cases the bath in the sea operates as a cleansing ritual and brings about his rebirth as a magic metamorphosis of the wintry sea into a sea of "warm southern night."[14] takes place.

Thus already in the first encounter with the magic of Fairy Land the archetypal pattern of a mythic journey is hinted at. It is, however, a very unconventional journey because Anodos is

unaware of any aim and his wandering lacks the overt character of a quest. Even the search for the White Lady turns out to be only one stage on his 'pilgrim's progress'.

Even though it might seem that Anodos is left on his own, he has also been given a symbolic lead in the second chapter: it is the magic stream he saw flowing from his wash basin in his metamorphosed bedroom.

The Entering

If the first step towards the act of creation comprised the right kind of mood in which the magic of imagination is evoked, personified by the fairy; the second step involved a metamorphosis which has opened a door to the space of imagination. The third step is to enter the creation.

In *Phantastes* the entrance is a metamorphosis of the bedroom into a magic landscape, and the metamorphosis is achieved by the power of imagination. In *Lilith*, the first entrance is through a mirror, a favourite door to other worlds in Victorian fiction, but later on it can be anything and it can happen anytime: in one scene Vane talks to Mr Raven in the garden and suddenly finds himself in the other world.[15] Another time he climbs a huge tree growing in the palace of Lilith and wakes up back at home.[16]

Let us now examine closely the metamorphosis of Anodos's bedroom because it is a wonderful demonstration of the metamorphical power of Imagination.

While Anodos is recollecting the miraculous events of the night, tuning his mind unconsciously to the right magic wave, he becomes suddenly aware of the metamorphosis which has taken place

in his room. And significantly, the first perception is "the sound of running water".

> "...looking out of bed, I saw that a large green marble basin...was overflowing like a spring; and that a stream of clear water was running over the carpet, all the length of the room, finding its outlet I knew not where. And stranger still, where this carpet, which I had myself designated to imitate a field of grass and daisies seemed to wave in a tiny breeze that followed the water's flow..."[17]

MacDonald's metamorphosis has its roots in the symbolic representation of the real world. Anodos's room is an imitation of nature. It is an artificial human space of objects which are in fact mere representations of nature: for example the carpet is to evoke natural grass. In one sense, the human habitat has become 'false', artificial. It is not the real Nature of the Romantics which speaks through symbols and reveals God's glory. The human space of representations of 'real things' has to be transformed into a magic Nature which can communicate with man. Thus Anodos's bedroom is metamorphosed into the magic wood of Fairy Land. The magic of Fairy Land is, in other words, the power of imagination, which transforms the signs (symbols) into 'magically real things' and makes the metamorphosis a metaphor for Imagination as such. As a result, Fairy Land becomes the space of mind, and the narrative events express mental processes.

Having washed himself in the stream, which is obviously taken as a cleansing ritual, Anodos's vision becomes clear and magnified, and the metamorphosis can be completed: instead of a single oak tree growing from his dressing table, he can see a whole forest.

This again reveals the structural link between metamorphosis and imaginative seeing. To see imaginatively is a metamorphical

process during which objects of Nature, taken as symbols, reveal their true substance. Metamorphosis does not produce a new form and content: it merely unveils the reality of a higher order. The magic wood has already been there in the bedroom because Fairy Land is where we are, in our space, which can be opened by Imagination. Manlove points to the scene in *Lilith* where this duality is made explicit: Mr Raven tells Vane that "that tree stands on the hearth of your kitchen"[18], if only he could see it. As Manlove states: "Granted this imaginative perception, what is thus seen will depend on the health of the soul's subconscious eye."[19]

Setting out on his journey, Anodos first follows the lead: that is the path leading "along the right bank" of the stream. Soon, however, he leaves it: "without any good reason and with a vague feeling that I ought to have followed its course: I took a more southerly direction."[20]

Vane also refuses to follow Mr.Raven's odd instruction that he should lie down in the House of Death, decides to act on his own, and then has to face the painful consequences of his disobedience.

The instruction in *Phantastes* is passed in a more subtle metaphorical code. The first symbolic instruction, which Anodos overlooks, is the stream, overflowing from the basin. Its significance is strengthened by the motto from Novalis, referring to a search for a stream which is discovered "flowing gently over their heads".[21]

The stream appears once again in the desert with malicious goblins, when Anodos is heavily depressed by the evil presence of the Shadow which he unwittingly released in the Ogre's hut, and which stifles the beauty of Fairy Land. The stream refreshes

Anodos and has an almost spiritual transformative effect on him, as it wakens love in him. It leads him to a splendid river valley, only to reappear in its mystic form in the Fairy Palace as an overflowing fountain, which feeds the magic basin in one of the halls.

The image of the overflowing fountain is derived from Plotinus, and his concept of 'emanation'.

> "According to Plotinus, the undifferentiated One, by virtue of the very fullness of its perfection, overflows (without diminution of itself) into an other, and so on into all existing things, through a series of stages, or "hypostases" - first, mind...then soul...and at the farthest possible limit, the material universe."[22]

Also the motto of *Phantastes*, taken from Fletcher's *The Purple Island*, refers to this mystic image, applying it to the human faculty of creation.

MacDonald believed in the organic unity of life and art. "The chaotic element,"[23] is not only the syntactic freedom of a dream (or art), inspired by Novalis, but in the structural opposition with the thematic plan, it expresses MacDonald's vision of life in the paradoxical unity of the conscious and the unconscious. Anodos, as well as every man or woman, is unware of the divine plan in the figurative form of the stream which flows through his soul and which has not yet reached his mind; and therefore his deeds appear incongruous and accidental. But even though he ignores the cues coded in physical symbols presented by Nature, he is invisibly guided and no matter what he wants and does he achieves, taking the longer and more painful way, the destined goal.

This pattern is made even more explicit in *Lilith*, in which

Vane is expected to be obedient, but he is not and yet he seems to succeed in the end: he captures Lilith and brings her for a cure by penitence to Adam, and manages to bring about the metamorphosis of the desert into a green country. As Prickett puts it:

> "He fails, but through disaster he learns wisdom, and finally new opportunities: his sin is a *felix culpa*, permitting an even greater redemption."[24]

The Fall through Metamorphosis

One has to fall before one can truly rise: this could sum up MacDonald's concept of the Fall, which is never definitive and which always offers a chance of redemption.

> "As in all sweetest music, a tinge of sadness was in every note...Joy cannot unfold the deepest truths, although deepest truth must be deepest joy."[25]

Robb even claims that the "novel can be seen as an exploration of the eternal struggle between Joy and Dejection."[26] This is, however, only one of the many themes that can be covered under the spiritual pilgrim's progress whose aim is a spiritual transformation, which also contains bliss and joy.

Let us now examine the falls through metamorphosis which generate fear and dejection. Do they strike the hero as a mythic punishment for some transgression or are they unmotivated as the dreams largely appear to be?

> [The landscape of Fairy Land] "is, throughout, a projection of Anodos's mood and his degree of insight: at first the

impression is of abundant colour and vitality in a living forest, but as he accumulates experience of terror and disappointment, the gloving forest gives way to bleaker landscapes of cave, desolate shore and grim, level moor."[27]

If the landscape of Fairy Land is identical with the complex space of mind, then the horrors of the dark side of the mind are its inherent aspect. The dark aspects of the mind are represented by the metamorphical creatures of darkness: the Ash and and the Alder, the Shadow, the gohlins, the evil giants, the dragon, the Beast.

In *Lilith* the space has much more definite outlines, which are achieved by the objective third-person narrative

"It has a firm, objective geography capable of being traversed many times: it has a physical independence which can be calculated upon, and entering or quitting it can be chosen and organised, to some extent."[28]

The characters such as Lilith, the Little Ones, the bad Giants, or the inhabitants of the city of Bulika, are more like personifications of various types of behaviour: Lilith is a personification of the twisted ego; the Little Ones stand for innocent ignorance; the residents of Bulika are corrupted by idle life, fear and commerce; the Giants stand for greed and stupidity.

The first part of *Phantastes*, ending at the sea shore, is dominated by the Ash, the Alder and the Shadow, seconded by gohlins. The second part, taking place after his regeneration in the fairy cottage on the magic isthmus, is dominated by the fight with the giants and ends in another fit of despair, as Anodos is imprisoned by his Shadow in the tower; and the third part culminates in the deadly fight with the Beast, in which Anodos dies and undergoes a series of animistic metamorphoses.

Leaving a safe path brings always a potential danger. Soon after entering the forest, Anodos, being warned by a mysterious country girl to shun the Ash and the Alder,[29] experiences the first sinister change in the mood of Fairy Land, characterized by its "utter stillness". Anodos feels "anxiety" and comparing the still trees to human bodies deep in sleep:

> "...the moveless death-like forms of men and women and children, lying strewn and parted beneath the weight of the heavy waves of night, which flow on and beat them down, and hold them drowned and senseless, until the ebb-tide comes, and the waves sink away, back into the ocean of the dark."[30]

This is MacDonald at his best, drawing a fascinating picture from the 'other side' and offering a disturbing reversal of perspectives. This scene creates an expectation of the horrors of night in which people are destined to spend a large part of their life and which Anodos is going to face.

The appearance of a metamorphical monster is always preconditioned by a metamorphical change of mood and outside reality. Before the first encounter with the Ash, Anodos walks into the ancient heart of the forest and is again stricken with fear and anxiety. The Ash thus emerges as the monster of fear, which in an uncanny way grows from both physical and mental shadow. The Ash is MacDonald's version of what Hyde represented for Stevenson: it is a "new form of awful hideousness", a nightmare of sleep in which Anodos wanders, reminding Anodos of vampires: "for the face resembled that of a corpse"[31] although it did not appear to be so ugly, as Anodos admits. The essence of the Ash seems to be greed:

> "But the most awful of the features were the eyes...They seemed to be lighted up with an infinite greed. A gnaving voracity, which devoured the devourer..."[32]

The overall description suggests a sensual nature, as the reference to vampires suggests. Both the Ash and the Alder can be seen as forerunners of Lilith, in the combination of the sensual and savage greed. Lilith is virtually a vampire: she recovers her strength by sucking Vane's blood and Vane becomes fatally drawn to her.

Victorian popular fiction reveals a particular fascination with the myth of vampirism, and numerous remakes of Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) prove its lasting appeal. There have been many Freudian interpretations of the fact, and there is undoubtedly some truth in them. Vampirism was a 'decent' way of sublimation of suppressed sexual desires: it avoided sexual intercourse and yet it provided powerful mixture of pain and extasy. The victim could remain chastily dressed in the night gown anmd yet stimulating desire in the taboo place, the bedroom.

In a Freudian interpretation the Ash might be taken as another Victorian monster of shame, a monster of suppressed libido. It may well be true in this particular case, but it is not my intention to apply the Freudian reductionism to the mythic tale which has broader metaphysical implications than a frustrated libido or suppressed id.

Anodos is saved by one of the many mother figures which Providence mysteriously places in his way at crucial moments. As I have stated above, this female element can be considered as the embodiment of a pure Imagination which is in constant struggle with Fancy. Fancy is the quality of 'impure', dark dreams and chaos of the pit; Fancy leads to falls into madness and hell, while true Imagination leads to transcendence.

While the Ash is the male destructive principle, the Alder

stands for the peril of the captivating charm of the destructive female aspect. The mysterious girl at the beginning of his journey has given him a signicant warning as to the true nature of the Alder: "...the Alder will smother you with her web of hair, if you let near you at night".[33] But the childish Anodos is quick to forget all the well-meant signals his unconscious sends and becomes entangled with the Alder.

The whole meeting is again carefully staged. Once again we witness the ironic distance between the discourse of the narrative and the discourse of the character. Anodos does not read the symbolic signals that nature transmits through his unconscious in the right way. If Anodos does not seem to have been guilty of anything (except leaving the path at the beginning of his adventures) in the horror scene with the Ash, then he is not so blameless when the Alder appears. Being warned by the sad knight Sir Percival, who refers to his unfortunate episode with the Maiden of the Alder-tree, Anodos is too sure of himself to be able to recognize and avoid any danger.

> "...surely I shall be on my guard; and I am fully resolved I shall not be ensnared by any beauty, however much beautiful. Doubtless some one man may escape, and I shall be he."[34]

Blinded by self-confidence, he cheerfully heads for another disaster.

As the twilight sets in, the forest turns into a haunted place. The mere inventory of motifs is alarming in its choice: 'great bats', 'monotonous music of owls', a night hawk. In other words, birds of prey, which evoke the subconscious image of a hunt and a prey, invite the ironic question who is the hunter and who is the prey. Anodos, however, does not read his

perceptions as signs of danger.

Then the space undergoes a subtle metamorphical change: 'Unknown sounds' and oppressing odours raise desire.

> "The night-hawk heightened all the harmony and stillness with his oft-recurring, discordant jar. Numberless unknown sounds came out of the unknown dusk: but all were of twilight kind, opressing the heart as with condensed atmosphere of dreamy undefined love and longing. The odours of night arose, and bathed me in that luxurious mournfulness peculiar to them, as if the plants whence they floated had been watered with bygone tears. Earth drew me towards her bosom: I felt as if I could fell down and kiss her. I forgot I was in Fairy Land..."[35]

A close reading of the passage reveals how the description of the setting again skillfully anticipates the following events. The hot night in the forest echoes with sensuous, almost decadent, undertones, as the attributes 'oppressing', 'condensed', 'floating' prove. 'Dreamy undefined love and longing' is juxtaposed with 'luxurious mournfulness'

Even though the 'luxurious mournfulness' of the night odours may have some foundation in the realistic perception of the smell of the moist soil in the night forest, which may evoke an image of a fresh grave, the phrase may also imply a foreboding of the coming fall. Anodos is being captured by his senses and dazed by his desire and thus unable to communicate with the essence of Fairy Land. He is pulled down to the material aspect of Mother Earth, which is expressed by his wish to 'fall down and kiss her' [35] Anodos is simply in the right mood for metamorphosis.

The passage is a marvellous example of very subtle work with images in Victorian fiction. Although the subtlety may escape the conscious attention, it nevertheless operates on the subconscious level.

The third part of the description offers a close up: the mind focuses on the details - roses, twigs, leaves, insects, boughs crossing the path, large roots. As a matter of fact, all the described things are either small or are parts of the whole, which turns invisible as the mind becomes entangled in the multiplicity of the material world and gets distracted from its spiritual quest. Again all components fit together and form one whole.

The fourth part gives a shape to his desire. Desire is personified by the figure of the white lady: it makes him deaf and blind to the warning signals: "the whole night became one dream-realm of joy "[36]

His song invokes a white apparition which, as he believes, is the marble lady. He immediately becomes aware of some kind of dissonance: he can hear in her voice a sweetness which "did not vibrate harmoniously with the beat of my inward music... a cold shiver ran through me "[37]

But he ignores the voice of his unconscious and lets himself be lured into her cave where he soon loses consciousness as she tells him some strange tale. He wakes up into a metamorphical nightmare: he finds out that the beautiful lady has turned into the monster of the Alder-tree and the evil Ash is about to kill him. Anodos is completely paralyzed with fear and, like a child, he is unable to put up any resistance.

The metamorphoses of the Ash and the Alder are so closely linked with his fear and anxiety that they might be generated by the emotions and thus operate in the space of the uncanny. But since the whole space of Fairy Land is the space of the marvellous, it would be illogical to think so.

As the metamorphoses are obviously very closely linked with the mental processes, it could be said that it is Anodos who

undergoes a metamorphosis and experiences a fall into the darkness of his mind, facing the horrors hidden there.

The Shadow

The godfather of all the horrors in the narrative is the Shadow which is released by Anodos in the Ogre's hut. The release of the shadow has serious consequences. It is always so when the protagonist opens the door of a forbidden chamber; the Shadow destroys the charm of Fairy Land and brings Anodos to despair. The Shadow becomes Anodos's mute Adversary, with whom he has to struggle. In order to get rid of him, Anodos has to go through a series of cleansing rituals and trials.

The concept of the shadow being attached to human body, both physical and spiritual, has long held a fascination for mankind and there have been many variations on this theme. The Romantic interest in shadow doubles has three major sources: folklore, mysticism, and current theories of magnetism and mesmerism.[38] The most influential was G.H.Schubert's notion of 'animal magnetism'. "In the magnetic trance, the forerunner of hypnosis, there was often startlingly revealed a second personality arising from the dark side of the mind, its 'shadow-side' or 'night-side'"[39] At the end of the nineteenth century there is a large revival of interest in psychiatric research and spiritism. And thus attention is focused again on the questions of the dark shadow doubles. MacDonald's shadows obviously come from this mystic source.

The Shadow plays a relatively minor and rather obscure role in the structure of *Lilith*. It is associated exclusively with

Lilith: she seems to be subordinated to the Shadow in a way which is never really explained. At the end of the novel, however, even the Great Shadow lies down in the House of Sleep and is going to be saved.

In *Phantastes*, the Shadow plays a much more extensive structural role. The presence of the shadow has a metamorphical effect on the magic space of Fairy Land: it becomes dreary and ordinary as if he were back in the reality:

> "Everything, henceforward, existed for me in its relation to my attendant...These rays of gloom issued from the central shadow as from a black sun...But wherever a ray struck, that part of earth, or sea, or sky, became void, and desert, and sad to my heart."[40]

Some of the effects of the Shadow may be regarded as uncanny, for example the scene in which Anodos wants to kiss a pretty country girl but due to the 'metamorphical effect of the Shadow she turns grotesquely hideous[41]: but other effects are not, unless we refuse to trust Anodos's sense completely: for example, wherever the shadow lies, the vegetation is burned down as if by fire.[42] The Shadow disappears at the magic, regenerative stations, such as the Fairy Palace or the isthmus with the magic fairy cottage. The Shadow is also absent when Anodos becomes fully engaged in the preparation for the duel with giants: but after this heroic episode the Shadow returns, even though it remains invisible. It comes back and strikes with a new momentum at the moment of high elation and complacency, when Anodos in a splendid armour rides through a forest comparing himself to the holy knight Galahad.[43] The Shadow confronts him in the shape of a double, only "greater and fiercer than his counterpart", blocking the narrow path[43]. At this moment of confrontation Anodos fails to obey the voice of the unconscious which tells him: "Spear in rest, and ride at him!

else thou art for ever a slave."[43] and gives up resistance in his typical passive manner and suffers the consequences until he is again given a helping hand and takes a moral lesson to his heart:

> "I learned that it is better, a thousand-fold, for a proud man to fall and be humbled, than to hold up his head in his pride and fancied innocence. I learned...that he that will be nothing but a doer of his work, is sure of his manhood."[44]

The last metamorphosis of the Shadow might be the beast, "like a wolf, but twice the size"[45], kept hidden under the platform with a pagan altar, to which human sacrifices were offered, and which Anodos managed to strangle at the cost of his own life.

There is no doubt that the Shadow represents the negative aspects of mind which frustrate the spiritual progress. For example, Robb regards the Shadow as "MacDonald's version of Coleridge's Dejection"[46]; for Manlove the Shadow is the embodiment of possessiveness: "The Shadow is the evil conscious self which seeks to have, and destroys in having"[47] The most complex concept of the symbolic role of the Shadow is offered by Prickett:

> "As we discover, the shadow is not *merely* 'original sin', or the 'unconscious', the Jungian 'shadow', or even some prototype of the Freudian 'id', for it operates at *two* levels in the story. At one level it may indeed stand for some, or all, of these...Simultaneously, however, the discovery of this dark shadow through the forbidden door *illustrates* the process by which this comes about. It forms a symbol of his own mental process."[48]

In other words, the Shadow may personify a lot of negative

aspects of mind as a concept; but it is of equal, or may be even of greater importance to understand why and how the Shadow was released.

The evocation of the shadow has all the features of a dream. The hero seems to have no will of his own; he acts as if under a spell, doing things he knows he should not do. He opens the door of a closet in spite of the warning. The closet looks first like an ordinary tool shed but then it undergoes a metamorphosis: the other side opens into a space with a night sky and 'the long perspective of a narrow, dark passage..."[49] And out of the passage comes the shadow. Paralysed Anodos can only watch as the shadow noiselessly glides toward him, with the strange slow speed of nightmares.

The shadow has been released and there is no way to send it back once the hero opens the doors of the forbidden chamber. Dr. Jekyll has met Mr. Hyde and their struggle has begun.

> "Everybody's shadow is ranging up and down looking for him. I believe you call it by a different name in your world: yours has found you, as every person's is almost certain to do who looks into that closet, especially after meeting one in the forest, whom I dare say you have met."[70]

The problem of the symbolic role of the Shadow is connected with the concept and role of evil and suffering in MacDonald's work. The release of the Shadow is an act of disobedience: Anodos repeatedly ignores the inner voice and acts on impulse, and therefore his wanderings resemble a series of falls. But he is always saved and always given a chance to begin anew. This narrative pattern reflects MacDonald's concept of the evil:

> "What we call evil, is the only and best shape, which, for the person and his condition at the time, could be assumed

by the best good."[51]

As a result, the release of the shadow has done Anodos a lot of good in its ultimate effect. Even his selfish act of breaking the magic glass sphere of a little girl has turned out to be a good thing to do after all, because she could grow up and acquire a gift of singing, by means of which she could please others. By the magic of her voice Anodos is also set free from the tower and his despair. If one does not look into the forbidden closet and does not experience pain and sorrow, one will never grow up. Hyde must be acknowledged and overcome. It is the liberating, transformative power of the girl's song that annihilates the Shadow.

The annihilation of the Shadow is not the most convincing scene: it comes too easily and demands nothing of Anodos. It is simply given to him, as if he earned it by his suffering. But one should not think in terms of deserving or not deserving. In MacDonald's work the metaphysical help mysteriously comes and goes, following the logic of endless compassion.

The end of the Shadow is not, however, the end of spiritual progress: it is not the death of the self. After being saved by the girl from the tower, Anodos breaks the sequence of his recollections and from an authorial distance comments on the next stage of his spiritual progress:

> "Ere long, I learned that it was not myself, but only my shadow, that I had lost...Another self seemed to arise, like a white spirit from a dead man, from the dumb and trampled self of the past. Doubtless, this self must again die and be buried, and again, from its tomb, spring a winged child; but of this my history as yet bears not the record.Self will come to life even in the slaying of self: but there is ever something deeper and stronger than it, which will emerge at last from the unknown abysses of the soul..."[52]

The final goal, that is the final metamorphosis, is to be achieved after a long journey, the end of which is not included in the book, because it is beyond the limits of Imagination. Even in *Lilith*, which brings the hero beyond the world of the senses into the city in Heaven, Vane does not get more than a glimpse of the edge of Heaven, and is sent back to his dreams of reality.

Healing Metamorphoses and Transformations

Since the space of Fairy Land is the space of mind, metamorphoses can also be taken as expressions of states of mind and images of mental processes. Most of the regenerative metamorphoses are connected with images of water and a cleansing ritual: the eyes of the fairy, the bath in the stream springing from Anodos's bedroom, the swim in the basin in the Fairy Palace, the suicidal jump into the dreary autumn sea, and plenty of tears. The first part of the narrative is framed by the image of the sea found in the eyes of the fairy, and then by the image of the magic sea discovered in the palace basin, and finally by the image of the dreary autumn seashore Anodos reaches in despair.

The dominating metamorphoses of this part are the release of the Shadow and the metamorphosis of the marble statue into the White Lady. Manlove claims that "The Shadow and White Lady themes are, moreover, linked: they are different aspects of possessiveness..."[53] The episodes with White Lady serve as lessons of true love, which has transformative effects on the character: to love means to give and not to receive. "I knew now, that it is by loving, and not by being loved, that one can come nearest the soul of another..."[54]

It is impossible to fix a definite allegorical meaning to

the motif of White Lady. It is again the process which is more relevant than the concept. The actual metamorphosis of the statue can be understood as a symbolic image of the creation of work of art[55] as well as the release of the soul from the material confinement of matter. It is quite upsetting to see the White Lady running away from Anodos without a word of thanks. It is never explained why she does this. On a symbolic level, it becomes clearer when one accepts MacDonald's concept of love and the mystical concept of spiritual quest, in which the meeting with soul is only one step on the journey to perfection. By giving life to his White Lady, Anodos releases something in himself, by giving her up as the ideal he sought, he has opened himself to new stages of spiritual progress. Anodos himself claims:

"Thus I, who set out to find my Ideal, came back rejoicing that I had lost my Shadow."[56]

One has to wonder why MacDonald repeats the same scene of metamorphosis of the statue in the palace. I cannot think of any good explanation: it seems to be merely one of the random syntactic motifs which may not convey any semantic content, and simply contribute to the manifested dream-like, disjointed syntactic structure of the narrative.

If we think of the narrative as a mystical quest for perfection, then we should be able to interpret the respective stages. It is especially Anodos's stay in the palace which serves as an important regenerative station, in which two essential metamorphoses occur: the metamorphosis of the large basin into a sea, and the metamorphosis of the statue into dancers, including the metamorphosis of the statue of White Lady back to her human form.

In the palace, which seems empty to him at first, he is no

longer bothered by his Shadow. The swim in the magic basin, fed by the water from the overflowing fountain, has a regenerative effect on Anodos. His senses grow sharper again until he begins to discern "faint, gracious forms, here and there throughout the building".[57] In the huge palace library he is given a chance to learn by reading about other lives and other worlds, even though it always seems to him he is the main hero of the books.
And yet all the books do not teach him enough, because he fails to act properly during the metamorphosis of the statue of the White Lady back to life: he loses her when he stops his singing, grabs her hand and wants to pull her down from the pedestal.

But once again his failure works to his ultimate benefit, he grows by giving and giving up: he accepts finally that the knight, who finally married the White Lady at the end, deserves her more than he.

I believe that the stay in the fairy palace should have been the climax of his wandering: where else could he achieve what he has sought? And yet he leaves the palace without finding out who the mysterious, only half-visible inhabitants are: without meeting the owner of the palace, the fairy queen: Anodos chases the spectre of his dreams which, however, is not very keen on meeting him. Such a reading obviously makes no sense. Either the palace was an opportunity Anodos did not take, or it is only another phase in his quest. I am in favour of the second possibility. One cannot spend one's life in the comfort of a palace of art. This is only a way station as well as an isthmus: when Anodos is given a second chance to start, the fairy tells him: "Go, my son, and do something worth doing."[58]

Until his death in the fight with the beast, Anodos does not undergo a physical metamorphosis physically: the transformations of his mind are expressed by the symbolic metamorphosis of Fairy

Land and its elements. His own metamorphosis comes only after his death.

First he changes into a primrose, then into a cloud; and when exulting in his new mission of love, he experiences another fall: "a pang and a terrible shudder went through me; a writhing as of death convulsed me..."[59] He wakes up back in the real world.

Should the metamorphoses be taken as a fall or as a rise? Or as Robb has put it:

> "Is the ejection from Fairyland...a sign that the moral benefit of Anodos's fairy journey has been reaped, or is it a punishment for allowing self to enter in the moment of ultimate selflessness?"[60]

Robb left this problem unresolved, suggesting a purposeful ambiguity: "MacDonald *creates* the limits of human perfection by an ultimate ambiguity."[50] There can be no doubt about Anodos's spiritual progress, he has grown wiser and less selfish, taking lessons from his falls and failures, as well as from his reading experience, even though it shows up only in the long run. He gets rid of his Shadow and learns the value and the true nature of love.

His metamorphosis, however, does contain some seeds of corruption, which prevent him from reaching further stages of his spiritual progress. The fall from above comes as a result of his vision of Christ-like mission of love, another fallacy:

"Ah! my friends...how will I tend you, and wait upon you, and haunt you with my love."[61]

What he has done is to bring to life a new self, as Anodos the narrator in his retrospective remark explains, commenting on the riddance of the Shadow. "Self will come to life even in the

slaying of self; but there is ever something deeper and stronger than it, which will emerge at last from the unknown abysses of the soul..."[62]

But I would rather avoid the word 'punishment'. The last metamorphical fall is simply the last lesson Anodos receives. The writhing pain is evidently the birth pain; Anodos is born into a new life, or, in other words, he is giving life to a new self. Although it still remains a self, it is a much better self than the old one.

This last fall was necessary because Anodos could not stay in Fairy Land for ever. Similarly, the reader cannot stay forever inside the story he reads. He has to face the hard facts of reality and look for the guiding cues in the Book of Nature. And if the reader became fully involved in the story, he must have been transformed in the course of reading like Anodos was in the palace, even though the change did not take place immediately. He begins to understand the important issues only later on after he suffers because of his failures and falls. And the same applies for the reader, who is told by the fairy: "Go, my son, and do something worth doing."[63]

The expulsion from Fairy Land reflects the limits of human and artistic experience: Anodos has reached the highest stage that MacDonald as an artist could conceive. In *Lilith* MacDonald ventured further on: he lets Vane reach the gates of the heavenly city guarded by angels but does not allow him to enter it. Anodos is returned back, and the rest of the book becomes a series of falls from one reality to another, from one dream to another, erasing the borderlines between them.

The metamorphical fall brings Anodos literally down from the clouds to earth. The 'circuitous journey' was completed. Without a fall there can be no rise.

NOTES

1 Douglas Gifford, "Myth, Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914", in *The History of Scottish Literature*, vol.3 (Aberdeen, 1989), pp.217-260
2 George MacDonald, *Lilith*, in *Phantastes and Lilith* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p.203
3 George MacDonald, *Phantastes*, in *Phantastes and Lilith* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p.2
4 Ibid., p.3
5 ROBB, David S., *George MacDonald* (Edinburgh, 1987), p.52
6 Ibid., p.52
7 *Phantastes*, p.5
8 Ibid., p.132
9 Ibid., p.5
10 Ibid., p.5
11 Ibid., p.6
12 Ibid., p.159
13 Ibid., p.160
14 Ibid., p.161
15 *Lilith*, p.202
16 Ibid., pp.314-315
17 *Phantastes*, p.19
18 *Lilith*, p.203
19 C.N.Manlove, *Modern Fantasy* (Cambridge, 1975), p.73
20 *Phantastes*, p.20
21 Ibid., p.19
22 M.H.Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism. Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (London, 1971), p.147
23 Manlove, op.cit., p.77
24 Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy* (Hassocks, 1979), p.182

25 *Phantastes*, p.74
26 Robb, op.cit., p.84
27 Ibid., p.79
28 Ibid., p.97
29 *Phantastes*, p.21
30 Ibid., p.11
31 Ibid., p.36
32 Ibid., pp.36-37
33 Ibid., p.21
34 Ibid., p.49
35 Ibid., p.50
36 Ibid., p.51
37 Ibid., p.53
38 see John Herdmann, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London, 1990);
see Karl Miller, *Doubles* (Oxford, 1987)
39 Herdmann, op.cit., p.3
40 *Phantastes*, p.66
41 Ibid., p.70
42 Ibid., p.65
43 Ibid., p.159
44 Ibid., p.164
45 Ibid., p.176
46 Robb, op.cit., p.84
47 Manlove, op.cit., p.77
48 Prickett, op.cit., p.175
49 *Phantastes*, p.69
50 Ibid., p.70
51 Ibid., p.182
52 Ibid., p.165
53 Manlove, op.cit., p.77

54 *Phantastes*, p.179

55 see Robb, op.cit., p.90

56 *Phantastes*, p. 182

57 Ibid., p.79

58 Ibid., p.145

59 Ibid., p.180

60 Robb, op.cit., p.87

61 *Phantastes*, p.179

62 Ibid., p.165

63 Ibid., p.145

CONCLUSION

In my dissertation I discuss the development and treatment of the motif of metamorphosis in nineteenth-century Scottish fiction. I focused my attention on James Hogg, R.L.Stevenson and George MacDonald, because they are major Scottish writers and their works under discussion illustrate the general transformation of the concept of metamorphosis not only in Scottish literature, but also in the European context.

I have chosen to devote three chapters to James Hogg because his works reflect the whole development of the concept from the ancient mythic concept as found in ancient myths and the oldest layers of folklore to the Romantic concept of metamorphosis.

Stevenson's and MacDonald's concepts of metamorphosis represent the other stages of the development: Stevenson shifts the thematic focus to the moral issues while MacDonald, influenced by neoplatonism, uses metamorphosis at its ultimate effect as a symbol of the transformation of human consciousness and of the transcendence of the laws of reality, apart from its role as a symbolic Fall.

Metamorphosis, defined as a radical change in form and substance, is generally conceived as the changing of someone into a being of a lower order of life because mankind considers itself the highest form of life. This explains why metamorphosis is associated with the Fall of man, and with the myths that refer to it, such as the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, or the Faustian myth, which enjoyed a particular popularity in Romanticism.

I focused my attention on the thematic aspects of metamorphosis in my analysis, loosely following Todorov's structural classification of the text, which differentiates the

syntactic (plot), semantic (symbolic), pragmatic, and ethical levels. In practice, however, it is often impossible to separate the individual aspects (or levels) from each other.

In my discussion of the ontological development of the concept of metamorphosis I make use of Todorov's structural categories: the marvellous and the uncanny. As many critics noted, Romantic literature, like its forerunner, the Gothic novel, displays a shift of emphasis towards the uncanny. Hogg's fiction can serve as a good example of this trend. To achieve an uncanny effect the authors have to use more subtle ways of characterization by means of a skillful manipulation of interlinked images. They have to pay close attention to the tone, the point of view, and the style.

Whereas metamorphosis in Hogg's *Memoirs and Confessions* can be interpreted as an uncanny event as well as a marvellous event, this ambivalence is lost in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*. He avoids epistemological issues in order to focus fully on the moral and psychological problems of good and evil. Since his story lacks a satisfying psychological explanation which would dismiss Hyde as a hallucination, and the nature of the experiment is too improbable, the story becomes a moral fable about good and evil in the human soul, or in the modern reading, a psychological fable about suppression and sublimation. The question whether the story is 'real' in the mimetic sense ceases to be important.

The fable quality, however, does not encourage individual characterization, the characters lack fullness and depth, the setting remains rather sketchy and the major emphasis is put on action. Consequently, the story lacks the psychological quality of the previous Romantic masterpieces, as represented by James Hogg.

MacDonald moves even further away from sophisticated characterization. He expresses himself through images and incidents with symbolic undertones. If in Stevenson's story the metamorphosis produced Hyde and with him the whole story, in MacDonald metamorphosis stands for the metaphoric process of creation: a whole new world comes into being through metamorphosis. The process of internalization is complete. The whole story takes place in the mind of the central character and is therefore an expression of the contents of his own mind in which he is free to go on a quest for organic growth and perfection. Metamorphosis thus can be read in two contexts, the artistic and the religious: as a metaphoric process it creates a work of art in which we can realise our spiritual quest.

The epistemology of the narrative space is linked with different concepts of metamorphosis and the Fall. Michael's Fall takes place in the mythic space, he is a typical Faustian hero in search of secret knowledge and striving to control the forces of nature. Each new variation brings an ironic transformation: Robert is happy in his dogma and little schemes and does not aspire to any kind of gnosis. Although Jekyll is closer to the Faustian adept of mystic lore, his goal is rather limited in its scope: he does not strive to understand and control the elements of Nature, he simply wants to control his own nature and escape the frustrating inner conflict between the public persona and the private self.

MacDonald has no use for the Faustian myth; his heroes lack strong will and are carried away by the flow of events.

On the syntactic level, metamorphosis, being a severe disturbance of the laws of Nature, molds extensively the narrative structure as it generates and solves conflicts in the

plot. On the pragmatic level, it has a considerable effect on the reader: it produces fear, a sense of the grotesque or, as in Hogg's "The Hunt of Eildon", it achieves a comic effect.

Metamorphosis assumes a number of roles in the narrative. I turned to one of the oldest collections of myths of metamorphosis, written by Ovid, and I found in it the following archetypal roles: escape, reward, punishment, disguise.

The ethical aspect of ancient myths is often obscure, and the pragmatic aspect can differ from tale to tale. Ancient metamorphosis does not seem to have a clearly defined ethical content, because it reflects an epic world in a state of flux, in which the values, in contrast to later periods, are not fixed. Given this fact, metamorphosis can enter even completely contradictory narrative roles; in one case it may be a punishment, in another, paradoxically, a reward.

I have traced the origin of this loose epistemology back to the animistic mode of thought, which did not draw such a sharp line between man and Nature and regarded metamorphosis as a transfer into another form of life rather than a fall into a lower order of life.

Hogg's "Hunt of Eildon" is a typical example of a tale which is still in close touch with the ancient mythic type of metamorphosis. The pragmatic effect and narrative concerns prevail over the thematic concerns. Metamorphosis in the story is an important dynamic element in the plot and the metamorphoses of Croudy aim at a gross comic effect, while the ethical aspect is only vaguely implicit.

Hogg's *Three Perils of Man* uses metamorphosis in a more sophisticated and complex way: apart from its traditional narrative roles of punishment and disguise, it enters various thematic links. It operates as a coded message (the metamorphosis

of Charlie and his companions into bulls instructs them as to the way of conquering the besieged castle Roxburgh); the metamorphoses of the Eildon Hill and the countryside show the dangerous extent of the evil power. The fact that metamorphosis can function as a sport to employ the surplus energy of the three evil spirits reveals the Faustian theme of the problematic control of the evoked power: Michael can not give it up, as if it were a drug. He is finally destroyed by the power he raised.

Even the absence of the two mythic narrative roles of metamorphosis, escape and reward, is significant: metamorphosis can be neither a reward nor an escape into another order of being for the heroes in the world of romance, unless it is Heaven or Hell, because Christianity rejects animistic beliefs.

In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions* metamorphosis is used in a more subtle way and at the same time more sparingly. Metamorphosis assumes the role of a disguise and becomes the means of corruption of Robert by his mysterious companion; it spurs Robert to action and pushes the plot forward. Robert himself, unlike Charlie, does not undergo any real metamorphosis, because his metamorphosis would sway the story towards the marvellous and break the elaborate balance between the uncanny and the marvellous. Similarly, metamorphosis is either an act of the supernatural agency of justice, or a psychic mechanism of projecting his desire and then his guilt onto, or into another object, which can be real or entirely imaginary.

Metamorphosis also provides the key metaphor for his Fall: deprived of his free will Robert degenerates into a flat-soled monster, caught in the web of his lies and delusions.

Metamorphosis also generates a number of strong symbolic images that illustrate Robert's fallen state: he is perceived as a ghost-like figure with an evil eye, a person either possessed

by the Devil or mad.

In Hogg we can see that metamorphosis becomes more and more central to the syntactic and semantic aspects of the text; in *The Three Perils of Man* and *Private Memoirs and Confessions* metamorphosis serves as one of the major structuring thematic elements. In Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, however, metamorphosis plays an even more essential role than in Hogg because metamorphosis becomes the narrative pivot of the story. It is the event that generates the whole plot and all motifs are subordinated to it.

Stevenson not only created the most potent image of metamorphosis in the nineteenth century, but he also came with a new variation: the metamorphosis in *Jekyll and Hyde* serves as an escape from Jekyll's frustration. Jekyll's experiment fails and his attempt to escape proves to be disastrous; the escape is transformed into a punishment when Jekyll loses control over Hyde and Hyde takes over the body. Crossing the borders of the Newtonian physical space, and that is what metamorphosis is, was felt to be a severe transgression of the laws of Nature and therefore it was doomed to failure and condemnation in late Victorian society.

The story can be read as a Victorian version of the Faustian myth, similiar to its forerunner, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Jekyll in his studies and research transcends the empiric field of science, crosses the boundary of matter when he masters the secret of metamorphosis. The Devil figure is strictly internalised, only to be transformed into the figure of Hyde. As critics have noted, Hyde is a monster of shame. In this respect Robert's companion can be a monster of pride and guilt.

Although the metamorphosis itself is presented as a chemical

experiment with a Gothic flair, it is not far from alchemy and magic. Yet the metamorphosis is not a result of magic because magic works on the basis of a spell; it requires the right formula. This particular fact has several thematic implications: the story can be read as one the first examples of the abuse of science and its tragic results. An attempt to use science to solve psychological and metaphysical issues has to end in disaster. On the other hand, the circumstances of metamorphosis ironically suggest, that it was not science that produced the metamorphosis but a chance arrangement (the essential powder used in the chemical process was impure, and therefore of unknown composition). What remains then, is the fact of human transgression of the physical space of Nature that has been allocated to him, and this calls for a balladic punishment.

While the Stevenson metamorphosis fails to assume the role of an escape, the MacDonald metamorphosis assumes all the traditional roles in the course of the narrative: escape, reward, punishment, and disguise. Since the whole story takes place in the space of the hero's mind, the narrative roles come to signify the processes of the mind. But in its ultimate effect they are not subordinated to the myth of the Fall, but to the concept of organic growth expressed in the image of death as a supreme metamorphosis, transforming the human consciousness.

Metamorphosis thus turns from a mere syntactic device into an important thematic element in the composition; in MacDonald even the symbol of the creation itself, which opens space for the human quest for a deeper understanding.

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