

James Hogg's *The Profligate Princes*: An unconventional treatment of Scottish female sexuality in Romantic writing for the theatre

Barbara Leonardi

University of Stirling

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to shed new light on the dramatic output of James Hogg (1770-1835), a genre of which the *Etrick Shepherd* was particularly fond but which, both at the time of first publication and in twentieth-century criticism has attracted little attention. The focus will be on *The Profligate Princes* (1817), a tragedy where the threat of seduction to its upper-class female characters questions the profitability of their chastity. Contemporary reviewers condemned Hogg's breach of the Aristotelian unity of action in the plot construction; however, this article argues that Hogg's tragedy also questions the norms of sympathy and sensibility that shaped the heroine of early nineteenth-century established literature as found, for example, in the grand narrative of the National Tale. A comparative analysis with Hogg's *The Hunting of Badlewe* (1813), a former version of the same tragedy, shows that the omissions Hogg made in the subsequent version of *The Profligate Princes* was dictated by a wish to meet the expectations of contemporary reviewers; while the intertextualities with other Hogg works, such as the novel *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823) and the narrative poem *Mador of the Moor* (1816), indicate that Hogg addresses illegitimate pregnancy quite consistently throughout his work, and that in *The Profligate Princes* such an audacious theme might have challenged ascendant middle-class norms of taste and decorum.

INTRODUCTION

Hoping to benefit from the recent success with his anonymous imitations of Romantic poets, in 1817 Hogg advertised his collection of *Dramatic Tales* as ‘by the Author of “The Poetic Mirror”’. Nevertheless, Hogg’s experimental attempt at writing for the theatre¹ was received unenthusiastically: the *Monthly Review* judged it as ‘a poor school-boy’s performance, —a coarse and unenlightened *commixture* of Allan Ramsay, Robert Burns, and Walter Scott, into an irregular fairy tale, dramatized and *colloquized* for the occasion’.²

The Profligate Princes is one of Hogg’s *Dramatic Tales*, the plot of which focuses on a group of four Scots noblemen in disguise, wandering through the Scottish Borders, with the double purpose of hunting the deer and ‘the blooming mountain maids’.³ Although contemporary reviewers did not appreciate the intricate machinery of the tragedy’s plot, Hogg’s failure to meet their aesthetic expectations was not the only reason for their negative reception. Though Hogg sets his tragedy at the time of Robert III,⁴ the economic relation between women’s virtue and their seduction questions the authority of the male higher classes over women’s sexuality in the early nineteenth century. In *The Profligate Princes*, the threat of rape to which the female characters are constantly exposed highlights the lucrative value of their chastity—a commodity to be exchanged together with the dowry women brought with marriage, both in the fourteenth and in the nineteenth century.

Hogg merges the importance of chastity for safeguarding primogeniture, a pre-nineteenth-century concern, with the purity inherent in the delicate figure of the primary heroine with traits of sensibility as depicted in the National Tale. He mirrors the first issue in the subplot related to the jealousy that Lord Crawford feels towards his wife

Matilda and her previous lover Badenoch, while representing the nineteenth-century issue of women's relegation to the private sphere through the main plot: Sir Drummond is obsessed with the chastity of his daughter Annabel, a lady of aristocratic origins but without money who needs to preserve her chastity for a good marriage in order to save her family from destitution. Hogg portrays Sir Drummond as resorting to necromancy to protect his daughter's purity, while Annabel is a heroine endowed with sincere moral values, thanks to which she resists the amorous advances of Kilmorack, one of the profligate princes. Annabel is hence shown to be a lady at heart who, for this reason, deserves to become queen of Scotland. Thus, Hogg captures the transition from an ancient aristocratic world, where magic is used to maintain an arbitrary power, to a more ethically developed society.

At the time when Hogg wrote his tragedy, sensibility was a 'feminine virtue' that distinguished bourgeois women and made them suitable mothers and wives, besides 'justifying' their 'confinement to the safety of the domestic sphere'.⁵ The role of British middle-class women in nation-making and empire-formation was of paramount importance, as they represented the moral authority of the imperial project.⁶ Exploiting Adam Smith's notion of teleological progress from 'savage' to commercial society, and David Hume's idea of the female condition as a mark of progress, nineteenth-century British discourse assumed the purity of middle-class white women as an indicator of superior civilisation. This provided a powerful tool for legitimising the imperial project in the new commercial society dominated by the bourgeoisie (Wilson, pp. 20-21). The vogue for sensibility, whose values of compassion and benevolence were cultivated and internalised in the domestic sphere, defined women's sense of womanhood and

motherhood; while domesticity became a patriotic ideal which, however, limited women's agency within the public sphere.

Concerning sympathy, in his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739), David Hume argues for a sympathy determined by closeness and similarity that enables the exchange of emotions among human beings. Hume contends that '[n]o quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than the propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own.'⁷ Juliet Shields observes that Hume's notion of sympathy as a trait developed by 'like-minded individuals raises the question of whether sympathy that transcends cultural, political, or national boundaries is possible' (p. 10). Adam Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), answers this point by arguing instead for a learnt sympathy which 'requires both the self-control necessary to regulate or moderate emotion and the sensibility necessary to imaginatively change places with others' (Shields, p. 11). Hogg's *Profligate Princes* shows a notion of sympathy which 'transcends' the boundaries of class and gender by portraying a shepherd who, in one of the subplots, convinces Lord March to forgive his daughter Elenor, who is pregnant out of wedlock. Christopher Nagle maintains that 'in the post-Enlightenment world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries [...] the realms of the ethical and the aesthetic [...] are matters [...] we understand most fully and meaningfully through feeling, not reasoning'.⁸ Likewise, in *The Profligate Princes* through a forgiving shepherd figure, Hogg depicts a 'Man of Feeling' of the peasant class who truly sympathises with Elenor's condition.

In her essay 'Hogg and the Theatre', Meiko O'Halloran observes that in this genre Hogg experimented with 'innovative narrative techniques that emerged in his

fiction in the 1820s' with regards to the position of himself and the readers.⁹ However, Hogg's attempt was not a mere experiment with narrative techniques, and an analysis of the reception of *The Profligate Princes* by early reviewers reveals the critical value of Hogg's tragedy, as his focus on the threatened chastity of its female characters exposes the political relation between women's purity, Christian values, and the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie in the early nineteenth century. The following analysis is thus intended to focus new attention on Hogg's tragedy and his approach to the theatre as a genre, which, as argued by Gillian Hughes, has been rather neglected by twentieth- and twenty-first-century Hogg studies.¹⁰

ANALYSIS

The Profligate Princes had been written in 1813, four years earlier than its publication in the *Dramatic Tales*, under the title of *The Hunting of Badlewe*, of which Hogg had only six copies printed for a few 'selected literary friends'.¹¹ Their opinion, however, was not very favourable, as William Roscoe considered it 'unsuitable for representation on the stage' (*Collected Letters*, vol. 1, p. 172); while Walter Scott, though he 'had read it with pleasure, [...] pronounced that the plot was divided into too many characters and interests'.¹² Despite the negative reception by Hogg's friends, Goldie published a few copies of *The Hunting of Badlewe* the following year in London (1814), 'to see how the public relished it'.¹³ Hogg printed it under the pseudonym of J. H. Craig of Douglas in order to avoid, as he stated in a letter to Bernard Barton, 'the prejudices that poverty and want of education have to encounter in this important age' (*Collected Letters*, vol. 1, p. 140).

Hogg's tragedy, this time, attracted a more positive notice as in the North American *Analectic Magazine*, apparently a reprint from the *Scottish Review*, the author's style was compared to Shakespeare's:

This is indeed a most extraordinary production, in which the faults and the beauties are almost equally indications of no common-rate talents. The hitherto unknown author has marked out a path for himself with all the boldness at least, if not with all the originality, of Shakespeare. Those infringements of dramatic rules, or, in other words, those transgressions of probability and good taste, into which that master of the art was betrayed by ignorance, allured by indolence, or hurried by the fervours of an impetuous imagination, the author seems to have adopted from choice; and whilst he flounders, in company with his great master, through all the fragments of broken unities, he certainly comes nearer to him in his most daring and unequalled flights than perhaps *any* modern poet.¹⁴

In the subsequent version of *The Profligate Princes*, Hogg took into account the suggestions of the *Analectic's* reviewer, removing 'the indelicacy and silliness' of the 'stupid enumeration of the mistresses of Badenoch' (p. 366), and published it anonymously in the volume *Dramatic Tales* (1817). Again, the plays incited little interest among contemporary critics, with the *Monthly Review* judging *The Profligate Princes* as 'undeserving of criticism in its design or execution' (February 1819: 185).

Such a poor reception put an end to Hogg's dramatic career and his plays were never performed.

Both Hogg's literary friends and the *Monthly Review* agreed that the departure from the unity of action—besides showing a 'want of plan, character and incidents'—rendered Hogg's tragedy rather difficult for theatrical representation (February 1819: 183). And, indeed, the series of inter-connected subplots requires the reader's strictest attention. The main plot concerns Annabel Drummond, a noble by birth but impoverished young lady, who enjoys being courted by three Stuart princes in disguise as noble men of a lower rank 'hunting in the Scottish Borders': for the occasion they have assumed the names of Sir Ronald, Kilmorack, and Coucy. Only Sir Ronald, King Robert III in disguise, has honourable intentions, while Kilmorack's and Coucy's hidden purposes are to enjoy Annabel's beauty, either by seducing or raping her. When Annabel experiences an ambiguous dream about them, her father Sir Drummond, who is still attached to old superstitious beliefs, visits the powerful wizard Merlin seeking an interpretation of his daughter's vision.

Badenoch is another profligate prince of the same group, whose intention is to seduce Matilda, Lord Crawford's wife, having tired of his current mistress Elenor, daughter of Lord March, who is in his train disguised as a page and pregnant by him. Elenor escapes from Badenoch's entourage and is helped by a shepherd, who meets Lord March and persuades him to forgive her. Badenoch, however, kills Elenor's father when the latter demands that he marry his daughter. Badenoch is then killed by Lord Crawford (Matilda's husband) in an act of revenge, as he wrongly believes him to be involved in a liaison with his wife.

The plot is rather intricate, and William Roscoe claimed that ‘though containing some fine scenes, [it] does not “form a perfect whole.” Although a tragedy may admit of episodes “yet they sho[uld] all contribute to the illustration of the principal object”’.¹⁵ In his preface to *The Hunting of Badlewe*, Hogg justified his departure from the unity of action by arguing that a chain of connected events affords more opportunities of representing the subtleties of human nature since, ‘arising out of one another, [they] afford infinitely more scope and chance of success to the poet,—more opportunities to the actor, of displaying his powers in the representation of nature, and more interest and delight, whether to spectators or readers (1814b: vii).’ However, in an unpublished review for the London weekly newspaper *The Champion*, written by himself, Hogg would later acknowledge that ‘[t]he plot is too long and diffuse [...] bold, erratic, ill conceived, and carelessly executed’.¹⁶ And, probably, as argued by Meiko O’Halloran, ‘Hogg’s use of multiple plots restricts the psychological development of the characters, leaving little room for the audience to enter into their feelings’ (p. 110).

Nevertheless, this was not the only reason behind the bad reception of Hogg’s play. Shakespeare’s non-observance of the Aristotelian unities did not limit the revival of his plays during the Romantic period. Hogg himself, having drawn rather heavily on Shakespeare for his tragedy—as O’Halloran (2012) has accurately shown—was rather surprised, claiming in a letter to the editor of *The Scotsman* that the complete failure of *The Dramatic Tales* had ‘more astonished me than all I have ever witnessed in my short literary experience’ (*Collected Letters*, vol. 1, p. 351). Undeniably, Hogg’s treatment of illegitimate pregnancy questioned the ideology of the delicate heroine, a symbolic container of bourgeois moral values.

In *The Profligate Princes* Hogg portrays a dying, impoverished Scottish aristocracy, exemplified by Sir Drummond, who retains only a noble title and is incapable of making the transition to commercial society. Self-made men have now the economic power to buy Sir Drummond's title by marrying his daughter; this is why Annabel's chastity needs protection. Hogg also depicts a rich Lord Crawford, who has married the attractive, though destitute Matilda without a dowry. Notwithstanding his prodigious wealth, Crawford's extreme jealousy of his wife exposes his concerns for primogeniture, his deep attachment to physical beauty (a patriarchal value), and his inadequate awareness of the beauty of Matilda's soul. Hogg then presents Elenor, Lord March's daughter, who has defied the law of her father by eloping with her lover Badenoch, by whom she is later raped and made pregnant. Finally, a shepherd—a subaltern voice and alter ego of Hogg himself, the Ettrick Shepherd—is presented as the only character upholding the morality of the play, endowed with a nobler sense of justice than the revengeful Crawford, as he advises Lord March, Elenor's father, to forgive and accept his injured daughter—a 'trodden flower' deserving pity. Not only does Hogg show a shepherd asking a father to forgive an unmarried, pregnant daughter, but he also depicts a 'fallen woman' of the upper class. Hogg's tragedy could not be accepted by the literary reviewers of his time because its 'indelicacies' challenged bourgeois sense of propriety.

Recent studies on politeness pragmatics can illuminate theoretically the reasons for the unenthusiastic reception of Hogg's work at the time of its first publication.¹⁷ The fictional act of a shepherd requesting an upper-class father to forgive his erring daughter must have been viewed as threatening both the 'positive' and the 'negative face' of the dominant classes in Hogg's time. Negative criticism threatens the hearer's 'positive

face' as it questions the validity of his or her social status; while requests and orders—by limiting the addressee's freedom of action—threaten the hearer's 'negative face'. In the specific case of theatrical performance, communication occurs at two simultaneous levels: between the characters, and between the playwright and the audience by means of the characters' dialogues and actions. In Hogg's play, the request by a member of the lower class to forgive a daughter with an illegitimate child limits Lord March's freedom to re-establish the patriarchal order and to punish Elenor, whom he considers 'the shame of maidhood and nobility' (p. 69). The shepherd's fictional request also questioned patriarchal authority in the real world outwith the play: early nineteenth-century reviewers must have perceived *The Profligate Princes* as questioning bourgeois assumptions of women's chastity and thus as threatening contemporary norms of taste and decorum.

In Hogg's Calvinist Scotland, a woman in Elenor's condition, pregnant out of wedlock, had to face public repentance. According to the Calvinist doctrine of Scottish Presbyterianism, man is sinful in principle and corrupted 'by the taint of original sin'.¹⁸ Any form of good work is pointless for salvation, because God has already decreed who will be among the damned and the elect. That is to say, the individual has neither merit nor virtue apart from that attributed by God himself, who has already chosen who will be part of the true church. Since in Hogg's time a congregation's strict observance of moral discipline was considered as a sign of being part of the true church, its members were kept under the strictest control because the misbehaviour of a single individual could threaten the 'elect' status of the congregation as a whole.¹⁹ A community that did not punish breaches of the rule threatened its 'elect' status and was likely to attract the

wrath of God through famine, plagues, wars, or rebellions, ‘all signs of divine displeasure’ (Mitchison and Leneman, *Sexuality & Social Control*, p. 18).

Discipline was kept by a system of kirk sessions, special meetings held on a monthly basis by the minister and the elders of a parish, with the purpose of imposing the strictest moral supervision on the members of the community. They dealt with cases of ‘fornication, adultery, drunkenness, and Sabbath profanation’, as well as with ‘assault, theft and wife-beating’, referring more serious offences to the local civil authority (Devine, ‘The Parish State’, p. 84). This moral supervision was mostly directed against women, particularly from the lower classes, to prevent illegitimate pregnancy.²⁰

The social élite, the landowning class, and their servants could easily escape public repentance, and its inherent humiliation before the members of a lesser status, by writing a persuasive, contrite letter and by donating a token payment to the poor fund (Devine, ‘The Parish State’, p. 87). The cases of people appearing before the congregation were mostly of those without property, both men and women. Interestingly, there are very few cases of upper-class women who were cited by the kirk sessions, and ‘whether such women were more virtuous, better guarded, or less likely to be found out is a moot point’ (Mitchison and Leneman, *Sexuality & Social Control*, p. 155). This is an important aspect to consider in the analysis of *The Profligate Princes*, where the chastity of its upper-class female characters is a central theme.

Christopher Smout points out that both middle- and upper-class women observed the strictest code of sexual behaviour before marriage, which was ‘a contract by which property was transferred’.²¹ To illustrate the significance of female premarital chastity for a hereditary system regulated by the system of primogeniture, Dr Johnson

claimed that '[u]pon that all the property in the world depends' (cited in Smout, p. 214). Indeed, an uncertain paternity meant that land and estates could be inherited by an illegitimate child. In this regard, peasant women enjoyed more freedom since, in their cases, an illegitimate pregnancy would not threaten land ownership and, as observed by W. Cramond, having gone through public repentance, they would be considered purged from their sin and could even aspire to marry—as long as they were not promiscuous.²² Hogg himself, like Robert Burns, had appeared 'with a red face on the Stool of Repentance', as he had fathered two daughters out of wedlock.²³

A comparison between *The Hunting of Badlewe* and *The Profligate Princes* shows Hogg's awareness of his audacious treatment of sexuality. In the later edition of Hogg's tragedy, the dialogue between Kilmorack and the old courtier Glen-Garnet is devoid of any hints at pregnancy out of wedlock and 'grace of true repentance'—signs of the influence of Calvinism on Hogg's play. Robin MacLachlan's research on the forthcoming Stirling/ South Carolina edition of *Dramatic Tales* has shown that the changes of substance in *The Profligate Princes* are 'generally of a kind that suggests that Hogg has been involved', and this is '[i]n part [...] supported by the absence of any comments from Hogg that the cuts and rewriting were done without his knowledge or involvement'.²⁴ In the earlier version of *The Hunting of Badlewe*, Glen-Garnet rebukes Kilmorack quite harshly for his profligate behaviour:

Gar. Hence, scoffer with thy jargon: Now I guess

The drift of all this deft dissemblage,—vice!

Kil. Call't not by name so hard; say love, Glen-

Garnet.

Gar. Heaven bar such love! Poor girls, they little
 ween
 What gins lie hid around them!—From the hall,
 The steading, and the cot, constant they look
 To see the green-coat hunter's stately form;
 Their fair blue eyes, like morning's softest beam,
 And ruddy lips, opening in cherub smile,
 Courting their own destruction!—I do fear
 This wicked hunt will teach too many a maid
 The grace of true repentance; and the art
 To sing the sob-broke lullaby full sweet
 O'er mid-day cradle!—Fie upon it! Now
 That I perceive your drift, I'll home again.²⁵

In the later version of *The Profligate Princes*, Hogg softened this long rebuke by omitting the two long sections that address directly the issue of illegitimate motherhood. The first part from 'Now I guess' to 'What gins lie hid around them!' is bowdlerised into the innocuous sentence 'true it is I like these country maidens' (*The Profligate Princes*, p. 5); while the second part from 'Courting their own destruction!' to the end is reduced to the innocuous clause '[c]ourting in simplest guise the words of love' (p. 5). These omissions show Hogg's willingness to accommodate the sense of politeness of his contemporary reviewers, perhaps, to achieve a more enthusiastic literary recognition of his newly edited play.

Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson point out that Hogg's contemporary 'Scottish periodicals' had established notions of 'gentility and taste', thus 'mark[ing] the boundaries of suitability'. As a consequence, 'working-class writers, particularly those who threatened to disturb moral and stylistic standards, were being carefully monitored by the literati'.²⁶ As shown above, Hogg's questions about women's chastity are particularly evident in *The Hunting of Badlewe*, and the apparent removal of such hints from the subsequent version of *The Profligate Princes* shows Hogg's own personal attempt to 'improve' his sense of delicacy, even though such 'improvement' might have been not enough for the *Monthly Review*.

There are plentiful intertextual relations with other Hogg texts which engage with female chastity, and the most obvious—particularly for the theme of disguised princes—is the one with the long narrative poem *Mador of the Moor* (1816). Since both texts were written in the same period,²⁷ seeing them in dialogue with each other may be illuminating, as also in *Mador* Hogg develops the theme of a father forgiving a lost daughter. In *The Profligate Princes*, the Shepherd tells Lord March,

Could you endure to see that innocent
 Vilely betray'd, disgraced, and then thrown out
 Derisive on a cold injurious world?
 Could you bear this, sir? —For my part I cannot;
 No, and I will not bear it. (p. 66)

Lord March will later accept Elenor's pregnancy, claiming, 'Thou art my daughter still!' (p. 70). In *Mador*, too, Ila Moore's father forgives his daughter using a similar address:

My child is still my own, and shall not tell
 At Heaven's high bar, that I, her only shield,
 For blame that was not hers, expell'd her to the field.²⁸

This is also what Daniel Bell will argue some years later in *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823) when, presuming Gatty with child, he claims, 'What can a father do, but forgie his erring bairn?'.²⁹ Concerning *Mador of the Moor*, James Barcus has observed that Hogg promotes 'a kind of fatherhood which has not been praised until the last half of the twentieth century'.³⁰ Ila's father accepts his daughter's pregnancy, and he chooses poverty rather than repudiating her. In the same poem, Hogg sets Ila's case in intra-textual relation with the episode of the Palmer: he fathered a child out of wedlock with a Lady of the upper class who, having been promised in marriage to another Lord, killed her baby to avoid public shame. In *Mador*, Hogg shows what may happen when a daughter is not forgiven for having disappointed her family's economic ambitions—a crime which the Elenor of *The Profligate Princes* might have committed if a shepherd had not provided his advice to her revengeful father.

Yet in his tragedy Hogg also exhibits a wish to espouse the Christian values exploited by the discourse of delicacy that kept upper- and middle-class women confined to the domestic sphere. He does so by relating Elenor, an erring daughter, to Annabel Drummond, the impoverished aristocratic young lady who resists Kilmorack's advances thanks to her Christian principles. When asked by Kilmorack to elope with him, Annabel replies,

Hold, my good lord, a while;
 Let me deliberate calmly on this act:
 Short conference with my own heart will serve.—
 Fair candid maid,—can thou, in time to come,
 Answer, with open truth and stedfast look,
 To prudence, virtue, parents, and the world,
 For this?—Not one:—No; not to one of them! (p. 107)

Annabel's words are reminiscent of the female protagonist's monologue at the beginning of 'Peril First' in Hogg's *Perils of Woman* where, likewise, Gatty addresses herself in the second person before the mirror, in order to evaluate her love for M'Ion and to reflect upon the risk of tarnishing her reputation.³¹ Similarly, in *The Profligate Princes* the judging entity that Annabel interrogates while having a 'short conference' with her 'own heart' represents an external authority—her 'parents, and the world'—which she has internalised and which she is addressing in order to assess the social consequences of her personal circumstance.

The reasons why here Hogg complies with a bourgeois value are various. Sir Drummond, who defines himself as an 'ancient oak' (p. 39)—symbol of the dying aristocracy in Hogg's time—shows an economic interest in his daughter's purity, whom he addresses as '[a] slender stem | [...] should that too fall or fade, | [f]arewell to every hope beneath high heaven' (p. 40). Lady Drummond, similarly to Ila Moore's mother in *Mador of the Moor*, is also a scheming woman, interested in the financial value of her daughter, to whom she gives wrong guidance by advising her to yield to Kilmorack's amorous advances. This aspect shows, as Barcus indicates in his reading of *Mador*, that

often ‘mothers participate in and are party to the [...] seduction of their daughters [by...] teach[ing them] to acquiesce in a subservient role’ (p. 42), hence reinforcing—rather than questioning—patriarchal assumptions. On the other hand, in *The Profligate Princes* Annabel proves to have internalised the Christian values of women’s delicacy for more honourable reasons than the pecuniary ones of both her parents. She does not trust her ‘inexperienced heart’ with lord Kilmorack and, contrary to her mother’s advice, chooses the apparently poorer Sir Ronald who will not only reveal himself to be King Robert III in disguise, but will also marry Annabel, making her a queen because ‘[f]or love, and not for state, thou wedded’st me; | [t]herefore I love you and value thee more’ (p. 187).

Annabel’s father, Sir Drummond, represents the old Scottish pre-Enlightenment world and its superstitious beliefs. Though a sorcerer himself, he craves for more supernatural expertise and thus resorts to the wizard Merlin, ‘to read with him the book of fate, and learn [Annabel’s] fortune, and the fortune of [his daughter’s] race’ (p. 96). But Sir Drummond finds the wizard in his cave sleeping over the mighty book. Merlin’s cave symbolises Scottish tradition: an enchanted world, fuelled by his magic book—symbol of knowledge and power—which the wizard is not able to control any longer because history has reached a modern phase, and the book’s values have become untenable. Sir Drummond steals Merlin’s book with the hope of re-establishing his authority and the old system of values; but, again, he does not have the expertise to manage its power. Sir Drummond will abandon the book, as the members of the old aristocracy have to renounce their hunger for authoritarian power and give way to the new phase of commercial society.

Merlin's magic book is reminiscent of Hogg's 'chivalrous romance' *The Three Perils of Man* (1822), where another opportunistic figure, the Borders chief Sir Ringan Redhough,³² sends an embassy to the magic castle of Aikwood, to have the wizard Michael Scott interpret an old man's prophecy concerned with whether—for his own personal advancement—Sir Ringan should support the Scottish Lord Douglas or the English Sir Philip Musgrave in the siege of the castle of Roxburgh. Walter Scott had also exploited the same traditional figure in the plot of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), where Lady Janet Scott of Buccleuch has Sir William Deloraine steal the 'Mighty Book' from Michael Scott's tomb in Melrose Abbey, to oppose the marriage between her daughter Margaret and Lord Cranston, who took part in the murder of Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch, Lady Janet's husband. In both *The Three Perils of Man* and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the wish of the two authoritarian figures to possess Michael Scott's magic book mirrors an attachment to arbitrary power gained in the wrong way. Likewise, in *The Profligate Princes* Hogg exploits the trope of the magic book to mirror Sir Drummond's attachment to absolute power.

In *The Profligate Princes* the stolen book is then found by Merlin the wizard and Lord Crawford, Matilda's jealous husband who, likewise, has gone to the magician's cave to enquire into the future of his marriage. Merlin's prophecy will help Lord Crawford to acknowledge the beauty of Matilda's soul—an event through which Hogg highlights the value of Scottish tradition—but wizard and book will shatter and vanish forever.

Hogg concludes *The Profligate Princes* by negotiating Scottish folklore with the new post-Enlightenment phase of his actual time of writing, of which he gives a glimpse

in Annabel's dream. In her vision, Annabel—who will become a queen of the Stuart line—travels 'to future ages' (p. 37), where she sees

Our progeny extended in a line
 Farther than the eye could reach; and still they grew
 In grandeur and in glory, till at last
 Their branchy curving horns hoop'd the wide world.' (p. 38)

Suzanne Gilbert argues that 'Hogg's defence of oral culture depends on a view of tradition that had undergone revision as a result of Enlightenment scrutiny; ideas about antiquity, authenticity, and the reliability of direct experience had been challenged and found too unscientific'.³³ Yet, in *The Profligate Princes* Hogg makes a strategic use of Scottish tradition, exploiting the supernatural belief in foretelling dreams to show the process of fusion between upper and middle classes, and taking Annabel's vision of the future Stuart dynasty, an allusion to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, as evidence for the validity of her prophetic dream, which foretells the flourishing of the British Empire in 'future ages'. After the defeat of Napoleon in the battle of Waterloo in 1815—a time close to when Hogg wrote and published *The Profligate Princes*—Britain was 'the leading world power which not only dominated the European stage but had also acquired an overseas empire of colossal scale and prodigious wealth' (Devine, *Scotland's Empire*, p. 290).

The *Monthly Review* was thus rather unfair when judging *Dramatic Tales*—and *The Profligate Princes* in particular—as 'a poor school-boy's performance', and a 'coarse and unenlightened [...] irregular fairy tale' (February 1819: 183). Hogg

reconciles Scottish lore with contemporary post-Enlightenment rational demands by distancing his tragedy in a previous time and by using contemporary historical evidence—the majestic expansion of the British Empire—to validate the foretelling power of Annabel’s dream. Hogg then depicts a more honourable sense of women’s delicacy, questioning the bourgeoisie’s exploitation of this Christian value for economic and political reasons. He finally shows a shepherd conveying the moral message of the play, and teaching the values of forgiveness and acceptance to a member of a higher class. Perhaps the reason for the failure of Hogg’s work should be traced to what Valentina Bold has argued for the peasant poets in Scotland, namely the prejudices with which Hogg was still regarded by the *literati* of his time,³⁴ behind which—this article adds—they hid the potential of Hogg’s creative power.

¹ In his ‘Preface’ to *The Hunting of Badlewe* (1814), Hogg writes that he wished to have his tragedy

brought forward on one of the theatres of the metropolis; but on showing it to a few selected friends, who he knew could not be mistaken, he was persuaded that the innovations upon received custom were too palpable to be tolerated at once; and therefore determined not to *offer* it for representation, but, rather than risk the mortification of a refusal, or the still more painful one which every bad or perverse actor has the power of inflicting, to give it to the Public simply as it is, —*an experiment, and a first essay.*

See James Hogg [J.H. Craig of Douglas], ‘Preface’, in *The Hunting of Badlewe: A Dramatic Tale*, written by James Hogg (London: Colburn, 1814b), pp. v-viii (p. viii), emphases original.

² Anon., '[Review of] *Dramatic Tales* by the Author of *The Poetic Mirror*', *Monthly Review*, 88, February 1819, pp. 183-85 (p. 183), emphasis original <<http://books.google.com>> [accessed 25 June 2012]

³ James Hogg, 'The Profligate Princes', in *Dramatic Tales*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne, 1817), vol. 2, p. 4 <<http://books.google.com>> [accessed 2 August 2011]. Quotations from Hogg's play will be from this edition, and page references given within parentheses in the text.

⁴ King Robert III of Scotland (1390-1406). He married Annabella Drummond in 1366/7 and was crowned in 1390.

⁵ Juliet Shields, *Sentimental Literature and Anglo-Scottish Identity, 1745-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 9.

⁶ Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Gender, and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century', in *Gender and Empire*, ed. by Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 14-45 (pp. 20-21).

⁷ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 316.

⁸ Christopher Nagle, *Sexuality and the Culture of Sensibility in the British Romantic Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

⁹ Meiko O'Halloran, 'Hogg and the Theatre', in *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, ed. by Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 105-12 (p. 105).

¹⁰ Gillian Hughes, 'James Hogg and the Theatre', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 15 (2004), 53-66 (pp. 62-63).

¹¹ *The Collected Letters of James Hogg*, ed. by Gillian Hughes, associate editors Douglas S. Mack, Robin MacLachlan and Elaine Petrie, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004-08), vol. 1, editorial note, p. 141.

¹² Gillian Hughes, *James Hogg: A Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 120.

¹³ James Hogg, 'Memoirs of the Author's Life', in *Altrive Tales*, ed. by G. Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005 [1832]), pp. 11-52, (p. 33).

¹⁴ Anon., '[Review of] *The Hunting of Badlewe, A Dramatic Tale* [From the *Scottish Review*]', *Analectic Magazine*, May 1815, pp. 353-67 (p. 353), emphasis original.

¹⁵ Cited in an editorial note to a Hogg letter, *Collected Letters*, ed. by Hughes and others, vol. 1, p. 173.

¹⁶ J. H. Craig Esq^r. [James Hogg], '[Review of] The Hunting of Badlewe', draft copy for the London weekly newspaper *The Champion*, identified by Gillian Hughes; it survives in the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Yale University: James Hogg Collection GEN MSS 61, Box I, Folder 23; it has never been published. Hogg's Manuscript was sent to the editor of *The Champion*, John Scott, in a letter of 28 February 1816 (James Hogg, *Collected Letters*, ed. by Hughes and others, vol. 1, pp. 268-70). I thank Robin MacLachlan for this information and The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library for permission to cite the manuscript in their care.

¹⁷ See Penelope Brown & Stephen Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Brown and Levinson's limit is that they view politeness principles as universal for all participants in communication, regardless of their class, gender, or ethnicity. For a more socio-historically contextualised politeness theory see Christine Christie, *Gender and Language: Towards a Feminist Pragmatics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); and Sara Mills, *Gender and Politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); the latter contends that when people communicate, both their production and interpretation of politeness are influenced by their group's gendered stereotypes, which are also in relation with other variables such as race, class, and age. For the application of politeness principles to literary texts see Roger D. Sell, 'The Politeness of Literary Texts', in *Literary Pragmatics* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 208-24; also by the same author 'Decorum versus Indecorum in *Dombey and Son*', in Roger D. Sell's *Mediating Criticism: Literary Education Humanized* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001), pp. 165-93.

¹⁸ Rosalind Mitchison and Leah Leneman, *Sexuality & Social Control: Scotland 1660-1780* (Oxford: Basil Blackwells, 1989), p. 16.

¹⁹ T. M. Devine, 'The Parish State', in *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2007*, written by T. M. Devine, (London: Penguin Books, 2006), pp. 84-102.

²⁰ Callum G. Brown, 'Religion', in *Gender in Scottish History since 1700*, ed. by Lynn Abrams and others (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 84-110.

²¹ Christopher Smout, 'Aspects of Sexual Behaviour in Nineteenth-Century Scotland', in *Bastardy and its Comparative History: Studies in the History of Illegitimacy and Marital Non-Conformism in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, North-America, Jamaica, and Japan*, ed. by P. Laslett and others (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 192-216 (p. 214).

²² W. Cramond, *Illegitimacy in Banffshire* (Banff, 1888), p. 49, cited in Mitchison and Leneman (1989), p. 236.

²³ See James Hogg, *Collected Letters*, vol. 1, ed. by Hughes and others, p. 314; Gillian Hughes, *James Hogg: A Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 73-80; Gillian Hughes, 'James Hogg and the 'Bastard Brood'', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 11 (2000), 56-68.

²⁴ I must thank Robin MacLachlan for his generous help and guidance on this point; MacLachlan's comments come from an email exchange dated 3 May 2012.

²⁵ James Hogg [J.H. Craig of Douglas Esq.], *The Hunting of Badlewe: A Dramatic Tale* (London: Colburn, 1814a), p. 3, emphases mine.

²⁶ Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson, 'Introduction', in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, ed. by Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 1-20 (pp. 6, 5, 8, 9).

²⁷ Hogg refers to the writing of *Mador of the Moor* in a letter to Eliza Izett of 11 February 1814; see *Collected Letters*, vol. 1, ed. by Hughes and others, p. 176.

²⁸ James Hogg, *Mador of the Moor*, ed. by James E. Barcus (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005 [1816]), ll. 97-99, p. 53.

²⁹ James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Woman; or Love, Leasing, and Jealousy: A Series of Domestic Scottish Tales*, ed. by Antony Hasler and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002 [1823]), p. 118.

³⁰ James E. Barcus, "'When Beauty Gives Command, All Mankind Must Obey!': Gender Roles in Hogg's *Mador of the Moor*", *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 6 (1995), 33-49 (p. 45).

³¹ See Barbara Leonardi, 'James Hogg, the *Three Perils*, and the Pragmatics of Bourgeois Marriage', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 22 (2012), 19-38 (pp. 29-30).

³² Before publishing the novel, Hogg had named Sir Ringan 'Sir Walter Scott of Rankleburn'. Judy King and Graham Tulloch in their recent Stirling/ South Carolina edition of *The Three Perils of Man* (2012) have reinserted Hogg's earlier choice. In my analysis I keep 'Sir Ringan', as I refer to Douglas Gifford's (1996) edition of Hogg's novel, where he keeps Hogg's second choice. The name 'Sir Ringan' for the Borderer Warden was adopted by Hogg under Walter Scott's suggestion, who feared that the guardians of the juvenile 5th Duke of Buccleuch, whose father had provided Hogg with Yarrow's farm free of rent for

life, could feel offended by Hogg depicting one of his ancestors with such opportunistic traits. See Hogg's letter to Walter Scott of 10 December 1821 (*Collected Letters*, vol. 2, ed. by Hughes and others, pp. 129-30) and the editorial note on p. 130. See also Judy King and Graham Tulloch, 'Introduction', in *The Three Perils of Man or War, Women, and Witchcraft: A Border Romance*, written by James Hogg, ed. by Judy King and Graham Tulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. xi-lxiii (pp. xv-xvi).

³³ Suzanne Gilbert, 'James Hogg and the Authority of Tradition', in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace*, ed. by Alker and Nelson, pp. 93-109 (p. 101).

³⁴ See Valentina Bold, *James Hogg: A Bard of Nature's Making* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 19.