

Abstract

Gothic novels and authors have often been accused of being hostile towards religion by twentieth century literary scholars and critics such as George Haggerty and Diana Long Hoeveler. Religion is often a central theme in Gothic writing, but not all authors treat religion poorly, and critics such as Maria Purves and E. J. Clery argue that the Gothic novel has been too harshly judged when it comes to its treatment of religion. In this dissertation I will examine how three individual authors, who are separated both spatially and temporally, treat three different religions in their Gothic novels. I will examine how religion is used in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and I seek to answer why religion is often a central theme in Gothic writings. I will review how Catholicism, Calvinism and Puritanism influence the different societies depicted in the three Gothic novels, and I will argue that there is a lack of separation between the religions and governing in the novels, and between the public and the private sphere which causes problems for the characters in the novels. I will provide evidence supporting my claim that the three Gothic novels do not deserve to be labeled hostile towards religion, and that religion is used by the authors of the novels because of the literary devices it makes available, and because religion ties in well with the Gothic genre. Furthermore, I will argue that it is not the religions in themselves, but rather the lack of separation between religion and society which is criticized in the novels, and that this is often mistaken for anti-religious sentiment.

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1 Introduction

The Gothic genre has often been accused by twentieth century literary scholars and critics such as Diana Long Hoeveler and George Haggerty of being hostile towards religion. According to Maria Purves authors of Gothic fiction have frequently been accused of treating religion poorly in their writings and of putting religion in a bad light, for example by including evil characters connected to a specific religion, by portraying the church as hypocritical, or by focusing on terrifying and powerful religious institutions in their writings. Although religion is often an important theme in Gothic novels, not all authors treat religion poorly. I agree with Purves who states that the Gothic genre has been too harshly judged when it comes to its treatment of religion. This dissertation will examine Ann Radcliffe's treatment of Catholicism in *The Italian*, James Hogg's representation of Calvinism in his novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's portrayal of Puritanism in *The Scarlet Letter*. It seeks to prove that not all authors of Gothic fiction treat religion poorly, and that the Gothic genre does not deserve to be labeled anti-religion. It will focus on the connection between religion and society as it is presented by the authors in the three novels, and it will argue that a lack of separation between religion and society in Gothic novels has contributed to giving the Gothic genre a reputation for being hostile towards religion.

1.1 The Dawn of the Gothic Novel

Horace Walpole is often given credit for writing what would later be known as the first Gothic novel. He published *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, although the term "Gothic" was not applied to the novel until the second edition was published one year later (Clery 21). According to the author himself, the novel was "an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" and he wanted to mix imagination and improbability with reason and realism (Walpole 43). E. J. Clery points out that although *The Castle of Otranto* was labeled "Gothic" by its author the term is "mostly a twentieth-century coinage" (21). Furthermore, he argues that the use of the term "Gothic" to label literature can be explained by the fact that it coincided with the Gothic Revival in architecture, since both started in the middle of the eighteenth century (Clery 21). Nevertheless, Walpole took the first steps towards creating a literary genre which would entertain and horrify readers for centuries.

Catholicism is central in *The Castle of Otranto*, and Walpole's choice of setting the novel in Catholic Italy would inspire authors of Gothic fiction for decades.

A lot of Gothic novels were written and published during the 1790s, and in 1800 the publication of Gothic novels reached its peak (Miles 42). One might ask oneself why the Gothic novel seemed to be at its most popular at the turn of the century. Many scholars argue that this rise in popularity could be explained by the French Revolution. According to the Marquis de Sade the Gothic novel was a natural literary reaction to the violence and suffering which colored the years of the Revolution in France. Furthermore, some thought that it was necessary to include gruesome and terrifying elements or features in literature in order to compete with the violence and terror which people witnessed and talked about daily both during and after the French Revolution (Miles 43). Some scholars tend to view the Gothic novel or genre as a reaction against the realist novels which flourished during the first half of the eighteenth century. However, the realist novel seemed to experience a decline towards the 1770s when it suffered from "generic exhaustion" as there was a lack of both original material and great writers to carry on with this literary tradition (Clery 33). Just as the reading public was beginning to tire of the realist novels, Clara Reeve picked up where Walpole had left off and started developing the Gothic genre further. In her novel from 1777, *The Old English Baron: a Gothic Story*, Reeve manages to revise Walpole's mode of fiction and create her own combination between traditional Romance and the modern novel (Clery 33). Although later Gothic authors have revised this mode of fiction further, there are some commonalities to be found between these writings which have been labeled "Gothic", and this dissertation will focus on the role of religion in Gothic writing, since this is often an important theme.

Walpole and Reeve's mode has later been adapted by authors spread across both space and time. In this dissertation I will explore three Gothic novels written during the time span of 53 years, and whose authors all came from different countries. The first Gothic writer whose novel I will examine is the famous Ann Radcliffe. Although Radcliffe was English, she chose to set her tales in foreign countries, and in her novel from 1797, *The Italian*, the plot is set in Catholic Italy. Secondly, I will review the Scottish writer James Hogg and his Gothic satire *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* from 1824. In contrast to Radcliffe's works the plot of Hogg's novel takes place in his native country, and Calvinism is central to his story. Finally, I will examine *The Scarlet Letter*, which was written by the American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne and published in 1850. Like Hogg, Hawthorne chose his native country as the setting in his famous novel as he focuses on a Puritan community. Religion is a central theme in each of these novels, and although their authors focus on

different denominations of Christianity, there are some commonalities between the authors and their treatment of religion. Among other things, the societies depicted in the novels seem to be heavily influenced by the different religions.

1.2 What Constitutes Gothic Fiction?

Although novels within the Gothic genre differ from each other at many points, there are some features which most of the novels share and which enables us to categorize a novel or a text as “Gothic”. According to Jerrod E. Hogle a Gothic tale, or parts of it, often takes place in an antiquated space. For example, a tale might take place in a castle, dungeon, church, graveyard, prison or in an abbey (Hogle 2). This feature has been popular since *The Castle of Otranto*, where the characters spend time both in an ancient castle and in old, hidden subterranean passages. All three novels I will examine are set in the past, and as such the institutions and the buildings presented in the novels will seem ancient to the reader and might bring with them a sense of mystery or terror. The reader is taken to churches, castles, dungeons, court rooms, mysterious forests, ancient societies and prisons in these three Gothic novels. Antiquated buildings and institutions which are connected to various religions are especially central in these novels, such as convents, churches, monasteries, and the buildings of the Inquisition. In these antiquated, or seemingly antiquated, places secrets from the past are often hidden. These secrets may haunt the characters both physically and psychologically throughout the tale (Hogle 2). The haunting role of history is a common theme in Gothic writings, and this is often connected with a split in time in the novel. In *The Castle of Otranto* the past catches up with the present as an ancient secret regarding the real heir of Otranto surfaces. These secrets often manifest themselves as ghosts, specters, or monsters, and in *The Castle of Otranto* it takes on the form of a giant. These manifestations signal the fact that the secrets can no longer remain buried or hidden (Hogle 2). Finally, these supernatural creatures are often connected to various religions, as is the case in the three novels which this dissertation will focus on where for example the figure of the devil is central.

Although the use of ghosts, specters, monsters and other supernatural elements is common in Gothic writing, this does not have to be present in order for a tale to be labeled “Gothic”. Ann Radcliffe, for example, is famous for using a literary device called “the explained Gothic”. In her writing Radcliffe introduces elements which at first glance seem to be of a supernatural character. However, towards the end of her novels these elements are given natural explanations. Although what was previously believed to be a ghost turns out to be a bed sheet or what the protagonist thought was a decaying body is revealed to be a ruined wax

statue towards the end of her novels the reader is kept in suspense throughout her books, and her writing has an air of mystery. It is not the use of supernatural or seemingly supernatural elements which renders a novel Gothic, but rather the presence of terror, horror or suspense in the writing. Although the themes present in Gothic novels will vary from author to author, or from novel to novel, a Gothic novel will always contain a sense of mystery and anxiety.

The Gothic genre might have started with Walpole in 1764, but it is still going strong today. The genre expands from novels to poems, ballads, songs, plays and movies. In addition to talking about the Gothic novel, we also divide the genre into smaller sub-genres, depending on the nationality of the author. This is why we can speak of for example English Gothic, French Gothic or German Gothic. The three novels I will investigate in this dissertation are representatives of English, Scottish and American Gothic, and as such they carry with them some themes, elements, features or tropes which are somewhat more specific to the sub-genre. These themes are often connected to the nationality of the author and the history of the country.

1.3 Religion and the Gothic

In this dissertation I will focus on the presentation of religion in three Gothic novels. The three novels belong to different sub-genres within Gothic writing, and they focus on different denominations of Christianity. While Radcliffe focuses on Catholicism, often in contrast with Protestantism, Hogg's novel revolves around Calvinism and Hawthorne is concerned with Puritanism. Religion is often a central theme in Gothic writing, and as with many other features which are common to find in Gothic writing, the use of religion as a theme also dates back to Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto*, where the plot is set in Catholic Italy. Later authors writing within the Gothic genre have carried on with using religion as a theme in various ways. One can for example often find buildings which are connected with a specific religion in Gothic novels, such as monasteries, abbeys and churches. These are more often than not sources of mystery and terror. Moreover, characters who have titles connected with a religion like monk, nun, priest or reverend are frequent in Gothic novels, and in the three novels which are central to this dissertation such characters are essential to the stories. Creatures or supernatural elements like angels, demons and devils which can be read about in religious scriptures or are otherwise connected to a specific religion are also found in Gothic writings. Finally, the laws or the moral codes related to a specific religion are often important, and in Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as well as in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* these are paramount to the story and the plot.

In the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* Walpole relates that the document or work, which is the novel itself, was found with an ancient Catholic family. Furthermore, Walpole suggests that the work was written to reinforce “the empire of superstition” (29). Superstition has often been connected to Catholicism, and as I will later argue this is part of the reason why it works so well as a theme or setting in Gothic novels. Superstition and religion are great sources of mystery, and as such they can make interesting and perplexing backdrops for Gothic novels. Walpole excuses the use of superstition in his novel when posing as the translator of the document in the first edition of the novel as he explains that superstitious scenes would have been expected in ancient Catholic times. I will argue that the authors I will examine chose settings where religion is central partly because of the literary possibilities this brings with it, and because it ties in neatly with the Gothic genre in many respects, and not in order to criticize the religions in themselves.

Scholars have often tended to view the Gothic genre as being hostile towards religion in general. It is argued that Catholicism, for example, which is central both in Walpole’s and Radcliffe’s novels, is often treated poorly by its authors (Purves 55). Moreover, David Punter argues that monasteries or convents were viewed as sources of “hypocrisy and violent incarceration” during the history of early Gothic (118). Some critics go as far as to label the entire Gothic genre “anti-religious” or “anti-Catholic”. Maria Purves, on the other hand, argues that the treatment of Catholicism and religion in general in Gothic writings is much more ambiguous than critics might be willing to admit (Purves 55).

1.4 Religion, Society and the Individual in Three Gothic Novels

In this dissertation I will examine how three individual authors, separated both in time and space, treat three denominations of Christianity in their novels, and how they use elements related to a specific religion in order to enrich their writings. I will present evidence to support the claim that not all Gothic authors treat religion poorly in their writings. Examining novels which belong to different sub-genres of Gothic writing might give an indication of how religion is treated in these sub-genres in general. This might in turn make it possible to say something about how religion is treated in the Gothic genre. I will suggest that the evidence I will present might indicate that the Gothic genre is not fundamentally anti-religion and that it has been too harshly judged. Furthermore, I will investigate how the presence of a specific religion in the novel influences the characters and their lives. Specifically, I will examine how individuals are treated in societies which are heavily influenced by different denominations of Christianity. I will argue that it is not the religion in itself which causes

problems for the characters in the novels, but rather that it is the lack of separation between religion and society, religion and power, religion and law, and the private and the public sphere. I will show that this lack of separation between the different spheres enables some of the characters who are connected to the religions in various ways in the novels to use and abuse religion and the power they receive from their connections with the church in order to get what they want. I suggest that the critique of this lack of separation between the different spheres by the authors of the novels might be mistaken for anti-religious sentiments by the readers and critics of their novels. I will show that some of the main characters in the novels disagree with the common laws and morality of the public, and argue that when the laws and the governing of a society are heavily influenced by religious codes or doctrines this does not create a welcoming environment for religious diversity in the Gothic novels. Finally, in these societies, individuals who are not in total agreement with the religious codes, laws, doctrines or the overarching morality are alienated from the communities, as is the case with some of the central characters in the novels.

2 *The Italian*

Ann Radcliffe published *The Italian* in 1797. She had already established herself as a Gothic writer and her previous novels had for the most part received favorable reviews (Clery “introduction” vii). This was also the case with *The Italian*, and although it might not have been as popular as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which Radcliffe had published three years earlier, Radcliffe’s novel did confirm her as a genius within Gothic writing. Although Radcliffe was an English Protestant, *The Italian* is set in Catholic Italy. The plot of *The Italian* revolves around the young, rich and noble Italian, Vivaldi, and his love for the poor, abandoned Ellena. As Ellena is deemed unworthy of Vivaldi’s love by his family, Vivaldi’s mother, the Marchesa, is helped by the villainous monk Schedoni in her efforts to keep the young lovers apart. The novel is filled with questionable characters and innocent, naïve victims. The plot unfolds as the reader and the characters are taken on a journey between Naples, the mountains of the Garganus, along the shore of the Adriatic and eventually to Rome. As Ellena is kidnapped and chased through ancient convents, abandoned cottages, secret passages and mysterious forests, Vivaldi follows in order to save her. Ellena is finally rescued as Schedoni discovers her to be his own daughter, just a moment before he is going to strike her dead with a knife. This paternity is later proven to be wrong, and although Ellena loses a father in Schedoni, she gains a mother in the kindhearted and gracious Olivia, as it is discovered that Ellena is in fact this Catholic nun’s biological daughter.

There are many exciting aspects to the novel, and it can be read as a story about the rich and poor, the powerful and the oppressed, church and state, and good and evil. In this chapter I will examine how religion is presented in the novel. As the plot is set in Catholic Italy, Roman Catholicism is a central aspect in the novel. I will examine how Radcliffe uses elements connected to Catholicism, such as characters, buildings and institutions, in her novel, and how she invites the reader to compare between the Catholic ways of Italy, and the Protestant ways of England. I will argue that Radcliffe uses a Catholic context because it adds a level of mystery to her story, and that setting the novel in a foreign country and a past time opens up for the possibility to include various tropes and elements related to the specific country, religion or time. Moreover, I will suggest that by using a Catholic context, Radcliffe justifies her use of seemingly supernatural elements in her Gothic novel. Although there is some critique of the Catholic Church present in her writing, and she uses characters which can be described as hypocritical, I argue that Radcliffe cannot be said to be an anti-Catholic author. I will show that Radcliffe also presents a positive, Catholic alternative to the

hypocritical institutions in her novel, and that the Catholic characters in her novel, such as Schedoni, cannot be seen as representatives of the religion. I will argue that what Radcliffe is criticizing in the novel is not Catholicism in itself, but rather the connection between the religion and the governing of the country. For example, I will examine the representation of the Roman Inquisition in the novel. This institution is connected both to power and religion, and might be seen to embody the lack of separation between spheres which causes problems for the young Vivaldi and Ellena in *The Italian*.

I will start by exploring Radcliffe as an author of Gothic novels, and I will focus on specific literary techniques which Radcliffe is often seen as the creator of. In addition, I will examine some of the devices she uses in her novels in order to create a sense of mystery. I will also review the context of the novel, in order to determine why Radcliffe chose to set her novel in a foreign country and past time. I suggest that this spatial and temporal separation enables Radcliffe to be more critical in her writing, and that it permits her to use different literary devices which work well within the Gothic genre, without damaging her reputation as a Protestant, English authoress. I will also examine the opening chapter of the novel, in order to see how Radcliffe invites her readers to make comparisons between Italian and English customs, traditions, mode of governing, and religious practice. Although Radcliffe welcomes the reader to make such comparisons, she does not seem to side with any of the characters presented in the opening chapter, and she does not seem to place Catholicism and Protestantism in a hierarchy. Later I will examine how Catholicism is treated and represented in the novel, and I will investigate in detail some of the characters, buildings and institution connected to the religion in order to reveal Radcliffe's intentions for using a Catholic context in her novel. In *The Italian* the Roman Catholic Church is closely connected to the state. Furthermore, people who were official representatives for the Catholic Church were automatically given a lot of power in Catholic Italy, as it is depicted by Radcliffe in her novel. I will argue that it is the lack of separation between church and state which causes problems for the protagonists of the novel, and that the abuse of power which is presented in *The Italian* is made possible because of this lack of separation, and that it does not necessarily make the novel anti-Catholic.

2.1 Radcliffe and the Gothic

As a writer of Gothic fiction Ann Radcliffe brought something of her own to the genre. Robert Miles notes that "If Horace Walpole provided the narrative skeleton and Clara Reeve the ideological flesh, then Radcliffe contributed the aesthetic esprit that made the whole thing

move” (45). Among other things Radcliffe was known for her poetic sensibility (Clery “introduction” vii). The use of poetry in her novels might have been an attempt to push Gothic writing towards the more respectable genres in the sphere of writing. This attempt to make the genre and her writing more proper is also evident through her use of the “explained supernatural”, which I will examine shortly.

Ann Radcliffe is also known as a representative of “terror-Gothic” which is in contrast to “horror-Gothic”. Radcliffe distinguishes between these two modes of Gothic writing in an essay from 1826. There she states that whereas “horror-Gothic” contracted the soul and almost annihilated the faculties, “terror-Gothic” expanded the soul and awakened the faculties (McEvoy xiii). Whereas the excitement present in novels dominated by “terror-Gothic” is often created by keeping the reader or the characters in the novels “in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety, and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows of suggestion from a hidden past”, the thrill derived from “horror-Gothic” is created as the principle characters are confronted “with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution, explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the representations) of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting, consequences” (Hogle 3). An example of “horror-Gothic” is Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, published in 1796 (Hogle 8). Inspired by the German *Schauer-Romantik*, Lewis included ghosts, murder, torture, rape, incest, devils and secret societies in his infamous novel. As opposed to the shock that the reader of *The Monk* would experience, a reader of a Radcliffe novel would be held in suspense.

“Terror-Gothic” and “horror-Gothic” are two terms that are often related to the use of supernatural elements in Gothic writing. Radcliffe is famous for her use of the “explained supernatural”. In her novels, Radcliffe presents the reader with scenes and features which at first glance seem to be of a supernatural nature. However, in contrast to Lewis and other writers within the field of “horror-Gothic”, Radcliffe gives these seemingly supernatural events natural and rational explanations towards the end of her novels. This is a contrast to Radcliffe’s predecessors within the Gothic genre. Walpole and Reeve defended the use of supernatural elements in Gothic writing, stating that it would have been natural to include such elements in the time in which the Gothic novels were set. According to Clery, Radcliffe’s use of the “explained supernatural” might be seen as an attempt “to reconcile Protestant incredulity and the taste for ghostly terror” (“genesis of gothic” 26-27). Since superstition would be closely connected to Catholicism by Radcliffe’s contemporaries, the use of the “explained supernatural” would go a little way towards reconciling the Gothic genre with Radcliffe’s Protestant, English audience.

The fact that Radcliffe's novels are not set as far back in time as those of Walpole and Reeve might also begin to explain why Radcliffe felt the need to avoid supernatural explanations, as the argument which Reeve and Walpole used for defending the use of supernatural features would not hold up for Radcliffe's novels. Still, Radcliffe manages to retain a suspicion of the supernatural in her writing. Although her novels are not set very distant in time from her own life, they are set outside of Britain. As her novels are often set in Catholic countries like Italy, Spain and France, Radcliffe is able to interact with the tradition of superstition and use it as a point of excitement and suspense in her own novels. I argue that one of the main reasons why Radcliffe chose to set her novels in Catholic countries was to justify her use of superstition in her novels. Setting the novel in a Catholic context also opens up a lot of literary possibilities which I will examine soon. I argue that it is because of these different possibilities and the opportunity of being able to play on superstition that Radcliffe chose a Catholic context, and that it is not in order to criticize the religion in itself.

2.2 The Removal of the Plot in Time and Space

Radcliffe participates in the Gothic literary tradition where the plot of the novel is removed from the author and its intended readers both spatially and temporally. *The Italian* is set in the mid-eighteenth century, rather than in the medieval era and throughout the novel the reader is taken on a journey through Italy. However, the novel was written in England in the late eighteenth century.

There may be many reasons why Radcliffe chose to place the novel in a foreign country and time. For example, setting the novel in a semi-distant country, with a different religion, culture and customs than those belonging to the author, may have served to give the novel a sense of exoticism. Readers of Radcliffe's novels might have encountered many aspects or elements that would have seemed strange or foreign to them. Radcliffe might have made her novels seem more attractive or interesting by including such unfamiliar elements as for example convents, monks, nuns, or descriptions of the Inquisition. However, Maria Purves points out that contrary to popular belief there were monks, nuns, convents and monasteries present on English soil in the eighteenth century (42). Consequently, Purves states that the presence of monks and convents, which are indeed very important and central elements in *The Italian* and commonly found in other Gothic fiction as well, was not as foreign or exotic as it is often assumed (43).

Still, Clery states that exoticism was an important part of Radcliffe's fiction, and that her writing was "wholeheartedly engaged in the exploration of national differences"

("introduction" x). Radcliffe's novels might have appealed to her readers because of this exploration, and the descriptions of the unfamiliar or strange customs of another country might have intrigued her readers. According to Clery, Radcliffe wrote "at the beginning of the age of nationalism, and the activities of travel and cultural comparison were important aids to conceptualizing distinct nation-states" and he states that British tourists, no matter if they actually left the country or merely read about other cultures in books, "were engaged in a continual process of defining and sifting differences, ready to assimilate certain aspects of a foreign culture, rejecting others in order to reinforce the boundaries of British selfhood" ("introduction" x). This emphasis on differences in culture, religion, customs, laws and mode of government is evident in *The Italian*. Already in the novel's opening chapter, which I will soon review, comparisons are being made between the English and Italian way of life.

Another reason for setting the novel in a time gone by and in a foreign country could be that it would have been easier and perhaps safer for the author to criticize the present state in his or her own country by comparing it with other cultures or through implicitly criticizing specific parts of what makes up a nation state. Radcliffe would have had to be careful not to explicitly criticize the religion and government of her own country, as this could have made her eligible for critique. Instead it is up to the readers to draw parallels between what they are reading and what they might be experiencing in their own country at the time of reading the novel. For example, Clery states that although *The Italian* is set in Italy in the middle of the eighteenth century, the events which took place during the middle of the 1790s in England and France dictate the novel's concerns ("introduction" xxi). This was a moment in time where elements which had previously been regarded as certainties, such as the role of the church and state in the everyday life of ordinary people, were scrutinized and called into question. The legitimacy of the church's power became a source of doubt for many in this time. This same uncertainty can be found in Radcliffe's novel. As the powerful characters in the novel use and abuse their power for their own personal gain, their power is called into question as their motives and backgrounds are revealed one by one. In *The Italian*, for instance, the mischievous monk Schedoni abuses his power to such an extent that his motives are called into question and he is finally revealed as the villain when he is taken prisoner by the Inquisition. Radcliffe also examines the role of the Inquisition in her novel, as it can be seen to stand at the intersection of religion and power. However, Radcliffe does not offer any explicit comments on neither the Inquisition nor the Catholic Church. Instead she leaves it up to the readers to draw their own conclusions. Still, I will argue that it is the lack of separation between church and state which enables the characters connected to the Catholic Church in

The Italian to abuse their power, and that it is the role of religion in questions regarding government and society which is under scrutiny in the novel, and not Catholicism as a religion. As such, the novel does not deserve to be labeled anti-Catholic. I will shortly examine the presentation of Catholicism in more detail in order to see what the presence of different elements belonging to Catholicism might say about the intentions of the author. I will review how scholars tend to view the connection between Gothic and Catholicism, and I will argue that the representation of Catholicism is more ambiguous in *The Italian* than what is often stated by critics. Furthermore, I will examine the opening chapter of the novel in order to see how Radcliffe invites the reader to compare between English and Italian customs, mode of governing and ways to practice religion, and I will argue that the presence of a division between these two cultures does not make the novel or Radcliffe anti-Catholic.

2.3 Catholicism and Cultural Comparisons in *The Italian*

Although Radcliffe's reasons for placing the novel in Italy in the middle of the eighteenth century are not known for certain, it is evident that cultures and customs, the familiar and unfamiliar, are being constantly compared to each other throughout the novel. Radcliffe explores Catholicism and other elements related to Italian culture in her novel. Although the Gothic genre is often accused of treating religion, and especially Catholicism, poorly, I argue that Radcliffe expresses some ambiguity towards the subject in *The Italian*. This ambiguity is evident already in the opening chapter, where Radcliffe seems reluctant to take sides in the discussion between some Englishmen and an Italian. Clery notes that Radcliffe can be seen to voice some concerns about Catholicism as she does exploit various elements connected to the religion in order to create an atmosphere of "enigma and foreboding", for example through her use of seemingly supernatural elements and her play on superstition ("introduction" xv). Although Radcliffe might exploit some of the prejudices against Catholicism in her writing, Clery also states that her treatment of the religion is more ambiguous and complex in *The Italian* than twentieth century critics have often given her credit for. Clery even suggests that Radcliffe and other authors might have played a part in liberalizing religious ideas through their writing ("introduction" xv).

During the eighteenth century Catholicism was constantly being critiqued and scrutinized by those who saw themselves in opposition to this mode of religion. In response to the deposed Catholic Stuarts who still posed a threat to and challenged the legitimacy of the new Protestant order in Britain, anti-Catholic propaganda flowed from the presses throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. The same claims were thrown at Catholicism over and

over again. For example, the Roman Catholic Church was accused of being violent and inclined towards repression, and of being in favor of an absolutist regime. As the primary allegiance was to be given to the foreign pope, it was claimed that Catholicism did not support nationalism (Clery “introduction” xvi). Charges were also brought against Catholicism because of its economic impact. The budgets of Catholic countries were drained because of the presence of monks and nuns in the numerous monasteries and convents. While these idle persons were kept in a state of wealth and bliss the common people suffered under poverty. The economy and the common people suffered a further blow because of the presence of a huge number of holy days, during which the poor and suffering were kept from working and earning wages (Clery “introduction” xvi). In addition, the Catholic Church was accused of brainwashing. Some go as far as to say that superstition and idolatry were tools used by the Catholic Church in order to prevent the people from standing up for themselves against the church. Moreover, the inquisitional system, which is central in *The Italian*, allowed the church to defend their power as people who were accused of heresy by anonymous persons were persecuted and tortured at length (Clery “introduction” xvi).

Maria Purves argues for a more ambiguous view regarding the treatment of Catholicism in Gothic novels as she states that a spectrum of opinions concerning the religion could be found during the years when the Gothic novel was most popular. She rejects the claim that Gothic writing is absolute anti-Catholicism in nature (Purves 2). Furthermore, Purves argues that this popular notion of the Gothic as a genre which is hostile towards Catholicism and religion is a result of both oversimplification and presupposition amongst scholars (12-13). She also suggests that Roman Catholicism was in the process of being rehabilitated and even romanticized during the 1790s (Purves 15). This might help to explain the ambiguity which runs through Ann Radcliffe’s last novel when it comes to her treatment of the religion. If Roman Catholicism experienced a rise in popularity during these years, it is possible that this would have been reflected in the novels written during that decade, as for example in *The Italian*.

Purves claims that an English toleration towards Catholicism could be experienced in the later part of the eighteenth century. She points to several historical incidents to explain the religious ambiguity which she states is present in Gothic novels in the late eighteenth century. Her main argument is that Catholics were met with toleration in England at the end of the century because of the sympathy that the English people felt towards the French *émigré* clergy, who escaped France during the years of the French Revolution and the years that followed it (Purves 26). This softening of the treatment of Catholicism in England was

probably a process where opinions were slowly and gradually reformed. Signs of this gradual reformation can be found in historical events in England. The Catholic Relief Bills which were passed in 1778 can for example be viewed as an attempt to put an end to the persecution of Catholics in England. I will argue that Radcliffe's treatment of Catholicism in *The Italian* is ambiguous, and that it does not deserve to be labeled anti-Catholic. The historical context in which she was writing might have influenced her writing, making it less critical towards the Catholic other.

The importance of Catholicism in the novel is evident already in its beginning as *The Italian* opens with a group of English travellers who happen to stumble upon the church of the Santa Maria del Pianto when visiting Italy and Naples in 1764. In the opening chapter one of the Englishmen is offered the possibility to read a story concerning a confession made in the church some years ago. The Englishman accepts the offer and receives the first volume of the story the next day. The document he receives tells the story of Vivaldi and Ellena. Why Radcliffe chose to use this opening chapter in order to present the story of the Italian, instead of merely starting with the main story itself, is not known. However, building a novel around a "recovered manuscript" was quite common in Gothic writing. The reader is told that the story is related to the church as the friar states that he wished to mark the place of the confessional "because some very extraordinary circumstances belong to it" (Radcliffe 3).

The opening chapter can be seen to set the mood for the rest of the novel and the presence of a group of Englishmen in the opening chapter is important as this forces the reader to make comparisons between different cultures, religions, opinions and ways of living throughout the novel. Maria Purves states that Radcliffe sets up ambiguous comparisons in *The Italian* as she can be said to compare Catholic and Protestant culture, and even church and state law in her novel. Importantly, Purves states that Radcliffe does not show that one is superior to the other (112). This ambiguous comparison is evident already in the opening chapter as the opinions and beliefs of the Englishmen are contrasted to those of the Italians. As the English travellers observe a mystical figure lurking in the shadows within the church they become curious as to whom this person could be. They are not held in suspense as the friar gladly answers their inquiries by saying that "He is an assassin" (Radcliffe 2). The English travellers are shocked at hearing this as they respond: "'An assassin!' exclaimed one of the Englishmen; 'an assassin and at liberty!'" (Radcliffe 2). As Clery notes, Radcliffe seems to confirm "in the reader a complacent, British and Protestant set of assumptions" ("introduction" xxi). Although the reader, or at least Radcliffe's intended readers, might have been expected to react to this news in the same manner that the English travellers do, the Italian companion who had travelled

with the Englishmen is not shocked as Radcliffe writes that “An Italian gentleman, who was of the party, smiled at the astonishment of his friend” (Radcliffe 2). Already a picture of huge differences in culture and opinions has begun to emerge in the novel as the Italian way is seen in contrast to the English way.

The differences between the two cultures are revealed as Radcliffe continues:

‘He has sought sanctuary here,’ replied the friar; ‘within these walls he may not be hurt.’

‘Do your altars, then, protect the murderer?’ said the Englishman.

‘He could find shelter no where else,’ answered the friar meekly.

‘This is astonishing!’ said the Englishman; ‘of what avail are your laws, if the most atrocious criminal may thus find shelter from them?’ (Radcliffe 2)

The Englishman poses a very important question, which the friar does not answer directly. An imbalance between church and state law becomes clear as the Englishman points out the mismatch that is present between these two regarding the treatment of the assassin. Whereas the assassin is in violation of the state law, since murdering people for money had rendered him a criminal, he has found refuge in the arms of the church. The fact that the church is able to protect criminals against the state might suggest that the Catholic Church is more powerful than the Italian state, as the first seems to undermine the authority of the latter, or that the state is unwilling to challenge the Catholic Church out of respect for it or a superstitious terror of it. Although the Englishman is shocked at this discovery, Radcliffe does not comment upon this directly. It is up to the reader to decide what to think of this perplexing discovery.

It is difficult to see what Radcliffe feels about the ways of the Italians, as she does not say anything explicitly about it in her novel. Radcliffe does not seem to determine a winner in the discussion between the Englishman and the Italian friar. However, one might argue that Radcliffe voices some concerns regarding some Italian customs through the character of the Englishman. As Clery notes, Radcliffe’s intended readers might have been expected to have a British, Protestant set of assumptions. However, he states that these perspectives change following the course of the novel. He even goes so far as to claim that the reader is eventually “brought into a curious empathy with the Catholic Other” (“introduction” xxi). Furthermore, one might have expected that if Radcliffe’s novels were indeed anti-Catholic, or at least hostile towards Roman Catholicism, this would be more obvious in her opening chapter, where Catholicism is implicitly being compared to Protestantism.

I argue that the opening chapter is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, Radcliffe uses the opening to point out differences between English and Italian culture, thereby making sure that the two are available for comparison. She presents the reader with two perspectives as representatives of both the Italian and the English side are consulted from the start. Purves states that this split between the English and the Italian perspective is strong throughout *The Italian* (112). Secondly, the reader is made aware of the role of the Catholic Church in matters of the law. It is at times difficult to see where the one ends and the other one begins in the novel. The question voiced by the Englishman is a question of power, and after reading the introduction the reader is left with questions of his or her own. Is it the Catholic Church that governs Italy? What is the point of a government if it can be overruled by the church? How powerful is the Roman Catholic Church? Although some questions regarding the role of the Catholic Church are posed already in the beginning of the novel, Radcliffe is too ambiguous in her treatment of Catholicism here for *The Italian* to be labeled an anti-Catholic novel. Furthermore, although elements central to Catholicism are scrutinized later in the novel, at this point it is not Catholicism in itself which is being criticized, but rather the division of power between the Italian state and the Roman Catholic Church. I argue that it is not Catholicism as a religion that is criticized in the novel but that it is the power connected to the religion and the lack of separation between church and government which is under scrutiny in *The Italian*. Mark Canuel has observed that monasticism emerged in Gothic fiction “as a subject of concern not because it represented a certain set of (Catholic) beliefs” (62). Canuel argues that it arose as a subject because “it represented a mode of governing the beliefs of political subjects, which the Gothic novel participated in dismantling and modifying” (62). Canuel states that the religion is important in Gothic fiction “not as a belief but as a point of fracture between belief and government” (62). It is this “point of fracture” which I argue is more central in *The Italian* than the Catholic beliefs. This imbalance between church and state can be seen to cause problems for some of the main characters in Radcliffe’s novel. I will continue by examining Radcliffe’s treatment of Schedoni, a character connected both to power and Catholicism, in order to see what this might reveal about Radcliffe’s feelings towards Catholicism and her intentions in her portrayal of the religion in the novel.

2.4 Schedoni

Schedoni is a very important character in *The Italian*, since he is the one who drives the plot forwards as he persuades the Marchesa di Vivaldi that Ellena is unworthy of her beloved son and heir and therefore deserves to die. Radcliffe was known for her Gothic villains like

Schedoni and Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Peter L. Thorslev Jr. is fascinated by her villains, and he says that they, “with their depths of mystery, their genius minds, their indomitable wills, and their unmitigated evil, are by far her greatest creations, and, by contrast, her heroes as well as her heroines are bound to seem somewhat dull” (52). Schedoni is indeed a very interesting character, and he is a great example of a Gothic villain as he fits Thorslev’s description very well.

Although each Gothic Villain has his own motives and characterizations, Thorslev Jr. argues that there are some commonalities between these evil hearted characters as he states that “By birth the Gothic Villain was always of the aristocracy, partly for the power which his nobility confers, and partly for the air of the fallen angel, the air of Satanic greatness perverted. Frequently, also, there is some mystery connected with his birth or his upbringing.” (54) In Schedoni’s case the first point above is connected to the last, as the mystery concerning Schedoni, which is revealed towards the end of the novel, is that he was born a count and is therefore part of the aristocracy. In addition it is revealed towards the end of the novel that Schedoni, or Count de Bruno, has murdered his own brother. Although Schedoni has chosen to hide this aspect as he chooses the disguise of a monk, he seems to be in constant search of power, scenes where he can demonstrate the power he has, or ways in which to become more powerful. It is this fascination with power which I find more interesting in Schedoni, rather than the fact that he seems to be an extremely evil Catholic character.

In the beginning of the novel the reader is given a very negative impression of Schedoni, as he is described as someone to be avoided and even feared. Radcliffe’s description of Schedoni is ruthless:

Among his associates no one loved him, many disliked him, and more feared him. His figure was striking, but not so from grace; it was tall, and, though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth, and as he stalked along, wrapt in the black garments of his order, there was something terrible in its air; something almost superhuman. (Radcliffe 34-35)

Already here Schedoni’s past evil actions are hinted at, although they are not fully revealed before the end of the novel. Radcliffe also makes sure to describe Schedoni as “superhuman”, thereby making the reader associate the monk with something supernatural. Starting out Schedoni acts as the confessor of the Marchesa in the novel, although he is soon given another role as the Marchesa employs him in keeping her son and Ellena apart. Schedoni and

the Marchesa become partners in crime as they find that they can both benefit from working together towards a common goal:

Each possessed, in a considerable degree, the power of assisting the other; Schedoni had subtlety with ambition to urge it; and the Marchesa had inexorable pride, and courtly influence; the one hoped to obtain a high benefice for his services, and the other to secure the imaginary dignity of her house, by her gifts. (Radcliffe 35)

Schedoni is prepared to go to terrible lengths in order to gain some power or dignity. However, when he discovers Ellena to be his daughter he suddenly changes his plans, arguably not because of paternal love, but rather because he sees that he can achieve even more power or dignity if his presumed daughter was to marry into the Vivaldi family:

Every step that he had taken with a view of gratifying his ambition was retrograde, and while he had been wickedly intent to serve the Marchesa and himself, by preventing the marriage of Vivaldi and Ellena, he had been laboriously counteracting his own fortune. An alliance with the illustrious house of Vivaldi, was above his loftiest hope of advancement, and this event he had himself nearly prevented by the very means which had been adopted, at the expence of every virtuous consideration, to obtain an inferior promotion. Thus by a singular retribution, his own crimes had recoiled upon himself. (Radcliffe 243)

Catholicism is central in *The Italian* and Schedoni is one of the major characters. Still, whether or not Schedoni can be seen as a representative of Catholicism in the novel can be debated. On the one side one cannot deny that Schedoni's status as a Catholic monk is extremely important for the development of the plot in the novel. For example, it is because of Schedoni's role as a monk that Vivaldi is committed into the arms of the Inquisition. The role of the monk undoubtedly connects Schedoni to Catholicism; however, I will argue that this does not necessarily make Schedoni a representative of the religion. Certainly, Schedoni can be said to be a representative of the power and the mystery which was seen as connected to the Catholic Church in the eighteenth century. Throughout the novel the villainous monk uses and abuses the power invested in him by the Roman Catholic Church while he hides from the world and his past within the sacred walls of the convent. Yet I argue that Schedoni is not a representative of the Catholic faith. The mystery of the monk is not revealed until the end of the novel, interestingly enough by the Inquisition:

There were circumstances, however, which appeared to indicate him to be a man of birth, and of fallen fortune; his spirit, as it had sometimes looked forth from under the disguise of his manners, seemed lofty; it shewed not, however, the aspirings of a generous mind, but rather the gloomy pride of a disappointed one. Some few persons in the convent, who had been interested by his appearance, believed that the peculiarities of his manners, his severe reserve and unconquerable silence, his solitary habits and frequent penances, were the effect of misfortunes preying upon a haughty and disordered spirit; while others conjectured them the consequence of some hideous crime gnawing upon an awakened conscience. (Radcliffe 34)

In the beginning of the novel Schedoni is supported by the Catholic Church, and although the reader might have some doubts as to his commitment to the role of Catholic monk, it is not until the end of the novel that the truth about Schedoni is revealed as Vivaldi is told by a mysterious stranger that “When you are asked of father Schedoni, say — that he has lived for fifteen years in the disguise of a monk, a member of the Dominicans of the Spirito Santo, at Naples. When you are asked who he is, reply — Ferando Count di Bruno” (Radcliffe 321). Schedoni is not only discovered to be a Count disguised as a monk, but also to be a criminal. Like the assassin who took refuge in the convent in the beginning of the novel, Schedoni has been hiding after murdering his brother: the real father of Ellena. It is important to note that Schedoni committed his crimes as a layman and later turned to the role of a Catholic monk in order to hide from his crimes. In this sense Schedoni cannot be seen as a representative of Catholicism, since he chose the role of monk because of its ability to conceal him from the law, and not because of his religious beliefs. Schedoni exploits the imbalance in power which is present between the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian government. Once Schedoni is revealed as a fraud and his past crimes are told to the reader, the role of monk can be viewed as merely a convenient disguise. I argue that his choice of disguise is more a comment on the split between the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian state, or law and religion, rather than it is a comment on Catholicism as a religion.

The fact that the figure of a monk is chosen as the disguise is not incidental. It is possible that the figure of the monk was chosen because of the contrasts it creates in the novel between what characteristics one would expect to find in a Catholic monk, and what the reader sees in Schedoni. Vivaldi, for example, is somewhat reluctant to admit his suspicions about the monk and unveil Schedoni as a fraud and criminal because of his role as a Catholic monk as Radcliffe states that “A respect for his age and profession with-held Vivaldi from seizing and

compelling him to answer; but the agony of impatience and indignation which he suffered, formed a striking contrast to the death-like apathy of the monk” (Radcliffe 104). Although the young Vivaldi is not able to be silent about his impressions of Schedoni, other characters might have been more patient and kept their suspicions about the fake monk to themselves. Nevertheless, Vivaldi calls the character of the monk into question:

‘Yes, father,’ added Vivaldi, ‘I know and will proclaim you to the world. I will strip you of the holy hypocrisy in which you shroud yourself; announce to all your society the despicable artifices you have employed, and the misery you have occasioned. Your character shall be announced aloud.’ (Radcliffe 104)

The contrast between what one might expect to find in the character of a Catholic monk and the qualities that are found in the figure of Schedoni is related to the “holy hypocrisy” of which Vivaldi threatens to strip Schedoni. Since the role of the monk functions more as a disguise for Schedoni rather than a uniform of religion, I argue that Schedoni cannot be seen to be a representative of Catholicism. The “holy hypocrisy” he displays also supports this as it goes to show that the characters in *The Italian* would expect a monk to be just and innocent. This might indicate that Schedoni is more of an exception than a representation of Catholicism, at least in the eyes of the writer and the other characters in the novel.

The focus on a perversion of Catholicism in *The Italian* might rather be a tool to create terror in the Gothic novel, than a chance to represent the opinions of contemporary readers, or indeed the author herself, regarding Roman Catholicism. Still, one might ask oneself why Radcliffe would choose the figure of a monk as one of her main characters in the novel if indeed it was not to include a representative of the religion which traditionally has often been seen in connection with the Gothic genre. Maria Purves states that the reason why Radcliffe chose to focus on the figure of the monk in *The Italian* partly derives from a wish to explore and exploit Catholic doctrines and practices (109). In this sense Schedoni functions as a doorway into the world of the Roman Catholic Church. By including the figure of the monk Radcliffe achieves access to the mysteries of Catholicism, such as for example the act of penance, confessions, the power of the Inquisition, and the concept of sanctuary. Furthermore, Radcliffe gets the opportunity to include seemingly supernatural elements, as she plays on the superstition connected to Catholicism. These elements which are present in the novel are sources of mystery in *The Italian*. Finally, the exploitation of such elements might be connected to the exoticism in the novel, which was discussed earlier.

When Schedoni and the Marchesa first form their plans for hindering the marriage between Vincentio Vivaldi and Ellena, they use the law to justify their future actions:

‘Good God!’ exclaimed the Marchesa, ‘that there should be no law to prevent, or, at least, to punish such criminal marriages!’

‘It is much to be lamented,’ replied Schedoni.

‘The woman who obtrudes herself upon a family, to dishonour it,’ continued the Marchesa, ‘deserves a punishment nearly equal to that of a state criminal, since she injures those who best support the state. She ought to suffer’ — .

‘Not nearly, but quite equal,’ interrupted the Confessor, ‘she deserves — death!’
(Radcliffe 168)

According to the Marchesa it is her right, because she is of a powerful, rich and ancient family, to punish Ellena for interfering with her plans for her family. Because there is no law in the country which states that the poor Ellena is guilty of a crime because of her possible attachment to a rich, ancient family through marriage, the Marchesa sees that it is necessary for her to take the law into her own hands, or rather to put her future wishes and happiness in the hands of Schedoni. Although the Marchesa and her confessor use the law, or lack of a law, to justify their future actions, Schedoni uses his position as a monk within the Roman Catholic Church as a tool to reach his goal.

To prevent Vivaldi from interfering with his plans, Schedoni reports him to the Roman Inquisition under the pretense that he has committed heresy. Kim Ian Michasiw points out that Schedoni is almost a super villain in comparison to Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Schedoni is able to do a lot of bad deeds because he has the support of the Catholic Church, and he uses the Inquisition as a tool to reach his goal. This is true for the two first volumes of *The Italian*. However, in the third and final volume of the novel Michasiw points out that “the institutions on which his power has depended turn against him” (340). After abusing the power he has had as a monk within the Roman Catholic Church Schedoni finally finds himself within the grasp of the Inquisition:

The motive for his arrestation was concealed from Schedoni, who had not the remotest suspicion of its nature, but attributed the arrest, to a discovery, which the tribunal had made of his being the accuser of Vivaldi. This disclosure he attributed to his own imprudence, in having stated, as an instance of Vivaldi’s contempt for the Catholic faith, that he had insulted a priest while doing penance in the church of the Spirito Santo. (Radcliffe 335)

As the church turns against him, Schedoni is finally revealed as the villain. Michasiw points out that “Schedoni, having called upon powers beyond his control, becomes their creature” (341).

Schedoni can be seen as a complex character because he and his motives change throughout the novel. Schedoni goes from wanting to murder Ellena in order to achieve some power, to wanting her to marry into the Vivaldi family. At first his motives for wanting his presumed daughter to marry Vivaldi are arguably mostly selfish as he sees that he can achieve the same goal as he would by murdering her. However, this changes somewhat later as Schedoni finds himself imprisoned by the Inquisition. As he finds that he has finally been discovered as a fraud, he realizes that he will not get out of the grasp of the Inquisition alive. Still, he continues to urge the marriage between Vivaldi and Ellena. Since Schedoni can no longer reap the benefits of their marriage, the nature of his motives has arguably changed into something more pure. He has now only the future life and happiness of his supposed daughter to consider.

Radcliffe’s treatment of Schedoni is complex. Purves points out that in contrast to Radcliffe’s earlier works in which the villains’ death is an opportunity for the author to paint out how much it is deserved, the reader comes to feel some sympathy towards Schedoni at the end of *The Italian*. Schedoni goes through a process of penance in the novel, constantly hurting himself for his past actions (109). The reader moves from viewing Schedoni as a villain and into viewing him as a man with an unfortunate past. However, even though he punishes himself throughout the novel, Schedoni still forms evil plans which he tries to carry out. Still, Schedoni’s death scene invokes sympathy with the reader and characters in *The Italian*. At the end of the novel, even an official of the Inquisition feels sorry for Schedoni as he is dying:

When the subject was finished, he sunk back on his pillow, and, closing his eyes, a hue so pallid, succeeded by one so livid, overspread his features, that Vivaldi for an instant believed he was dying; and in this supposition he was not singular, for even an official was touched with the Confessor’s condition, and had advanced to assist him, when he unclosed his eyes, and seemed to revive. (Radcliffe 394)

Although Schedoni has tried to hide his past by disguising himself as a monk, he confesses his crimes as he is about to die:

Then, as if by a violent effort, he half raised himself, and made an ample confession of the arts he had practised against Vivaldi. He declared himself to be the anonymous

accuser, who had caused him to be arrested by the Holy Office, and that the charge of heresy, which he had brought against him, was false and malicious. (Radcliffe 394)

The fact that Schedoni confesses in the end, together with his constant acts of penance and his newfound love for his presumed daughter might make the reader sympathize with him. Even if Schedoni could be said to represent Catholicism in *The Italian*, I argue that this would not necessarily make the novel anti-Catholic. Radcliffe's treatment of the villain complicates the way the reader feels about Catholicism in the novel as Schedoni is somewhat redeemed in the final volume. One would not expect to find this sort of sympathy towards a Catholic villain in the novel if it were fundamentally anti-Catholic. The death of a villain would be a great opportunity for Radcliffe to express anti-Catholic sentiments and focus on the hypocrisies of Catholicism. Instead she chooses to forgive the villain. Indeed, Radcliffe's treatment of Catholicism in the novel seems to be as complex and ambiguous as her villain.

2.5 Two Convents

Schedoni is not the only character in *The Italian* who can be said to be connected to Catholicism. Among other elements related to the Roman Catholic Church, the convents we encounter in the novel might say something about Radcliffe's treatment of Catholicism. I will examine Radcliffe's treatment of two very different convents, as well as some of the characters connected to these in the novel in order to show how differently Radcliffe treats these elements connected to Catholicism. The first convent I will examine is the monastery of San Stefano, to which Ellena is brought against her will after losing her aunt. As a means of keeping Ellena and her son apart the Marchesa contacts her old friend, the Lady Abbess of San Stefano, and asks her for help in her evil plans. As Ellena is brought to the convent she is struck by the chilly reception she receives from a nun of San Stefano as Radcliffe describes that "Ellena's hope of pity vanished as her eyes glanced over these symbols of the disposition of the inhabitants, and on the countenance of the nun characterised by a gloomy malignity which seemed ready to inflict upon others some portion of the unhappiness she herself suffered" (Radcliffe 66). Ellena loses all hope as she observes that the nun "seemed like a spectre newly risen from the grave, rather than a living being" (Radcliffe 67). The description of the nun Ellena first encounters is grave and cold. The meeting with this nun turns out to be an indicator of what is in store for Ellena in the convent. The situation worsens as Ellena is brought to the Lady Abbess:

The unhappy Ellena had not been left long to her own reflections, when the Abbess appeared; a stately lady, apparently occupied with opinions of her own importance, and prepared to receive her guest with rigour and supercilious haughtiness. This Abbess, who was herself a woman of some distinction, believed that of all possible crimes, next to that of sacrilege, offences against persons of rank were least pardonable. (Radcliffe 67)

As the abbess believes that Ellena is guilty of committing this crime, since she has been romantically linked to the young Vivaldi, the manner in which she is received by her is not surprising.

Within the monastery of San Stefano Ellena is treated as a prisoner:

During several days after Ellena's arrival at the monastery of San Stefano, she was not permitted to leave the room. The door was locked upon her, and not any person appeared except the nun, who brought her a scanty portion of food, and who was the same, that had first admitted her into that part of the convent appropriated to the abbess. (Radcliffe 83)

When the abbess offers Ellena a choice between taking the veil and marrying someone whom the Marchesa feels is more suited to her, Ellena states that she has already decided what to do, so that it is not necessary for her to "withdraw for the purpose of considering and deciding" (Radcliffe 84). As Ellena makes it clear to the abbess that she refuses to choose between these two evils and that she is "prepared to meet whatever suffering you shall inflict upon me" the abbess is appalled by "the boldness which enables you to insult your Superior, a priestess of your holy religion, even in her sanctuary!" (Radcliffe 84). This demonstrates the power which comes with titles connected to the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, the hypocrisy of the abbess' statement is evident as the monastery of San Stefano is far from a sanctuary for Ellena. This hypocrisy is made clearer for the reader as Ellena continues:

'The sanctuary is prophaned,' said Ellena, mildly, but with dignity: 'it is become a prison. It is only when the Superior ceases to respect the precepts of that holy religion, the precepts which teach her justice and benevolence, that she herself is no longer respected. The very sentiment which bids us revere its mild and beneficent laws, bids us also reject the violators of them: when you command me to reverence my religion, you urge me to condemn yourself.' (Radcliffe 84-85)

Ellena points out the hypocrisy of the religious practice in the convent, and she shows that the superior herself is in violation of the precepts of Catholicism. The superior seems to behave and function more as a prison guard in the novel, than as a Catholic nun. Ellena seems to believe that the religious practice which she witnesses in the superior is not only far from representative of the Catholic faith, but that it is in direct opposition to it. One could argue that based on this description of San Stefano Radcliffe might have wanted to criticize the Roman Catholic Church, since the inhabitants of the convent seem more like prisoners of religion, than servants of God. The characters connected to the convent seem unjust and vicious and Ellena is kept as a prisoner. However, one might also argue that Ellena functions as Radcliffe's mouthpiece as she shows that to be religious is not the same as having a title connected to Catholicism, as for example monk or abbess, but rather to revere the precepts of the religion. Ellena reminds the reader that "justice and benevolence" are important parts of religion as well (Radcliffe 84). In this sense the abbess, as well as Schedoni, are not representatives of Catholicism, since their connection to Catholicism seems to be purely superficial. Although they do have official titles which connect them to the religion, they cannot be described as neither just nor benevolent. Radcliffe might also be seen to use Ellena in order to show how religion should be practiced.

In contrast to the monastery of San Stefano the convent of Santa della Pieta is a genuine sanctuary where Ellena retires at the suggestion of Schedoni. The contrasts between the convents are evident from the start as Ellena is greeted by the superior "with a degree of satisfaction proportionate to the concern she had suffered when informed of her disastrous removal from the Villa Altieri" (Radcliffe 299). In contrast to the convent of San Stefano, "The society of Our Lady of Pity, was such as a convent does not often shroud; to the wisdom and virtue of the Superior, the sisterhood was principally indebted for the harmony and happiness which distinguished them" (Radcliffe 299). Ellena has moved from prison to sanctuary, and from abuse to safety. The governess of Santa della Pieta is a saint compared to the Lady Abbess of San Stefano:

This lady was a shining example to governesses of religious houses, and a striking instance of the influence, which a virtuous mind may acquire over others, as well as of the extensive good that it may thus diffuse. She was dignified without haughtiness, religious without bigotry, and mild, though decisive and firm. (Radcliffe 299-300)

Radcliffe shows that it is possible to be worthy of respect and to be strict without seeming evil or hurting those around you. Although both abbesses see themselves as religious persons,

there is a huge difference between the way they think about religion and the manner in which they practice it. According to Ellena the abbess of San Stefano has lost the respect of those surrounding her because she no longer respects “the precepts of that holy religion” (Radcliffe 84). The Lady Abbess at Santa della Pièta practices religion differently:

Her religion was neither gloomy, nor bigotted; it was the sentiment of a grateful heart offering itself up to a Deity, who delights in the happiness of his creatures; and she conformed to the customs of the Roman church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation. (Radcliffe 300)

The Superior might seem to be less conservative in her religion, as she opens up for the possibility that it is not necessary to believe in all the customs of the Roman Catholic Church.

The concept of sanctuary is important in the novel as Radcliffe might be seen to idealize it in her portrayal of the convent of Santa della Pièta. I argue that the presence of such an idyllic and peaceful convent counteracts the claim that *The Italian* is fundamentally anti-Catholic, since Radcliffe provides an alternative to the strict and gloomy convent and governing of San Stefano. Brenda Tooley sees the convent of Santa della Pièta as a utopia. Furthermore, she observes that the abbess of this utopian enclave “stands in contrast to the ‘evil’ abbess of San Stefano not because she relinquishes any part of the authority invested in her by virtue of her position within the Church’s and the community’s hierarchy, but because she exercises it so benevolently” (Tooley 44). According to Tooley Radcliffe’s description of the convent of Santa della Pièta is “unusual in its insistence on the benevolent role of its governess and the familial (or sororal) structure of its society, in contrast but also in relation to the structures of authority, also metaphorically familial, of the Inquisition” (53). As Radcliffe includes descriptions of both an ‘evil’ and a ‘good’ convent in her novel, she might be seen to show that both are possible to find. Furthermore, it seems that the key to how the convents turn out lies in the characteristics of the person who governs it and the way she practices the religion. I argue that Radcliffe’s insistence on the benevolence of Santa della Pièta supports my claim that Radcliffe’s novel cannot be seen to be hostile towards Catholicism.

2.6 The Inquisition

The Inquisition is important and interesting in *The Italian* because it is linked to power and religion. The Inquisition dominates most of the third volume of the novel, as the protagonist finds himself trapped within the dungeons of the Inquisition accused of heresy. As the novel progresses other characters are also brought into the inquisitional scene. This focus

on the Inquisition in the last volume of the novel might support the allegation that *The Italian* is fundamentally anti-Catholic as the Inquisition is a source of horror and mystery in the novel. It is therefore understandable that some critics argue that the novel is hostile towards Catholicism because of the use of this horrifying, ancient Roman Catholic institution. The ties between the religion and this institution are strong, and one can argue that this connection puts Catholicism in a bad light in the novel. However, Radcliffe's treatment of the Roman Inquisition might not be wholly negative. I will examine Radcliffe's treatment of the Inquisition and I will argue that the Inquisitional scenes were included in order to make the novel more mysterious, and not to criticize Catholicism. Furthermore, this focus on the Inquisition might remind the readers of the imbalance in power between church and state, as the Roman Catholic Church is able to demonstrate and keep its power through the use of the institution. In addition I will present instances of benevolence and justice which take place within the dungeons of the Inquisition in order to show that the Inquisition and the people connected to it were not all evil.

The horrors of the Inquisitional system are evident from the beginning of the third volume and Vivaldi acts as a commentator throughout the novel. Once Vivaldi finds himself within the walls of the Inquisition, he is not afraid to share his thoughts about the institution:

'Is this possible!' said Vivaldi internally, 'Can this be in human nature! — Can such horrible perversion of right be permitted! Can man, who calls himself endowed with reason, and immeasurably superior to every other created being, argue himself into the commission of such horrible folly, such inveterate cruelty, as exceeds all the acts of the most irrational and ferocious brute. Brutes do not deliberately slaughter their species; it remains for man only, man, proud of his prerogative of reason, and boasting of his sense of justice, to unite the most terrible extremes of folly and wickedness!' (Radcliffe 198)

It seems that it is the institution's abuse of power which Vivaldi criticizes as he points to the absurdity of man committing horrible deeds in the name of the Inquisition. When Vivaldi labels this abusive system a "horrible perversion of right" this might be seen as an attack on the Inquisitional system. Furthermore, Vivaldi seems to blame man and human nature in his critique of the Inquisition, and he does not mention religion or Catholicism as the cause of the evil things he witnesses. Vivaldi continues to point out the unjustness of this system as he is put in front of an Inquisitor and is interrogated:

'If you torture me till I acknowledge the justness of this accusation,' said Vivaldi, 'I must expire under your inflictions, for suffering never shall compel me to assert a falsehood. It is not the truth, which you seek; it is not the guilty, whom you punish; the innocent, having no crimes to confess, are the victims of your cruelty, or, to escape from it, become criminal, and proclaim a lie.' (Radcliffe 203)

Radcliffe uses Vivaldi to reveal the hypocrisy of the Inquisitional system, where everyone is presumed guilty. Furthermore, Radcliffe might be seen to criticize the ways anonymous accusation can be abused in the wrong hands, as for example Schedoni abuses his power. Vivaldi can be seen as an example of this, as he is wrongfully accused by the villainous monk. Yet, Vivaldi does not yet know why he is arrested by the Inquisition or who is to blame for this until later. Michasiw points out that even though Vivaldi recognizes the hypocrisy and unjustness of the Inquisitorial proceeding, this recognition does not change anything since the Inquisitional system works by its own logic (340). It is important to note that the Inquisition is not a purely religious institution. Rather, it is a device which is employed by the powerful within the Catholic Church in order to ensure their power. By the means of anonymous accusation those in charge can easily eliminate any threats they might experience.

One might ask why Radcliffe would choose to focus on the Inquisition if it was not to criticize the Catholic Church. I argue that the Inquisition is chosen as a focus point in *The Italian* because it ties in neatly with the terror or horror theme of the Gothic novel. Through her descriptions of the Inquisition Radcliffe introduces the reader to abuse of power, masked villains, subterranean passages, hidden doorways and terrible sounds, all of which are popular elements which are expected to be found in Gothic novels. By using the Inquisition as a backdrop for the last volume of her novel, Radcliffe gets access to many different elements which she can play upon in order to create mystery and hold the reader in suspense.

The buildings and the servants connected to the Inquisition are themselves sources of mystery in the novel. As mentioned earlier, the use of antiquated spaces is one of the elements which is most common within Gothic writing, and in *The Italian* there are many buildings represented which are sources of mystery and terror. This is most true about the buildings and dungeons of the Inquisition as the mazelike structure of the buildings and the scary sounds which can be heard throughout its chambers and hallways create an atmosphere of horror. This sense of mystery and terror is demonstrated as Radcliffe writes that "A long interval elapsed, during which the stillness of the place was sometimes interrupted by a closing door, and, at others, by indistinct sounds, which yet appeared to Vivaldi like lamentations and

extorted groans” (Radcliffe 197). Descriptions such as these keep the reader on edge, as they seem to foreshadow Vivaldi’s fate. Although Vivaldi is never physically tortured and Radcliffe avoids describing any scenes of torture, these descriptions of Vivaldi’s observations within the buildings of the Inquisition create a lot of tension. Vivaldi has the threat of torture hanging over him for the entire last volume of the novel, as he is unwilling to admit to the crimes he has been accused of. The vastness of the prison and the lack of information also give the novel an air of mystery:

The doors, through which they passed, regularly opened at the touch of an iron rod, carried by one of the officials, and without the appearance of any person. The other man bore a torch, and the passages were so dimly lighted, that the way could scarcely have been found without one. They crossed what seemed to be a burial vault, but the extent and obscurity of the place did not allow it to be ascertained; and, having reached an iron door, they stopped. (Radcliffe 309)

The lack of proper lighting keeps Vivaldi in suspense, as he is unable to ascertain where he is and what or who are around him. Vivaldi is in constant fear for his life as the threat of death seems to always be just around the corner. The descriptions of the Inquisitional scenery are typical of the Gothic novel with its focus on seemingly ancient, dangerous and forsaken places. I argue that the choice of the dungeons of the Inquisition as the stage where the plot unfolds in the novel is taken because of the mystery and terror it brings to the manuscript, and not because the Inquisition is connected to Catholicism.

Although the scenes within the Inquisition for the most part are dark and scary, there are some point of light, hope, integrity and humanity presented in the novel:

‘Are these the sentiments of an inquisitor!’ said Vivaldi to himself, ‘can such glorious candour appear amidst the tribunal of an Inquisition!’ Tears fell fast on Vivaldi’s cheek while he gazed upon this just judge, whose candour, had it been exerted in his cause, could not have excited more powerful sensations of esteem and admiration. ‘An inquisitor!’ he repeated to himself, ‘an inquisitor!’ (Radcliffe 352)

It is interesting that such a person as the vicar-general, by whom Vivaldi is so impressed, can be found within a seemingly corrupt and hypocritical system. Still, the humanity displayed by the vicar-general is more of an exception and is not enough to redeem the actions of the Inquisition. The presence of this just servant of the Inquisition might serve as an example of how the Inquisitional system should function and might have functioned if its servants did not

choose to abuse the power handed to them. It is also interesting that in Vivaldi's case the Inquisitional system is successful in finding the real criminal, as Vivaldi is discovered to be innocent and Schedoni and his accomplice are found guilty. In the end Vivaldi escapes torture and death, and he is able to return home with his father. According to Michasiw the fact that Schedoni is found guilty does not alter the moral stature of the institution. Furthermore, he states that the presence of a just man like the vicar-general in the novel only serves "to underscore the capacity of the institution to overbear any individual goodness that may inhere among its servants" (341). He concludes that "The Inquisition remains the chamber of oppression whatever good it might, incidentally, do" (341). Radcliffe's treatment of the Inquisition is somewhat ambiguous as the reader is only ever introduced to the threat of violence and torture, or the expectations of it, in the novel. The only deaths we encounter within the Inquisition's dungeons are the deaths of the guilty Schedoni and his accomplice. Furthermore, these are inflicted by Schedoni as he has poisoned his old friend and himself. Still, this does not redeem the Inquisitional system, and as Purves notes, "episodes featuring the Inquisition remain as a distinguishing mark of Gothic's alleged animosity toward the Roman Church" (8).

Although there is some ambiguity expressed in the novel towards the Inquisition, there might not be enough evidence present regarding this particular feature to clear the novel of the charges brought against it of being hostile towards Catholicism. However, along with the other elements I have examined, such as the characters, the way Catholicism is used as a literary device because it ties in with the Gothic genre, and the different convent presented in the novel, I argue that one can conclude that at least Radcliffe's treatment of Catholicism does not deserve to be labeled hostile. Radcliffe presents her readers with both positive and negative instances of Catholicism, and avoids altogether commenting directly upon the religion. Radcliffe leaves it up to her readers to draw their own conclusions. It is important to note that it is the imbalance in power between the Italian state and the Roman Catholic Church in *The Italian* which causes problems for Vivaldi and Ellena and not Catholicism in itself, since this lack of separation between spheres enables Schedoni to abuse his power. The connection between state and church, and religion and society ultimately forces Vivaldi and Ellena to run away. In James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, which I will examine shortly, the ties between religion and society are also strong. Although the novel cannot be said to be hostile towards Calvinism, I will show that Hogg as well voices some concerns about society being too heavily influenced by religion.

3 *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

James Hogg's novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* was first published in 1824. This Scottish, Gothic novel tells the story of the Calvinistic religious fanatic Robert Wringhim. Calvinism is central in the novel, and the society portrayed by Hogg is heavily influenced by ideas and moral codes connected to this denomination of Christianity. I will argue that although Robert, the villain and protagonist of the novel, is inspired by the religious ideas expressed in the Calvinistic doctrines, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, to commit gruesome crimes and sins, Hogg is not hostile in his treatment of the religion, and the novel cannot be labeled anti-Calvinistic. I will argue that Robert develops his own morality in the novel, in which his ideas come to be in direct conflict with the Calvinistic doctrines. As such, the protagonist cannot serve as a model of the religion since he represents a perversion of Calvinism. Furthermore, I will argue that Hogg problematizes, through the story of Robert, the connection between religion and society, which is present in the society depicted by Hogg in his novel.

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner is a psychological novel depicting how Robert acts after discovering that he is destined to go to heaven, regardless of his past and future actions. Among other things this eventually leads him to murder his own brother, George. The novel is split into three parts. The first part is told in the voice of a modern editor, and he tells the story of how Robert is alienated by his father and his brother after he is born. Robert is therefore raised by his extremely conservative mother and the Reverend Wringhim from whom Robert takes his last name. A feud breaks out between the brothers when they finally meet as grownups, and Robert eventually murders his brother. The second volume of the novel is told by Robert himself through his own memoirs. Here he confesses his crimes and tells his story from his own point of view. The reader is told of how Robert is taught that he has been pre-elected by God to go to heaven, and how this leads to him committing the murder as well as other crimes. Robert tells about how he encounters a young man, Gil Martin, and how this mysterious character comes to influence his life in different aspects. Furthermore, this volume tells the story of how Robert is forced to escape from the Scottish society he grows up in because of his beliefs and the crimes he commits. The last volume of the novel is told in the voice of the editor, and here he comments on the unbelievable and extraordinary tale told by Robert. Finally, this last part describes how the manuscript is found in a grave along with the remains of a body long since buried.

The novel differs from *The Italian* in many respects. For example, although it is written over 25 years later than *The Italian*, Hogg's novel is set further back in time than Radcliffe's novel. In addition it is set in Scotland, the native country of the author himself. Hogg focuses more on psychological aspects in the novel and he does not subscribe to the device of the explained supernatural. On the other hand, both Radcliffe's and Hogg's novels are deeply influenced by various aspects belonging to different denominations of Christianity. Whereas Catholicism is central in *The Italian*, Hogg's novel is concerned with Calvinism, and it is especially influenced by some of the doctrines which are central in this religion.

Calvinism is important to the plot of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and Hogg uses different aspect connected to the religion, such as characters, buildings and moral codes, in order to create a sense of mystery and terror in his novel and create an exciting backdrop for his story. The Scottish society which is portrayed by Hogg in his Gothic satire is heavily influenced by the Calvinistic doctrines, and the protagonist of the story is at different points in the novel described as a religious fanatic. I will examine Hogg's treatment of Calvinism in his novel, and I will argue that there is not enough evidence present for the novel or the author to be labeled anti-Calvinistic. I will explore in detail some of the Calvinistic doctrines which are central to the plot of the novel, as well as Robert's interpretation of these religious codes. I will argue that the religion as it is practiced by Robert Wringhim in the novel differs too much from the original Calvinistic doctrines for Robert to be seen as a representative for the religion. I suggest that Hogg's intention is not to criticize Calvinism as a religion, but rather to warn the readers of his novel about the dangers of carrying religious principles to an extreme. As was the case with *The Italian*, the novel shows that religion on its own is not harmful, but rather that it can be used as a tool to harm or control others in the hands of someone powerful.

It is not Calvinism in itself which is scrutinized in the novel, but rather the strong hold which the religion seems to have on the society depicted in the novel. I will examine how Robert as an individual whose opinions differ from those of the society portrayed in the novel is treated by the community, and I will argue that many of Robert's problems are caused by the fact that there is a lack of separation between religion and governing in this society, as was also the case in Radcliffe's novel. This is among other things evident through the lack of separation between the different spheres in the society in general, and specifically through the lack of differentiation between law and morality. There seems to be little or no differentiation between these two in the Scottish society described by Hogg, and this causes problems for the protagonist. Since Robert feels that he is unable to live by the morality of society, which is

deeply connected to the laws and the Calvinistic doctrines, he becomes a criminal in the eyes of society. Although the reader might not feel much sympathy towards Robert, since he commits gruesome crimes as he takes his personal morality and Calvinistic beliefs to an extreme, his story still shows that there is little or no room in Scottish society for opinions that differ too much from those expressed in its laws. Before I examine in detail Hogg's use of Calvinism in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, I will explore James Hogg as a writer of Scottish Gothic and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as a Scottish, Gothic novel.

3.1 Hogg's Novel as a Scottish Gothic

According to Ian Duncan, the term "Gothic" only became applicable to Scottish writing after Walter Scott had combined elements found in the Scottish, English and Continental literary tradition after the year 1800. Furthermore, he specifies that what constitutes Scottish Gothic is the blend between the national and the uncanny or supernatural. He states that "In Scotland Gothic came to represent the uncanny recursion of a native or ancestral power alienated from modern life" (Duncan "Scottish Gothic" 123). This is apparent in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as there is a constant battle between the past, with its focus on supernatural elements and religion, and the editor's present, which might be seen to represent enlightenment and reason. Through the voices of the novel's characters the reader is presented with different versions of the same country. Scottish history is central in Hogg's novel in many ways. For example, the division of political opinions and the role of religion in society are important aspects of the novel which change as the novel progresses in time. Furthermore, Hogg often relies on tradition and superstition in his novel, for example in the different tales involving the devil.

As a representative of Scottish Gothic *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* does share some common ground with its English relative. For example, as was the case with *The Italian*, most of the plot in Hogg's novel is removed in time. The sinner's narrative is set between the years 1687 and 1712, while the editor's comments are more recent and take place in the 1820s during Hogg's own lifetime (Duncan "introduction" xxii). This removal in time is especially central when it comes to Scottish Gothic, considering that national history often plays a central and sometimes a haunting role in the novels of for example Hogg and Walter Scott. In Hogg's novel the past is constantly being compared to the editor's, and Hogg's, present. Having parts of the plot taking place in the past two centuries also opens up to the usage of national tradition, tales and history. Whereas the plot in *The*

Italian, along with those of many other English Gothic novels, is also removed in space, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is set in Scotland. This ties in neatly with Ian Duncan's definition of Scottish Gothic as fiction which is typically deeply embedded in the national culture and history. As such the novel is filled with national scenery specific to Scotland. Throughout the novel the characters travel through the country, stopping among other places in Glasgow, Edinburgh, in small rural villages, on the top of hills and in the woods. Moreover, parts of the novel takes place in castles, prisons, dungeons and court-rooms, which are places that are typically linked to Gothic fiction. Since the history of the nation is often reflected in Scottish Gothic novels, it is not surprising that Calvinism comes to play a central part in the novel.

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner is also filled with supernatural elements and scenes, such as those involving what might be the devil. Although these for the most part are to be found in the narration of the sinner, the editor does not seem to dismiss them entirely. Hogg specialized in writing where he used supernatural elements "in order to affirm the potency of traditional rural culture – a potency that may reside in its power to reorder worldly affairs, or, more disturbingly, in an irreducibility to outside terms of explanation, a final, opaque otherness" (Duncan "Scottish Gothic" 130). In contrast to Ann Radcliffe, Hogg does not give the supernatural incidents and elements he presents in his novel natural explanations. However, the editor in the novel often points out the absurdity of the sinner's narrative and sometimes reflects on what might have caused these seemingly supernatural incidents. As a result the reader is left somewhat in the dark towards the end of the novel regarding the use of the supernatural elements, as the sinner's and the editor's accounts differ at so many points. Whereas the sinner's narrative might indicate that Robert is meeting up with, and is at times possessed by, the devil, the enlightened editor tries to disregard this. The editor's account might indicate that Robert either had dealings with a real person who called himself Gil Martin, that he has imagined the whole thing, or that he is mentally disturbed and suffers from schizophrenia.

In addition to including what might be the devil in the novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is filled with other supernatural scenes and figures. For example, when George finds himself on a hilltop early in the morning he encounters what might be described as a spirit taking on the form of a giant cloud shaped as a man:

George conceived it to be a spirit. He could conceive it to be nothing else; and he took it for some horrid demon by which he was haunted, that had assumed the

features of his brother in every lineament, but, in taking on itself the human form, had miscalculated dreadfully on the size, and presented itself thus to him in a blown-up, dilated frame of embodied air, exhaled from the caverns of death or the regions of devouring fire. (Hogg 34)

This scene is described in the editor's narrative, and although the editor does not comment on it directly, he does include other comments on the scene on the hilltop. For example, when George is explaining the event after he has been accused of attempting to murder his brother a judge expresses that "It was a very extraordinary story", before sending George to prison (Hogg 40). In the sinner's narrative Robert seems to believe that the demonic figure of Gil Martin is "no other than the Czar Peter of Russia" although he does encounter what he himself believes to be a supernatural being later on in the novel (Hogg 99). When ascending the hill in search for his brother Robert meets "a lady, robed in white" who tries to warn him: "Preposterous wretch! how dare you lift your eyes to heaven with such purposes in your heart? Escape homewards, and save your soul, or farewell for ever!" (Hogg 119).

In *The Italian* Radcliffe seems to rely on superstition among her characters, and maybe even among her readers, in her treatment of seemingly supernatural elements. Since the supernatural events are not really supernatural at all, superstition is important in order to create terror and suspense. Because superstition, as mentioned earlier, has often been linked to Catholicism, it works well within the Catholic context created by Radcliffe. In Hogg's novel superstition has been replaced by tradition as tales about the devil were common in Scottish tradition. Still, there is a link to religion since the devil is a central figure in Presbyterianism as well. Although the authors write in two completely different contexts, there does seem to be a link between the use of supernatural elements and religion in both novels. I will examine the use of Presbyterianism, or more specifically Calvinism, in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* later.

Although a lot of the horror which might be said to be present in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is a result of Hogg's use of supernatural elements and creatures connected to religion or national traditions, not all the suspense present in Hogg's Gothic novel is created by using supernatural beings or events. For example, there are episodes of both physical haunting and psychological haunting throughout the novel which are rooted in the physical world. As an example of this, Robert is both physically and mentally haunted by his supposed friend, Gil Martin, from the moment they meet in the woods. Furthermore, George is physically haunted by his brother as Robert acts like a stalker

who always keeps close. Looking at the novel as a whole one might even say that the past seems to be haunting Hogg's present. The past catches up to the present as the sinner's grave is dug up and the narrative is discovered, and old, Scottish tradition is mixed with the enlightenment of the nineteenth century. Hogg might be seen to invite his readers to compare between the two different eras through this split in the narrative, and I argue that while the editor's enlightened view seems to be easier to understand for the modern reader, Hogg seems to imply that the old, Scottish traditions have not disappeared entirely in the enlightened world. Similarly to *The Italian*, *The Personal Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* also revolves around a recovered manuscript. This is as mentioned a common trope to be found in Gothic novels. Still, I argue that this makes Hogg's novel seem even more Gothic, in the sense that it adds another level of mystery and terror to the story. The fact that the manuscript is found in a suicide victim's grave instantly links the story to death and horror. The deceased is brought back to life through the recovery of the manuscript, as parts of the novel are told through his voice beyond the grave. This kind of resurrection of the past is typical of Gothic writings.

3.2 Calvinism in Hogg's Gothic Novel

While Catholicism plays an important role in *The Italian*, Calvinism is central to any reading of *The Personal Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. I will examine the terms "justification" and "predestination", which are central to both Calvinism and the novel. Furthermore, I will discuss how Calvinism is presented in the novel and argue that *The Personal Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* does not deserve to be labeled fundamentally anti-Calvinistic. Although I will focus on Robert's religious practice and beliefs, I will also aim to show that Hogg presents his readers with an alternative to Robert's way of practicing religion, as well as discuss what this might say about Calvinism in the novel. I will start by examining briefly the religious and political context of Robert's narrative in order to show how he and the Reverend Wringhim justify what the reader might experience as a perversion of religion.

During the seventeenth century a civil war broke out in Scotland because of disagreements regarding the national religion of the country. As a result of the reintroduction of an Episcopal Church of Scotland by Charles II and his successor James II and VII, there was an armed uprising in the South-West of Scotland in 1679. This was spearheaded by those who subscribed to the Presbyterian ways of worship, as well as Church Government. These people who resisted were known as Covenanters. The five years that followed the culmination

of the conflict were years of terror which came to be known as the “killing time”. This makes up the immediate historical, religious and political context of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Duncan “introduction” xxvi). When Presbyterianism again was established in Scotland in 1690 it was based on the *Westminster Confession of Faith* from 1646, which was regarded as the official doctrinal statement of the Church of Scotland towards the end of the seventeenth century (Duncan “introduction” xxvii). The theological core of Scottish Presbyterianism came from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a document written by Jean Calvin during the European Reformation (Duncan “introduction” xxvii). I will examine the representation of Calvinism in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and discuss how this relates to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. I will focus on the terms “justification” and “predestination” and examine how these are treated in the doctrine as well as in the novel, and I will suggest that these terms are perverted by Robert as he takes the ideas behind “justification” and “predestination” to an extreme.

In Scottish Presbyterianism, as well as in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the ideas of predestination and justification are linked. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* from 1646 addresses the question of predestination in its third chapter called “Of God’s Eternal Decree” (The Westminster Confession of Faith). Paragraph three of chapter three states that “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death” (The Westminster Confession of Faith). This is further explained in part five of the doctrine:

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace. (The Westminster Confession of Faith)

The doctrine tells us that those who are predestined to go to heaven were chosen before time, and that predestination is an unconditional gift from God. As such it should not be possible for man to influence who will go to heaven, since this has already been decided. One could argue that the principle of predestination renders religious commitment superfluous, as one’s actions on earth have no impact on one’s afterlife.

In Hogg's novel the principle of predestination is perverted and taken to an extreme as Robert learns that he is predestined to go to heaven. Robert Wringhim is told of his predestination and is welcomed "into the community of the just upon earth" by his reverend father who explains "how he had wrestled with God, as the patriarch of old had done, not for a night, but for days and years, and that in bitterness and anguish of spirit, on my account; but, that he had at last prevailed, and had now gained the long and earnestly desired assurance of my acceptance with the Almighty, in and through the merits and sufferings of his Son" (Hogg 88). Robert is made to believe that he has been accepted by God and "welcomed into the society of the just made perfect" (Hogg 88). The heretical reverend would have Robert and his mother believe that he has influenced God and secured Robert eternal life. This is in direct violation of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* which states that those who are predestined to go to heaven were chosen "before the foundation of the world was laid" (The Westminster Confession of Faith). Robert is made to believe "That I was now a justified person, adopted among the number of God's children – my name written in the Lamb's book of life, and that no bypast transgression, not any further act of my own, or of other men, could be instrumental in altering the decree" (Hogg 88). The connection between "predestination" and "justification" becomes evident here. According to the Reverend Wringhim's beliefs Robert is taught that as a predestined person one can do no wrong. Robert's belief that his own actions will have no heavenly consequences eventually renders him a murderer.

Robert believes that he is not only predestined, but also justified. This means that he is not only above the moral and criminal laws of society, but above God's Ten Commandments as well. Chapter eleven of *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, "Of Justification", revolves around and somewhat explains the concept of justification in Scottish Presbyterianism (The Westminster Confession of Faith). According to part one of this religious document:

Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God. (The Westminster Confession of Faith)

If you have been chosen before time you are also justified by God. Just as predestination, justification is a gift from God with no strings attached. In paragraph five of chapter eleven the nature of justification is specified further:

God does continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance. (The Westminster Confession of Faith)

According to this even a justified person may do wrong. It does seem, however, that it is taken for granted that all justified persons will eventually recognize their faults and repent their sins. The confession of sins and repentance is necessary in order to receive the gift of eternal life. Still, according to this doctrine a sin is still a sin, no matter who commits it. In the novel the feature of justification is perverted by Robert, his mother and his reverend father who are under the impression "that a justified person can do no wrong" (Hogg 13). This is where the doctrine differs from Robert's view, since Robert believes that his actions are not and cannot be wrong. Robert never repents his sins and can therefore not be justified. I argue that Robert cannot be seen as a representative of Scottish Presbyterianism because of the enormous differences between what the official doctrine states, and what Robert thinks of religion and religious practice. I will continue to explore Robert's religion in comparison with other forms of worship which are present in the novel in order to show that Hogg's tale involving Robert's fanaticism might be seen to function as a cautionary tale. I will start by examining how Robert and the other characters in the novel feel and what they think about Robert's way of practicing religion.

Although Robert Wringhim's way of practicing religion is central in the novel it is not the only one Hogg introduces the reader to. I have argued that Robert's take on Calvinism can be seen as a perversion of religion. The belief in that God has elected some few persons before time began to be predestined to go to heaven is a central aspect of Calvinism. Although these predestined persons are also justified, they may still sin and do wrong according to the official doctrine. However, Robert and the Reverend Wringhim press the logic of predestination and justification to an extreme called "antinomianism" (Duncan "introduction" xxvii). This belief that a justified person can do no wrong is the core of Robert's religion. According to Duncan antinomianism was later condemned by the Church of Scotland and Jean Calvin himself refused to support the belief that the doctrine invited justified persons to sin ("introduction"

xxvii). In the editor's narrative in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* Robert is described as both a "devilish-looking youth" and a "hellish-looking student" (Hogg 20). In addition Robert is later called "a limb of Satan" by George (Hogg 37). I argue that descriptions such as these demonstrate the division between the editor's and the sinner's narratives, as well as the existing conflict between Orthodox Calvinism and Robert's religion. At least this might indicate that in the eyes of the enlightened editor Robert's religious practice is heretical, and that instead of bringing him closer to God, it takes him closer to eternal damnation.

In the novel Robert is perfectly aware that he sins constantly, still he refuses to believe that his actions will have any consequences for him:

That I was a great, a transcendent sinner, I confess. But still I had hopes of forgiveness, because I never sinned from principle, but accident; and then I always tried to repent of these sins by the slump, for individually it was impossible; and, though not always successful in my endeavours, I could not help that, the grace of repentance being withheld from me, I regarded myself as in no degree accountable for the failure. (Hogg 86-7)

Robert seems to subscribe to some points of Orthodox Calvinism and to disregard those which for some reason are difficult for him to honor. While *The Westminster Confession of Faith* states that all justified persons will sooner or later repent, Robert believes that being able to repent is a gift which he has not received. In this way Robert might be seen to disclaim all responsibility for his wrongdoings as he shapes his own extreme variety of Calvinism. Still, scripture seems to be extremely important to Robert, and he seems to be unaware of the fact that he does not keep to it himself:

Seeing that God had from all eternity decided the fate of every individual that was to be born of woman, how vain was it in man to endeavour to save those whom their Maker had, by an unchangeable decree, doomed to destruction. I could not disbelieve the doctrine which the best of men had taught me, and towards which he made the whole of the Scriptures to bear, and yet it made the economy of the Christian world appear to me as an absolute contradiction. How much more wise would it be, thought I, to begin and cut sinners off with the sword! For till that is effected, the saints can never inherit the earth in peace. Should I be honoured as an instrument to begin this great work of purification, I should rejoice in it. (Hogg 94)

When Robert applies his reasoning to the doctrines of Calvinism he gradually creates his own version of the religion. As the passage above shows Robert starts thinking that in order for the saints to inherit the earth earlier he should kill those who are not elected by God. In Robert's eyes those who are not predestined to go to heaven are already damned, and therefore killing them will not anger God. Robert later applies the same reasoning when contemplating whether it would be right in the eyes of God to murder the preacher Mr. Blanchard as he thinks to himself that "If the man Blanchard is worthy, he is only changing his situation for a better one; and, if unworthy, it is better that one fall than that a thousand souls perish" (Hogg 102).

In the novel Mr. Blanchard provides an alternative to Robert's way of worship. In addition he warns Robert about taking his beliefs to a dangerous extreme, and might in some ways function as Hogg's mouthpiece. Mr. Blanchard immediately takes a dislike to Robert's friend and states that "He, indeed, pretends great strictness of orthodoxy regarding some of the points of doctrine embraced by the reformed church; but you do not seem to perceive that both you and he are carrying these points to a dangerous extremity" (Hogg 100). This is just one of many warnings or signs which Robert receives during the course of the novel. Here Gil Martin is the cause of the warning. Mr. Blanchard later elaborates on his concerns as he states that "I can easily see that both you and he are carrying your ideas of absolute predestination, and its concomitant appendages, to an extent that overthrows all religion and revelation together; or, at least, jumbles them into a chaos, out of which human capacity can never select what is good" (Hogg 100). In the eyes of Mr. Blanchard Robert's religious practice and his ideas have been carried to a dangerous extreme and he warns Robert that nothing good can come from following these ideas. Furthermore, Mr. Blanchard seems to say that Robert's and Gil Martin's version of religion represents an overthrow of all religion. There is a huge gap between the content of the doctrines which Robert claims to follow and the things he does in the name of religion. Mr. Blanchard's statement seems to suggest that by perverting the doctrines of Calvinism Robert has prepared his own damnation.

As a contrast to Robert's extreme ideas about religious practice are those belonging to Mr. Blanchard. Robert himself starts out seeing Mr. Blanchard as "a worthy, pious divine, but quite of the moral cast" (Hogg 99). Although Robert acknowledges the fact that the reverend is seen as a pious divine in the community, he also reflects that in addition to believing in salvation from faith, Mr. Blanchard also believes in the moral law. Whereas good deeds might be seen to be important for Mr. Blanchard's religious practice, Robert believes that it does not

matter whether he commits bad or good deeds since he is already destined to go to heaven. In the eyes of Mr. Blanchard “Religion is a sublime and glorious thing, the bonds of society on earth, and the connector of humanity with the Divine nature; but there is nothing so dangerous to man as the wresting of any of its principles, or forcing them beyond their due bounds: this is of all others the readiest way to destruction” (Hogg 100). Mr. Blanchard might be seen to predict the destruction of Robert here, as there is a clear contrast between the sublime and glorious religious practice of Mr. Blanchard, and Robert’s fanatical misinterpretation of the Calvinistic doctrines. Robert eventually finds Mr. Blanchard to be blasphemous and he is disgusted in the preacher as he observes that “He was actually holding it forth, as a fact, that ‘it was every man’s own blame if he was not saved’” (Hogg 103). Robert finds it ridiculous that the preacher believes that any man can be saved, and that it is not only one’s faith but one’s actions as well which determine whether or not one is eligible for eternal life. This seems to be the point on which Robert and the preacher disagree the most. Although one might argue that both Robert’s and the preacher’s treatment of Calvinism differ in some aspects from *The Westminster Confession of Faith* I argue that only Robert’s version of Calvinism is portrayed as extreme in the novel. Still, Mr. Blanchard might also be seen to violate the doctrine, as he seems to believe that any one can be saved depending on their faith and actions, since this goes against the point of predestination. However, I argue that it is not because Mr. Blanchard’s beliefs differ from the official Calvinistic doctrines that Robert finds him blasphemous, but rather because he differs in opinion from Robert. After all, Robert does not see himself that he is in violation of the religious doctrines which he claims to hold in such great esteem.

In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* Hogg presents the readers with different takes on Calvinism by introducing them to the different characters in the novel. Hogg uses the character of Mr. Blanchard in order to comment upon Robert’s perversion of religion. The fact that the novel is filled with such comments which put Robert’s religious beliefs in a bad light indicates that Robert’s way of worship is to be avoided and not imitated. This claim may be further supported by the way the sinner’s narrative ends with Robert’s suicide after he has been haunted by supernatural creatures while trying to escape from the earthly consequences of his sins and crimes:

I was momentarily surrounded by a number of hideous fiends, who gnashed on me with their teeth, and clenched their crimson paws in my face; and at the same instant I was seized by the collar of my coat behind, by my dreaded and devoted friend, who

pushed me on and, with his gilded rapier waving and brandishing around me, defended me against all their united attacks. (Hogg 173)

Although Hogg might not have included scenes such as these in order to say anything about religious practice at all, I argue that the readers will nonetheless feel that there is a connection between such terrible descriptions and Robert's religious ideas. As such this, and similar scenes in the novel, might be seen to function as a warning against taking religious practice to an extreme, since they describe and contain such unnatural consequences. It is also interesting that Robert still thinks that he is elected and that he has been doing glorious and sacred work in the name of God even after he is haunted by supernatural creatures after he has committed his deeds. The scenes involving these horrifying brutes further support my claim that Hogg thinks that Robert's religion should be avoided. Although it might be clear to the reader that Robert is being pursued by supernatural beasts because of his sins and that he is about to commit the ultimate sin by murdering himself, Robert is made to believe that he and Gil Martin will "die like heroes" and eventually "mingle with the pure ethereal essence of existence" (Hogg 174). This makes it evident to the reader that Robert is not only a religious fanatic, but that he is delusional as well.

Mr. Blanchard is not the only character in the novel who comments upon Robert and his reverend father's beliefs and ideas about religion. For example, the senior George Colwan, Robert's and George's father, points out the reverend's heretical tendencies early in the novel as he states that "You are one, Sir, whose righteousness consists in splitting the doctrines of Calvin into thousands of undistinguishable films, and in setting up a system of justifying-grace against all breaches of all laws, moral or divine" (Hogg 15). The warning of Mr. Blanchard is somewhat echoed through this statement, as both he and Colwan senior point to the chaos which is created by the perversion of the religion. Colwan senior reveals the reverend's religious practice as heretical as he states that the reverend is not a true follower of Calvinism, since he uses and abuses the official doctrine when he creates his own perverted version of the religion. In addition he points out that this is not only wrong in the eyes of God, but in the eyes of society as well. The fact that the Reverend's perversion of Calvinism is seen to influence society underlines the power of the link between religion and governing in the novel, as well as between the public and the private sphere. As Colwan senior dies he utters "some incoherent words about justification by faith alone and absolute and eternal predestination having been the ruin of his house" (Hogg 45). Robert's and Reverend Wringhim's divine ideas finally have earthly consequences for Colwan senior, who during his

last moments on earth sees that it is the religious beliefs and practice of his enemies which are to blame for his firstborn's death, as well as his own.

In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* Hogg uses other devices in addition to his characters in order to express various views on Calvinism. Hogg includes a short parable or story in the sinner's narrative which might be seen to comment upon the main plot of the novel. The little story is a tale about what can happen to a whole town if its inhabitants take religious worship to an extreme, as Robert has already done himself. The story is told to Robert's servant by some old wives. After hearing it the servant boy relates the story to his master at his request. The servant boy tries to defend his master in refusing to believe that he keeps the company of the devil and he tells the old women that his master is "a peeous man, an' a sensible man" (Hogg 147). However, the old wives argue that "Gin ever he observes a proud professor, wha has mae than ordinary pretensions to a divine calling, and that reards and prays till the very howlets learn his preambles, that's the man Auld Simmie fixes on to mak a dishclout o'" (Hogg 148). According to the old women one is more likely to become Satan's prey if one has "pretensions to a divine calling", such as Robert believes that he is predestined by God (Hogg 148). This statement might also support the suggestion that Gil Martin is in fact the devil, and that he has come to Robert because of his pretensions, and in order to destroy his life.

In the old wives' story a whole town falls prey to Satan because of their extreme form of worship. They tell the servant about the town of Auchtermuchty where the people "grew so rigidly righteous that the meanest hind among them became a shining light in ither towns an' parishes" (Hogg 148). When at last there is nothing to be heard in the town other than "preaching, praying, argumentation, an' catechizing" the devils are so alarmed by this behavior that they are "moved to commotion" (Hogg 148). When the minister of the town suddenly disappears, he is replaced by "a strange divine" (Hogg 149). The people of the town are spellbound by the stranger, until the cunning Robin Ruthven exposes him as he takes "haud o' the side an' wide gown, an'in sight of a' present, held it aside as high as the preacher's knee, and behold, there was a pair o' cloven feet!" (Hogg 151). The readers of the novel might see that there is a connection between this tale and Robert's life. However, Robert refuses to believe this "absurd story" and gives no credit to the belief that his friend, Gil Martin, is in fact the devil (Hogg 152). Still, Robert is somewhat affected by the likeness of his situation with the townspeople in the story, so much so that it makes him look at Gil Martin's feet the next time they meet, in order to check "if it was not cloven into two hoofs" (Hogg 153).

It might be difficult to see exactly what Hogg wants the readers to think about the novel as it is so versatile and has so many different aspects to it. Furthermore, although the different parts of the novel sometimes complement each other, they differ from each other at many points. This ambiguity makes the novel somewhat difficult to analyze. The editor of the novel is also reluctant when it comes to commenting on the sinner's narrative, and he seems to be at a loss when it comes to its meaning as he asks himself "WHAT can this work be? Sure, you will say, it must be an allegory; or (as the writer calls it) a religious PARABLE, showing the dreadful danger of self-righteousness? I cannot tell" (Hogg 178). If the narrative is indeed an allegory or a parable, then I will suggest that the message of the novel is to show caution when it comes to religious practice and ideas, and not to stray too far from the ideas reflected in the laws and morality of society. Still, the inconsistencies which exist between the different parts of the novel make it difficult to say anything for sure. That it not to say, however, that Hogg wants to warn his readers about religious practice all together. In his introduction to the sinner's narrative the editor states that "We have heard much of the rage of fanaticism in former days, but nothing to this" (Hogg 71). The use of the word "fanaticism" might indicate that the editor finds it difficult to believe in the content of the sinner's narrative. Furthermore, it might imply that Robert is nothing but a religious fanatic, and that the narrative as such is the notes of a madman. I argue that the warnings Robert receives throughout the novel also function as a warning against the readers of the novel. Furthermore, the novel as a whole might be seen to function as a cautionary tale, where its readers are warned about taking religious practice to an extremity. In addition to indirectly commenting upon Robert's condition, this short story within the novel reinforces this message.

Hogg's treatment of religion in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is complex, and there are various aspects present in the Scottish satire which make it difficult to discover what Hogg wants his readers to think about religion and religious practice. There might be many reasons why Hogg chose to have religion or Calvinism as a central topic in his novel. One might for example argue that Hogg wrote his novel about religious fanaticism in order to criticize religious practices or ideas. I have argued that Hogg does not refuse religious practice all together, but rather that he shuns religious extremity. Calvinism might also be seen as an appropriate theme because it ties in neatly with the Scottish Gothic genre. For example, the tales involving the devil invoke religion, superstition and tradition all at once. I will continue to examine how religion ties in with society in the novel in order to see what this might say about Hogg's treatment of Calvinism. In addition, I will examine how religion as a social phenomenon differs in *The Private Memoirs and*

Confessions of a Justified Sinner and *The Italian*. Hogg shows through his tale about Robert the difficulties of existing in a society which is heavily influenced by religion if one's own religious ideas are in contrast to those presented by the society as a whole. I will examine the connection between power and religion in the novel, and I will argue that while Robert does not receive any real power through his beliefs, he is still able to act as if he was powerful. This is a contrast to the situation in *The Italian*, where the characters connected to Catholicism become powerful because of their ties to the Roman Catholic Church. Religion was used as a tool by Roman Catholic characters in *The Italian* in order to achieve power, and I will argue that in Hogg's novel it is Gil Martin who abuses religion in order to get what he wants.

3.3 Religion and Society in Hogg's Novel

In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* religion is an important aspect of society. Calvinism seems to be central to the Scottish society portrayed in the novel, and persons involved with the religion are important characters. In *The Italian* it was sometimes difficult to separate religion from the public sphere, as these aspects seemed to be somewhat intertwined. I argued that this lack of separation between the different spheres caused many of the problems portrayed in the novel. I will argue that this blending of spheres is also present in Hogg's novel, and that it is the root of Robert's troubles. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* might in many respects be seen as a tale about the consequences of religious fanaticism, and the novel also shows how the religious fanatic is treated in society. I will examine the character of Robert in detail in order to see how he is treated by his community and how he fits into society. Robert becomes an outcast because of his religious fanaticism. Furthermore, I will use Meredith Evan's article on law and morality in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* in order to see why it might be difficult for Robert to function in the public sphere, and how his religious ideas are in conflict with the laws of society. I will examine how Robert relates to terms such as "sin", "crime", "law" and "morality" in order to see what this might say about his own morality or religion. Because Robert's personal morality, which has its foundation in his extreme take on Calvinistic principles, differs too much from the collective morality of the members of his community, it is difficult for Robert to exist in society. I will start by examining the distinction between law and morality, as it is presented in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.

Laws might be seen as rights and rules by which all subjects belonging to a society must abide. These universal laws are created by a governing organ and are necessary in order for a society to function. The breaking of a law will be considered a crime. In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* there is a system in place to judge and punish those who commit crimes. Morality, on the other hand, is more personal than the laws created by a governing organ. Morality consists of a set of rules which one chooses to live by. Although religion does not have to be a part of personal morality it can be the foundation of morality, as it often seems to be among the characters in the novel. The Ten Commandments, along with other religious doctrines, might then be seen to function as the foundation of the rules. In Hogg's novel *The Westminster Confession of Faith* is especially important to Robert's set of rules. Morality is personal and internalized and may differ from person to person, although one should expect there to be a lot of common ground between the moralities of those co-existing in the same society, and I argue that there is a shared morality in the Scottish society depicted by Hogg which is based on a moderate interpretation of the Calvinistic doctrines. Breaking a rule of morality is not necessarily considered a crime in the eyes of the law, but it may certainly be considered a sin. I will examine how these terms are treated in the novel shortly.

In a society there are different sets of laws and rules which one must or should abide by in order for the people to co-exist peacefully. In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as well there are a number of written and unwritten laws and rules present which the characters of the novel have to be aware of. Penny Fielding points out that Hogg in his Gothic novel complicates the question of how people are bound by law as he asks whether a society should have its own set of laws which would apply to everyone, or whether "right is the issue of an incalculable, barely describable state of affairs that pre-exist any decision in the present", something which Robert comes to believe in the novel (138). The difference between law and morality might at times be a bit obscure in Hogg's novel because Robert changes his morality during the course of the novel. In addition there are other moralities than Robert's which are represented in the novel. In her article on morality in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* Meredith Evans examines how law and morality are mixed together in the novel, and how this creates problems for Robert and the other characters. As I have pointed out earlier, there seems to be a division in the novel as the different parts of it might be seen to represent different things. Evans also takes notice of this division when it comes to the way law and morality are presented in the novel. Evans notes that while Robert confesses and reenacts "the scene of morality", the editor "is concerned

with presenting, assessing, and evaluating” (201). Penny Fielding also notes that “Looking outwards from doctrinal to general principles of law, the novel traces a violent collision between two forms of compulsion; a modern, legal, civic, order versus a religious conviction that takes no heed of historical variations” (138). I will argue that not only the novel, but Robert as well, is torn between the different forms.

According to Evans the division and conflict between law and morality in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is dramatized through Robert Wringhim (199-200). Evans states that “by evincing a fanatical commitment to a perceived moral standing that overrides his legal personhood”, Robert “forces the collision of law and morality” (201). In most people belonging to a society and who are living under its universal laws one would expect to find that their personal morality would have a lot of in common with society’s laws. Otherwise it would not be difficult to imagine that the laws of society, along with the governing organ, would lose legitimacy and chaos might reign. In the beginning of the novel Robert has not yet created his own morality, and he is able to function in society. It is not until Robert is told that he is predestined and pre-elected by God to go to heaven that he starts molding his own moral laws with the help of Gil Martin. As the novel progresses Robert gradually forms his own morality and in this way moves further away from society and its laws. Because the laws of the government and Robert’s moral laws differ at so many points Robert finds himself having to choose between which he should follow. As Evans points out, for a fanatic such as Robert “things punishable by law may nevertheless be morally permitted and this, he argues, is permission enough” (199). Robert has the choice between staying true to his personal morality and become a criminal in the eyes of the law, or keeping to the laws of society and fight against his own, personal beliefs.

In the beginning of Hogg’s novel Robert’s morality might be viewed as a result of his reverend father’s heretical religious practice. Still, this morality seems to be closely connected to *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. However, Robert moves away from the official doctrine as his morality and religious ideas change. One might wonder how Robert creates his own moral ideas and where he gets them from. Evans observes that “the sinner is justified not by God but by himself” (208). While the institutions and characters in *The Italian* become powerful because of their connection to the Roman Catholic Church, the power which Robert has in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is imagined. While both Schedoni and Robert might be seen to self-justify, only Schedoni actively uses his connection to the Roman Catholic Church in order to achieve his goals. In Hogg’s novel it is not Robert, but Gil Martin who uses the religious doctrines as a tool to achieve his goals as he convinces

Robert of the correctness of his religious assumptions, as well as reinforces and stretches Robert's beliefs. Still, Robert's ideas about justification do enable him to do what he thinks is right. Therefore, Robert might be seen to empower himself. With the help of Gil Martin and the promise Robert receives of eternal life, Robert creates his own moral code where he alone decides what is right and what is wrong. Although Robert is aware of the crimes and the sins he is committing both according to the law and the Calvinistic principles, he believes that because he is justified they cannot be wrong. Because Robert justifies his own actions through the morality he has created for himself, he can do no wrong morally.

I have shown earlier that Robert's personal and extreme form of religion differs from the official doctrines of Calvinism in many ways. Still, the foundation of Robert's morality might be found in the religious doctrines. However, Robert has changed the rules so much that they are almost not recognizable. Moreover, they seem to be in direct conflict with what is considered the rules of God by Calvinists at many points. Robert's morality is closely connected to predestination and unconditional election, and it is because of his imagined condition as a predestined human being that he is able to carry out his actions:

In this desponding state, I sat myself down on a stone, and bethought me of the rashness of my undertaking. I tried to ascertain, to my own satisfaction, whether or not I really had been commissioned of God to perpetrate these crimes in His behalf, for, in the eyes and by the laws of men, they were great and crying transgressions. (Hogg 119)

Robert clearly seems to be aware of the fact that his religious opinions and morality differ from the laws of society. However, the crimes which he commits are not viewed as such according to his own morality. Robert's personal, internalized laws are not only in conflict with the laws created by the governing order, but also with the shared morality of his community. For Robert, the aspect of pre-election is crucial to his personal morality:

I could not but despise the man in my heart who laid such a stress upon morals, leaving grace out of the question; and viewed it as a deplorable instance of human depravity and self-conceit; but, for all that, I was obliged to accept of his terms, for I had an inward thirst and longing to distinguish myself in the great cause of religion, and I thought, if once I could print my own works, how I would astonish mankind, and confound their self-wisdom and their esteemed morality-blow up the idea of any dependence on good works, and morality, forsooth! (Hogg 165)

Robert would rather be judged by the fact that he believes himself to be pre-elected by God, than by his actions as a member of a community. In the eyes of Robert there is no value in doing deeds which are considered to be good by the majority of those belonging to society. Robert himself commits gruesome deeds in the name of morality, even though he takes little or no pleasure in doing so. However, because Robert believes that he is justified he does not consider his actions to be wrong in any way. Robert not only refuses to believe that the crimes he commits are wrong, but he does not believe that these deeds can be considered to be sins because he thinks he is pre-destined to go to heaven:

I can hardly describe the joy that it gave to my heart to see a wicked creature suffering, for, though he deserved it not for one thing, he richly deserved it for others. This may be by some people accounted a great sin in me; but I deny it, for I did it as a duty, and what a man or boy does for the right will never be put into the sum of his transgressions. (Hogg 84)

While the same actions, if committed by someone else, would have been considered sins according to Robert's morality, Robert's actions are not. This might imply that it is not the deeds in themselves which are important for Robert, but rather the reasons for committing them. As long as Robert believes himself to be justified, he is, according to his own, personal morality, incapable of sinning or doing anything wrong, and he argues that what one does in the name of duty cannot be considered wrong. It is Robert's ideas about duty which lead him to commit murder, even though he does not necessarily want to. Judging from the previous evidence taken from the novel it should be clear that Robert's beliefs about law, morality, crime and sin differ a lot from those of the members of society which surround him. I argue that it is because of this gap between how Robert and how the members of the Scottish society portrayed in the novel relate to law, morality, crime and sin, that Robert finally has to run away.

I have argued that the core of Robert's earthly troubles is that his morality differs too much from the official laws and the overarching morality of men. The young Wringhim is aware of this fact, and he ponders its possible consequences. Robert confronts his fears when he addresses Gil Martin in the novel as he says that he is afraid "that your ideas of retribution are too sanguine, and too arbitrary for the laws of this country. I dispute not that your motives are great and high; but have you debated the consequences, and settled the result?" (Hogg 104). Robert shows that although he might be considered a fanatic, he is perfectly aware that his opinions and his ideas are his own, and as such are not to be expected to be found among

other people in his society. Robert fears that Gil Martin has not thought through his plans, and he is beginning to suspect that their actions might have earthly consequences for him. Gil Martin, on the other hand, is quick to get Robert back on the path of their perceived righteousness as soon as Robert expresses even a hint of doubt. Gil Martin convinces Robert that their actions and plans are morally sound as he answers that “‘I have,’ returned he, ‘and hold myself amenable for the action to the laws of God and of equity; as to the enactments of men, I despise them. Fain would I see the weapon of the Lord of Hosts begin the work of vengeance that awaits it to do!’” (Hogg 104). Gil Martin reminds Robert that he should not be concerned about the consequences he might experience among men. What is important, he states, is the fact that their actions are in harmony with the laws of God. Robert does not perceive that his morality has changed so much that they no longer reflect these laws.

As Robert continues to follow his own morality he eventually gets to experience the consequences of his actions. Robert is afraid of being charged with the crimes he has committed against humanity and society and is ultimately forced to run away. When he is hiding from society Robert reflects that “My state both of body and mind was now truly deplorable. I was hungry, wounded, and lame, an outcast and a vagabond in society; my life sought after with avidity, and all for doing that to which I was predestined by Him who fore-ordains whatever comes to pass” (Hogg 163). Hogg shows his readers that it is difficult to exist or be part of a society if one’s personal morality differs too much from the collective morality of the members of the community and the written laws of man. I have argued that because of this gap Robert is forced to choose between the laws of society and his own morality. As he finally chooses his own morality he is no longer able to be a part of the society he grew up in. Robert finds that it is impossible for him to unite his personal beliefs with those he encounters in society, and he is forced to choose between becoming a criminal and turning into a sinner. Through the story of Robert, Hogg might be seen to show just how dangerous it can be to take one’s religious or moral ideas to an extreme. This is not to say that one cannot differ in opinion from the majority on any points. The problem for Robert is that his differences in opinion are too big, so that he has to choose which set of laws to follow. If there is an overarching or shared morality among the members of the society portrayed in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, then it is closely connected to Calvinistic principles. This collective morality is in turn linked with the formal laws of society. This means that if one’s religious opinions differ from those expressed in the official doctrines of Calvinism, then it is likely that one’s opinions will also differ when it comes to

the formal law. In Robert's case, his religious fanaticism eventually renders him an outcast of society.

While power enables Schedoni and the Inquisition in *The Italian* to commit their gruesome deeds, Robert does not receive any real power from his religious beliefs. Through the power he received as an official connected to the Roman Catholic Church, Schedoni uses religion as a tool to get what he wants. In Hogg's novel it is Gil Martin who uses religion as a tool to get what he wants by altering and molding Robert's religious beliefs. Gil Martin is thus able to turn something which in itself might be considered peaceful and harmonious, into something that supports violence and murder. This might indicate that the novel does not deserve to be labeled anti-Calvinistic. Although Robert goes through a lot of suffering because of his religious ideas, most of the people in his society are unaffected by his fanaticism. Furthermore, there seem to be no problems with basing the morals or laws in a society on Calvinistic principles for most of the inhabitants in the Scottish community. This supports the claim that Hogg's motive was not to criticize Calvinism in itself. However, the story of Robert does highlight the problems which can arise when religion and governing are not kept separate. Hogg's Gothic satire shows that there is a connection between being in conflict with the religious ideas of society, and in disagreeing with the ideas of governing. This lack of separation between different spheres is also evident in the *The Scarlet Letter*, which I will examine at shortly. In contrast to Hogg's treatment of his protagonist, I will argue that Hawthorne treatment of his main character, Hester Prynne, is sympathetic. The fact that the reader of *The Scarlet Letter* is invited to sympathize with Hester makes the criticism of the connection between religion and society in the novel more clear, whereas in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* this aspect is rendered more obscure because the reader is expected to be disgusted by Robert and his actions.

4 *The Scarlet Letter*

Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, was first published in 1850. Puritanism is central in this American, Gothic novel, and I will argue that although neither Hawthorne nor his writings can be labeled anti-religion or anti-Puritanism, the novel does show that Hawthorne had some problems with Puritanism. Specifically, I will argue that Hawthorne had problems with how strongly the religion influenced the governing of the society depicted in the novel.

In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne tells the story of Hester Prynne, a young woman who is forced to always wear the letter A on her outer garment after committing an act of adultery. In addition, Hester's sin also provides her with a child. The letter, made in scarlet cloth, is a constant reminder of Hester's sin or crime. The plot takes place in Boston in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the middle of the seventeenth century from 1642 to 1649. The novel is concerned with the consequences of sinning in a Puritan community, as it shows how Hester and her daughter Pearl survive on the outskirts of the Puritan society. The novel also has some elements to it which makes it resemble a crime novel. As such, the great mystery is the question of who Pearl's father, and Hester's secret companion, is. Although Hawthorne hints at this person being the Reverend Master Dimmesdale early in the novel, this fact is not revealed to the inhabitants of the Puritan settlement until the end of *The Scarlet Letter*. Since the novel can be considered a classic, it has been read, criticized and analyzed more times than one can count. Critics often disagree when it comes to Hawthorne's writing and what his opinion concerning Puritanism really is. In addition to using a lot of symbolism in his texts Hawthorne seems to at times condemn and at other times to support his character's choices. This makes it difficult to trace Hawthorne's own opinions, as he can often be seen to be very ambiguous.

In *The Scarlet Letter* religion, and specifically Puritanism, is central. I will examine how Hawthorne's representation of Puritanism fits in with the Gothic genre, and argue that while the novel cannot be said to be anti-Puritanism, Hawthorne did have some concerns about this denomination of Christianity. In addition, I will explore in detail how religion affects the society portrayed in the novel. The society is strongly influenced by Puritanism in many aspects. For example, the Puritan society fails to distinguish between sin and crime, and law and religion. As was the case with the previous two novels I have reviewed, what seems to be lacking in *The Scarlet Letter* is a separation between the religious and the judicial sphere, as well as with the public and the private. I will argue that this causes most of the problems

which Hester and the Reverend Master Dimmesdale encounter. I will also focus on how the individual, for the most part Hester, is treated in a society which is so strongly influenced by religion. In addition to exploring the character of Hester in some detail, those of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, the real villain in the story, will be central in this chapter. First I will begin by examining briefly *The Scarlet Letter* as a representative of American Gothic and explore how Hawthorne's use of supernatural elements ties in with Puritanism.

4.1 American Gothic and *The Scarlet Letter*

In the beginning of American Gothic writing authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe were central. The popularity of the Gothic genre increased from the middle of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century. Charles Brockden Brown, who is often considered to be the first professional, American author, was the first to modify the conventions present in English Gothic to an American culture. His novel from 1798, *Wieland; or the Transformation*, was influenced by an incident which took place in New York almost two decades earlier where a religious farmer murdered his wife and his children because of religious "voices" in his head (Savoy 171-2). Brockden Brown began his writing not long after the works of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis were published in England. In contrast to these writers Brockden Brown lacked a rich national history on which he could draw upon in his writing. Furthermore, he had no legitimate reason for setting his American tale in a far-away-country, such as Catholic Italy or France. The fact that America was still in its infancy as a nation at the time he was writing proved to be challenging as it was difficult to fully adopt the tropes of the Gothic genre to "American realities" (Savoy 174).

An appropriate historical context was eventually discovered by Hawthorne, who looked to America's colonial past. In particular, Hawthorne focused on the old Puritan community in New England. As Eric Savoy observes, "His novels work at the intersection of history and autobiography to demonstrate both a present indicative of the past and a meshing of the author's subjectivity with ancestral evil" (176-7). Hawthorne replaces the use of Catholicism and exotic countries with Puritanism and colonial New England. Savoy has noted the irony of a newly founded country such as America concerning itself with the haunting history which its people had tried to leave behind. The haunting role of history is central in Gothic writing, and the American Gothic is no exception.

Although American Gothic shares a lot of common ground with the English and the Scottish Gothic, it has some particular features which separate it from the other strains of Gothic literature. American Gothic is not merely an adaptation of the English Gothic with its

formulaic plot. Above all, the American Gothic is innovative with its “strange tropes, figures , and rhetorical techniques, so strikingly central in American Gothic narratives, that express a profound anxiety about historical crimes and perverse human desires that cast their shadow over what many would like to be the sunny American republic” (Savoy 168). This is evident in *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne uses different tropes and figures in his writing which sets him out from other authors. His novel is filled with symbolism and ambiguous statements regarding the country’s history. Hawthorne does not paint an idyllic picture of the Puritan past, but presents it as a stern community. There is nothing “sunny” about Hawthorne’s description of the Puritans as people in “sad-coloured garments” (Hawthorne 35). In “The Custom-House”, the somewhat autobiographical introduction leading up to the story of Hester and the scarlet letter, Hawthorne feels that he himself is in some ways haunted by his Puritan ancestors. Among other things he believes that they would disapprove of his occupation as a writer as he imagines them discussing his profession:

’What is he?’ murmurs one grey shadow of my forefathers to the other. ‘A writer of story-books! What kind of business in life – what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation – may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!’ Such are the compliments bandied between my great-grandsires and myself, across the gulf of time! (Hawthorne 8)

While Hawthorne seems to agree with and look up to his forefathers here and in many other places throughout the novel, the overall picture painted of his Puritan heritage is somewhat ambiguous. This is evident through statements such as “he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil” (Hawthorne 7). This might indicate that while Hawthorne seemed to admire the strict ways of his Puritan ancestors, he did find some fault with their way of living. It shows that Hawthorne was balanced in his view of his Puritan ancestors, as he recognized their faults as well as their strengths. I will suggest that although Hawthorne agreed with many points of Puritanism, he did find the religion and the inhabitants of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to be too stern, and that he felt that there should have been room for forgiveness or at least sympathy among the Puritans.

As is the case with *The Italian* and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* the plot of Hawthorne’s novel is set in the past. Whereas in *The Italian* what is important is the contrast between Italy and England, it is the relationship between the past and the present which is central in both *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and *The Scarlet Letter*. This comparison of different times is realized in Hogg’s Gothic

satire by the novel being split into the editor's and the sinner's version. In *The Scarlet Letter* the contrast between the colonial past and Hawthorne's present is also evident through the novel being split into two main parts, as well as through Hawthorne's comments throughout the novel. Hawthorne's introduction can be seen to function as a bridge between the past and the present, or between fact and fiction. This division of the past and the present is also connected to the trope of the "recovered manuscript". In "The Custom-House" Hawthorne describes discovering an ancient manuscript and "a rag of scarlet cloth", which turns out to be "the capital letter A" (Hawthorne 23).

Whereas Radcliffe's and Hogg's novels contain a lot of scenery and buildings which are connected to terror, the buildings presented in *The Scarlet Letter* are not described as horrifying. Although parts of the novel take place within a prison, the building does not seem to be a source of horror. Still, there are buildings, scenery and institutions in *The Scarlet Letter* which play a haunting, if not a horrifying, part. The custom-house is filled with letters and other references to the past, such as the scarlet letter itself. According to Savoy "The Custom-House" is filled with ghosts of the past and "it is surely one of the most deeply emblematic haunted houses in American literature" (177). The haunting role of history is important in *The Scarlet Letter*, and even the newly founded Massachusetts Bay Colony has not managed to escape its history. Early in the first chapter of the novel entitled "The Prison-Door" Hawthorne states that "The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognised it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as a sight of a prison." (35) Hawthorne shows that there are some realities one cannot escape. Even this newly founded religious community must cater to death, crime and sin. The presence of such institutions seems to be inevitable, and the idea of building a utopia seems to be a mere illusion or a dream.

In addition to the haunting role of history *The Scarlet Letter* is filled with other tropes which are important in Gothic writing. Among other things the novel is filled with scenes and elements which might or might not be supernatural. Hawthorne's treatment of such elements is as ambiguous as the rest of his writing and the reader is never really sure what to think about the different instances of possible supernaturalism which are presented throughout the novel. For example, although Hawthorne uses the word "witch" when describing an old woman, Mistress Hibbins, and plants the idea in the mind of the reader of her and her kind riding around on their broomsticks, such scenes are not ever described or witnessed by the characters in the novel. However, the use of the witch as a supernatural creature does tie in

neatly with the history of New England as the Salem Witch Trials were to influence the colony towards the end of the seventeenth century. It was believed at the time that Satan could enter the soul of these women if they permitted it, and consequently he could wield power over them and lead them to tempt others to sin. As a result, 20 women were executed and over 150 were accused of being witches (Boonyaprasop 7). Furthermore, there is a lot of talk about the “the Black Man” in the novel:

‘How he haunts this forest, and carries a book with him – a big, heavy book, with iron clasps; and how this ugly Black Man offers his book and an iron pen to everybody that meets him here among the trees; and that they are to write their names with their own blood; and then he sets his marks on their bosoms! (Hawthorne 139)

This figure of the “Black Man”, which might be seen to be the devil himself, is also never introduced into the novel in his own person. The idea of such a man is closely connected to the Puritan’s ideas of a devil who constantly tries to lure you into temptation or recruit you into his service, as it is hinted at that this “Black Man” has recruited Mistress Hibbins. It is also suggested that the scarlet letter which Hester wears on her bosom directly connects her to this “Black Man”.

Hawthorne also uses language and his literary skills to create this ambiguity or uncertainty towards possible supernatural creatures or incidents in his novel. For example, he often hints at Pearl being more than just human, although he never asserts this as a fact. At one point Hawthorne describes Pearl to be “dancing up and down like a little elf” (73). Furthermore, it is said about Pearl that “It was as if an evil spirit possessed the child, and had just then peeped forth in mockery” (Hawthorne 73). Hawthorne uses phrases such as “like” and “it was as if” when describing Pearl and other creatures which at first glance seem to be supernatural. These literary comparisons might suggest to the reader that there is something mystical or magical about some of the characters present in the novel, but Hawthorne never states this as a fact. Towards the end of the novel Hawthorne writes that “Pearl – the elf-child – the demon offspring, as some people up to that epoch persisted in considering her – became the richest heiress of her day in the New World” (195). Hawthorne does not say that there is anything supernatural when it comes to Pearl. He merely states that some of the inhabitant of the Puritan colony persisted in viewing her as such. Whether or not Pearl is actually a demon offspring or the “Black Man” really roams the forests, or whether or not Mistress Hibbins in reality flies around on her broomstick, such allusions to something supernatural give the novel

an air of mystery which is important in Gothic writing. Moreover, the use of these supernatural creatures also ties in neatly with the traditions and tales connected to Puritanism. The ties between supernaturalism and religion are evident in all three novels I have examined.

4.2 Puritanism and Society in *The Scarlet Letter*

Puritanism plays a central part in the society described by Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*. I am going to examine how Puritanism is portrayed in the novel and how the author himself seems to relate to the religion. Hawthorne's treatment of Puritanism is ambiguous, since he at some points seems to agree with the characteristics of Puritanism as they are presented in the novel, whereas he in other places seems to sympathize with the suffering protagonist. I will show that although Hawthorne seemed to recognize the faults of his Puritan ancestors, he saw them according to their own time. The fact that Hester is somewhat redeemed towards the end of the novel, might for example indicate that Hawthorne felt that the Puritans had been too harsh in their treatment of the sinner. In addition I will examine how religion is connected to the Puritan society. In the Massachusetts Bay Colony no one seems to distinguish between religion and law. Therefore, a sin is viewed and treated as a crime, and the sinner is judged and treated as a criminal. I will review how a sinner is treated by the members of a society which does not seem to distinguish between crime and sin, as well examine how Hawthorne presents sin in the novel. Although Hawthorne cannot be said to promote sinning in *The Scarlet Letter*, he does seem to differentiate between different levels of sinning. The ending of the novel might indicate that Hawthorne felt that some sins were more pardonable than others and that redemption and forgiveness should be possible in a Puritan community. Nevertheless, he seems also to say through the character of Hester, that total redemption is not yet possible. Hawthorne might be seen to suggest, however, that this might not be the case in the future. I will start off by reviewing how critics view Hawthorne's treatment of Puritanism in his writing in general. I will also examine why a Puritan community might have been chosen as the context of *The Scarlet Letter*, and why it functions so well within the Gothic genre. I will argue that the Puritan community was chosen partly because it ties in neatly with the American Gothic genre.

When it comes to the nature of Hawthorne's relationship with Puritanism critics are not in total agreement. According to Barriss Mills scholars do agree that Puritanism indeed is important in Hawthorne's writing. However, he states that while some critics believe that Hawthorne is skeptical and critical in his treatment of the religion, others feel that he puts Puritanism in a positive light. Still others tend to read Hawthorne's work in a more ambiguous

way and therefore argue that the American writer pursued a middle course in his treatment of the Puritans and their religion (Mills 78-9). Ambiguity is a word which is often mentioned in connection with Nathaniel Hawthorne and his writing, and his ambiguous writing makes it difficult for his readers to positively decide whether he felt that the ways of the Puritans should be emulated or criticized. It might be Hawthorne's intention that the reader must decide for him or herself whether or not Hester is too strictly punished and badly treated by her fellow Puritans. Whereas one might conclude by looking at Hester's story that she has been judged and punished too strictly, one might draw the opposite conclusion by looking at other characters who are central in the novel.

What Hawthorne found in the New England colony was an appropriate American context which functioned well within the American Gothic genre. The Puritan past seems to be haunting Hawthorne's present in the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*. The fact that the book is divided into two different parts which represent different epochs in history makes it natural for the reader to compare these times to each other. Hawthorne also invites the reader to compare as he contemplates how his ancestors would view him, and how Hester might have been judged and treated at a later point in history. Elements connected to the history of New England also give the novel a somewhat mystical air which is almost obligatory in order for the novel to be labeled "Gothic". The paths of Puritanism and mystery might be seen to intersect in the novel through the use of mystical figures such as the "Black Man". The image of the devil, lurking around in order to pollute the minds of the Puritans, fits well both within the Gothic genre and the Puritan context. Furthermore, Hawthorne's description of the Puritan colony as a stern and strict community seems to be appropriate in terms of genre.

There seems to be little room for forgiveness and repenting in the Puritan society which is portrayed in *The Scarlet Letter*. This is a contrast to the society and religion which is portrayed in Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, where one of the main ideas connected to Calvinism and justification is that a sinner can be forgiven if he or she repents. Hawthorne, on the other hand, or at least the Puritans which Hawthorne describes in his book, do not seem to subscribe to this Calvinistic idea, even though the five points of Calvinism laid the foundation of the Puritan faith as well (Boonyaprasop 10). None of the sinners presented in *The Scarlet Letter* are ever entirely redeemed, although there is little doubt about whether or not they repent their sins and condemn their own actions. To put it in another way: if Hester had lived in a Calvinistic society where she had been pre-elected to go to heaven, she would surely have done so, even though she committed adultery, because

she repented. In this sense, the Puritan society which is central in *The Scarlet Letter* is stricter and less forgiving than the Calvinistic community presented in Hogg's Scottish Gothic novel.

In 1636 to 1638, just a decade before the plot of *The Scarlet Letter*, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was affected by an antinomian crisis lead by Ann Hutchinson. Hutchinson, like Robert in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, believed that because God alone had the power to select those who were pre-elected to go to heaven, no earthly deeds committed by a single person could change this. This is a contrast to the Puritan belief in which this antinomian idea was rejected. The Puritans believe that the Elect, those who are predestined by God to go to heaven, have to work hard and constantly on their faith and be absolutely devout if they are to achieve salvation. Since Calvinism was the foundation of both cleric and state power in the colony, Hutchinson was accused of having wronged both church and state. Hutchinson therefore faced trial both because of her religious agitations, and because she threatened the whole Puritan regimen. Ann Hutchinson was therefore banished from the Puritan colony (Boonyaprasop 6-7). The tale of Robert Wringhim seems to echo through the story of Ms. Hutchinson. This makes up the immediate pre-history of *The Scarlet Letter*, and it demonstrates how dangerous it would have been for Hester to voice any concerns she might have had with the Puritan faith. What is important for all three novels examined in this dissertation is the connection between society and religion, law and religion, the individual and religion, and the individual and society. As I have argued and will continue to argue, it is these connections, or the lack of separation between these different spheres, which cause problems for many of the central characters in the three Gothic novels. Furthermore, I argue that the critique of the lack of separation between the spheres by the Gothic authors is often mistaken for anti-religious sentiment.

Puritanism is a central aspect in many of Hawthorne's novels, and in *The Scarlet Letter* it is placed at the heart of the novel. Hawthorne's description of the Puritans and their actions in the novel might make the reader think that he in fact disliked his ancestors and their way of living. However, other factors which I have mentioned and which I will examine shortly might indicate that Hawthorne held his ancestors in great respect. When Hester is being led to suffer her punishment on the scaffold in town, she is guided by the town beadle. Hawthorne writes that "This personage prefigured and presented in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law" (39). The fact that Hawthorne makes the town-beadle into a representative for the Puritans and their way of life might be seen to support the opinions of those who believe that he was critical of the religion and its followers. This is at least a grave way to look at and describe the Puritans, and as such it fits in well with the Gothic genre.

In the crowd Hester's long lost husband also happens to be standing. The newly arrived Chillingworth is greeted and welcomed by one of the other bystanders as he turns to Chillingworth saying "'Truly, friend; and me thinks it must gladden your heart, after your troubles and sojourn in the wilderness,' said the townsman, 'to find yourself, at length in a land where iniquity is searched out, and punished in the sight of rulers and people: as here in our godly New England'" (Hawthorne 46). This might seem like a positive description of the Puritan society in which the godly town is contrasted to the wilderness. However, the irony of this statement becomes evident as the reader starts to sympathize with Hester. Furthermore, while the town is presented as strict and stern, the wilderness is later viewed as sympathetic and kind as Hawthorne states that "Such was the sympathy of Nature – that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, not illuminated by higher truth – with the bliss of these two spirits!"(153). The description of the town as "godly" and nature as "heathen" might indicate that Hawthorne admired the Puritan society. However, this is contrasted by the description of the town as a place "where iniquity is searched out, and punished" and nature as sympathetic and capable of forgiving. The ambiguity and irony present in these statements make it difficult to ascertain what Hawthorne himself actually felt about the Puritans, and one can understand why so many people pursue a middle ground in their reading of *The Scarlet Letter*. However, I argue that whereas on the surface Hawthorne might be seen to support the Puritan way, contradictory statements such as these reveal that he did have problems regarding the strictness of the religion at that time and its strong influence on society. Nonetheless, that is not to say that Hawthorne and his novel are anti-Puritanism.

In the novel Hawthorne uses Pearl to comment upon the youngest generation of Puritans. Hawthorne states in the voice of the Puritan that "Pearl was a born outcast of the infantile world. An imp of evil, emblem and product of sin, she had no right among the christened infants" (70). As an outcast Pearl is able to observe the Puritans in the community:

She saw the children of the settlement of the grassy margin of the street, or at the domestic threshold, disporting themselves in such grim fashion as the Puritanic nurture would permit; playing at going to church, perchance, or at scourging Quakers, or taking scalps in a sham-fight with the Indians, or scaring one another with freaks of imitative witchcraft. (Hawthorne 70)

Hawthorne also states that "the little Puritans" were "of the most intolerable brood that ever lived" (71). Through the eyes of Pearl the reader gets a negative impression of the Puritans. Especially the children, the newest generation of Puritans, are criticized and put in a negative

light by both Pearl and Hawthorne. When playing outside Pearl engages with the objects which surround her and she imagines them to come alive. Hawthorne writes that “The pine-trees, aged, black, and solemn, and flinging groans and other melancholy utterances on the breeze, needed little transformation to figure as Puritan elders: the ugliest weeds of the garden were the children” (71). Hawthorne is relentless in Pearl’s description of the Puritans which surround her. Although the elder Puritans are also described in negative terms, it is the children which Pearl finds to be the worst sorts of Puritans. Although this might be because Pearl herself is a child and views them in contrast to herself and her personality, it might also indicate that Hawthorne felt that this generation was somehow worse than the original settlers of New England.

During the public holiday all the people of the settlement gather in the market place. Hawthorne writes that during these holidays “the Puritans compressed whatever mirth and public joy they deemed allowable to human infirmity; thereby so far dispelling the customary cloud, that, for the space of a single holiday, they appeared scarcely more grave than most other communities at a period of general affliction” (173). This description only goes a little way towards making the Puritans seem as if they too are capable of feeling and showing joy and happiness. Hawthorne debates the actions and the personalities of the Puritans as he writes that “we perhaps exaggerate the grey or sable tinge which undoubtedly characterised the mood and manner of the age. The persons now in the market-place of Boston had not been born to an inheritance of Puritanic gloom” (173). It becomes evident that the strictness and the sternness which is often seen in relation to the Puritans are not necessarily characteristic of the Puritan people, but rather they belong to the age in which they are living. Hawthorne goes on to describe the sunny ways of old England, and how the ancestors of the first settlers knew how to be happy and jolly. Hawthorne concludes by stating that “Their immediate posterity, the generation next to the early emigrants, wore the blackest shade of Puritanism, and so darkened the national visage with it, that all the subsequent years have not sufficed to clear it up. We have yet to learn again the forgotten art of gaiety”(174). Hawthorne does seem to distinguish between the Puritans belonging to different eras, and he seems to be saying that while the first settlers in New England still carried some of the jolliness of old England with them, their immediate ancestors were the gravest of them all. This description fits well with Pearl’s observations of the children in the Puritan community. Still, Hawthorne does say that the grim characteristics of the Puritan code are not necessarily the fault of the Puritans themselves, but might be a consequence of the times they are living in. Hawthorne’s

descriptions of the Puritans are ambiguous and at times somewhat confusing. Although he at some points seems to be admiring their strictness and their faith, he seems to criticize it in other places. Still, there is not enough evidence to suggest that Hawthorne was absolutely anti-Puritanism.

4.3 Law and Religion in *The Scarlet Letter*

As stated earlier the Puritans did not seem to distinguish between law and religion or crime and sin, and this I have suggested is the root of the problems which Hester and Dimmesdale experience in *The Scarlet Letter*. I will examine how sin and crime are viewed in the Puritan society depicted by Hawthorne, as well as review how sinners are treated by the strict, Puritan community. Furthermore, I will investigate how Hawthorne and the characters in his novel seem to feel about the different sins presented in *The Scarlet Letter*. The connection between law and religion in the novel is strong, and it is because of this that the sinners suffer such dire consequences. In chapter two, “The Market-Place”, Hawthorne paints a picture of the Puritan society as a stern and strict community:

In either case, there was very much the same solemnity of demeanour on the part of the spectators as befitted a people among whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused that the mildest and severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful. (37)

Hawthorne shows that the Puritans do not seem to distinguish between law and religion in their society, and that crimes and sins were sought out and the sinner disciplined in front of the whole community. Sinning becomes a part of the public sphere and it becomes an interest of society, just as one would expect that a crime would have been.

In a strict society where sin is equal to crime one cannot expect to find redemption or forgiveness:

Meagre, indeed, and cold, was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for, from such bystanders, at the scaffold. On the other hand, a penalty which, in our days, would infer a degree of mocking infamy and ridicule, might then be invested with almost as stern a dignity as the punishment of death itself. (Hawthorne 37)

Hawthorne points to the unforgiving nature of the Puritans, who seem incapable of feeling and showing sympathy towards the sinner. Although Hester is somewhat redeemed towards the end of the novel there seems to be little or no room for sympathy in this day and age in society, and as mentioned Hester only finds sympathy in nature. One might argue that

Hawthorne seems to believe that Hester is too harshly judged, although at the same time he seems to respect and admire the strictness of the Puritans. It is obvious that things have changed since the time Hester was put on the scaffold. In time the punishment for sinning has been softened. According to Laura Hanft Korokbin, the fact that Hester is only made to wear the letter A on her clothing and stand on the scaffold for a short period of time is ahistorical. She states that during the years depicted in the novel the consequences of committing the act of adultery would have been death (197). Keeping this in mind, one might argue that the judgment Hester receives from the magistrates of the Puritan society is mild. As one of the onlookers in the crowd in the market-place observes, it is with “great mercy and tenderness at heart” that the magistracy of Massachusetts let Hester live. The irony is evident, as Hawthorne paints a picture of Hester’s verdict as terrible and strict as she is made to be “a living sermon against sin, until the ignominious letter be engraved upon her tombstone” (47). Hester is thus not only doomed to suffer the consequences of her sin in her lifetime, but in all eternity as well.

Korokbin observes the strangeness with a novel which is so obsessed with sin, crime and punishment avoiding or erasing the institutions and procedures which would have been present during a public criminal process (197). Instead, she observes, it is the magistrates in *The Scarlet Letter* who are given the power of judgment and the authority to deal with Hester’s crime and sin. In the novel it seems that the word of these men, who are accountable only to themselves and God, is the law (Korokbin 193). This demonstrates the lack of separation between the religious and the judicial sphere as it is presented in *The Scarlet Letter*. Power seems to be given to representatives of Puritanism in the novel, and these people seem unable to distinguish between law and religion, and sin and crime. This blending of spheres causes problems for Hester as she is punished as if she had in some way wronged the Puritan society, when in reality her sin only has consequences for her. Both Hester and Robert in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* discover how difficult it is to exist in a society of which collective beliefs do not match one’s personal beliefs. However, I argue that this is more evident in *The Scarlet Letter* because the reader comes to sympathize with Hester. In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, on the other hand, the reader is not invited by Hogg to sympathize with Robert, but is instead expected to be disgusted by his actions. It is not only the magistrates in *The Scarlet Letter*, but the townspeople as well, who judge. Korokbin observes that because the judgment of the townspeople does not trigger any direct consequences for the sinner, they are free to judge

and re-judge Hester “until the harshness of those early judgments melts into later admiration for her modesty and usefulness” (200).

In the novel the fact that law, religion, sin and crime are all seen to be matters which concern the Puritan society, and the fact that the magistrates are given so much power, causes problems for Hester. Being concerned about the religious welfare of Hester’s child, the magistrates contemplate whether or not they should take away Pearl from her sinful mother. Hawthorne states that it might seem strange to modern readers “that an affair of this kind, which in later days would have been referred to no higher jurisdiction than that of the select men of town, should then have been a question publicly discussed, and on which statesmen of eminence took sides” (75). However, “At that epoch of pristine simplicity”, he explains, “matters of even slighter public interest, and of far less intrinsic weight than the welfare of Hester and her child, were strangely mixed up with the deliberations of legislators and acts of state” (Hawthorne 75). It is this lack of separation between the private and the public sphere which complicates Hester’s and other sinners’ lives. In the novel Hester has to stand up against the Puritan society and its laws in order to keep her child. Leaving her cottage to defend her child, Hester is “Full of scorn” and “so conscious of her own right that it seemed scarcely an unequal match between the public on the one side, and a lonely women, backed by the sympathies of nature, on the other” (Hawthorne 76). Once more, Hawthorne seems to be siding with his protagonist, and yet again the unforgiving public is contrasted to the sympathetic nature, suggesting perhaps that there is something unnatural about the sternness of the Puritan community.

Hester is eventually allowed to keep her child, after she addresses the Governor and the accompanying gentlemen:

‘God gave me the child!’ cried she. ‘He gave her in requital of all things else which ye had taken from me. She is my happiness! – she is my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punished me, too! See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable of being loved, and so endowed with a millionfold the power of retribution for my sin? Ye shall not take her! I will die first!’ (Hawthorne 84)

When Hester states that Pearl herself is the scarlet letter, it becomes clear that taking away Pearl from her mother would be to take away the letter itself. In a way the scarlet letter is superfluous as long as Hester has her daughter to remind her daily of her sin. Still, Hester does not entirely seem to repent, since she feels that it is the magistrates who have taken everything from her, and not God as a consequence of her sinning.

4.4 Sin and *The Scarlet Letter*

The Scarlet Letter is not so much concerned with sin as it is with the consequences of sinning in a Puritan community. Still, sin is central in the novel and the different characters do not seem to relate to their sins in the same way. I will argue that Hawthorne sets up a hierarchy of sin in his novel, and that he shows that the consequences of sinning in a Puritan community can be dire. Furthermore, I will argue that Hawthorne seems to think that the fact that his Puritan ancestors did not have any room for sympathy is negative. I will investigate Hester, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, the three main characters in *The Scarlet Letter*, and examine how Hawthorne views their sins, how they are affected by their sins and how they are treated by society because of them. Barriss Mills argues that there is a gradation of sins present in the novel. According to Mills, Hawthorne seems to be saying that Hester's sin is the mildest, Dimmesdale's is worse than Hester's, and the sins of Chillingworth are the worst kind (94). I will examine how these sinners differ from one another in the novel, and I will start with reviewing Hester.

According to Barriss Mills, Hawthorne feels that Hester is the best of the three sinners in the novel because she wears her shame openly (94). Hester is not able to hide the fact that she committed adultery because she gets pregnant with Pearl. Hester is forced to wear her sin publicly, and when she is standing on the scaffold in the market-place she is struggling to believe that her situation is indeed real as she thinks to herself "Could it be true?" (Hawthorne 44). Hawthorne writes that "She clutched the child so fiercely to her breast, that it sent forth a cry; she turned her eyes downward at the scarlet letter, and even touched it with her finger, to assure herself that the infant and the shame were real. Yes! – these were her realities – all else had vanished!" (44). Hester's past and personality vanishes, and she feels that she is now defined by her sin, at least in the eyes of society. Instead of leaving New England behind Hester stays and endures her penalty. Although Hawthorne points out that Hester did not have many things which tied her to the Puritan colony, "Her sin, her ignominy, were the roots which she struck into the soil" (60). Hester feels that she is not able to leave the place where she had sinned, and she only contemplates leaving once she thinks she could take the companion in her sin, Reverend Dimmesdale, with her.

Eventually Hester learns to survive and she finds her place in society, living "On the outskirts of the town" (Hawthorne 61). Here she sets up house and is able to provide for herself and her child, as well as finding a way to be useful to the society which she is alienated from, while the magistrates of the town continue to keep "an inquisitorial watch

over her” (Hawthorne 61). Although Hester is somewhat redeemed and the scarlet letter changes its meaning as the novel progresses, she is never fully accepted back into society. Towards the end of the novel Hester once more finds herself in the market-place in the midst of the Puritan townspeople. While the market-place is crowded and many people are curious about Hester and the scarlet letter she wears, no one dares to come too close to her. Hawthorne writes that “Unscrupulous as it was, however, it could not bring them nearer than a circuit of several yards. At that distance they accordingly stood, fixed there by the centrifugal force of the repugnance which this mystic symbol inspired” (184). This description might be said to show Hester’s place in society. Although she is deeply involved with it for example through her work at the needle, she is never permitted to become a part of it again.

Because of her pregnancy Hester is unable to hide her sin, and one might wonder what the outcome for Hester would have been if the people of the town were not aware of the fact that she had committed adultery. I would argue that Hester does better both physically and psychologically than her companion in sin both because she is not given the option to hide it, and because she does not feel as gravely about the sin they committed as Dimmesdale does. While Hester’s companion in her sin is unknown to the Puritan society, Hester becomes a living warning against sinning and adultery. Even Hester’s secret companion has to agree that Hester fares better because her sin is not secret:

‘There goes a women,’ resumed Roger Chillingworth, after a pause, ‘who, be her demerits what they may, hath none of that mystery of hidden sinfulness which you seem so grievous to be borne, Is Hester Prynne the less miserable, think you, for the scarlet letter of her breast!’

‘I verily do believe it,’ answered the clergyman. ‘Nevertheless, I cannot answer for her. There was a look of pain in her face which I gladly would have been spared the sight of. But still, methinks, it must needs be better for the sufferer to be free to show his pain, as this poor women Hester is, than to cover it all up in his heart.’ (Hawthorne 100)

According to Barriss Mills Hawthorne thinks that Dimmesdale is a worse sinner than Hester because he hides his sin until the end of the novel and his life (94). Early in *The Scarlet Letter* Hester is asked by the magistrates in the market-place who her companion and the father of the child is. Dimmesdale himself is given the task to try to make her confess and asks her in front of the town “What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him – yea,

compel him, as it were – to add hypocrisy to sin?” (Hawthorne 50). Hester refuses to reveal who Pearl’s father is, and Dimmesdale is too weak to do this himself. Moreover, Dimmesdale might be seen to blame his cowardice in not revealing himself on Hester.

The hypocrisy is evident as the Puritans hold the sinful minister in the highest esteem and almost view him as a saint. Instead of confessing he tortures himself, both body and mind in order to repent:

In Mr Dimmesdale’s secret closet, under lock and key, there was a bloody scourge. Oftentimes, this Protestant and Puritan divine had plied it on his own shoulders, laughing bitterly at himself the while, and smiting so much the more pitilessly because of that bitter laugh. It was his custom, too, as it has been that of many other pious Puritans, to fast – not, however, like them, in order to purify the body, and render it the fitter medium of celestial illumination – but rigorously, and until his knees trembled beneath him, as an act of penance. (Hawthorne 108)

Although Dimmesdale, similarly to Schedoni in *The Italian*, tortures himself until his body gives in and he eventually dies, I argue that he is never truly able to repent. In *The Scarlet Letter* Dimmesdale suffers worse consequences of sinning than Hester does, and he is not strong enough to live with the gap between how he feels about himself and the way the townspeople view him. Towards the end of the novel he regrets not speaking up earlier, as he recognizes that he is the worse sinner for it. When Hester and Dimmesdale once more find themselves together on the scaffold in the market place Dimmesdale says that “I should long ago have thrown off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as they will see me at the judgement-seat. Happy are you, Hester, that wear the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom! Mine burns in secret!” (Hawthorne 144). Although Hester and Dimmesdale have both committed adultery, only Dimmesdale has hidden his sin and is therefore guilty of hypocrisy.

As stated by Nina Baym adultery is only part of the sin committed by Hester and Dimmesdale in the novel:

The two characters had forgotten society, and were thinking only of themselves, their passion, and momentary joy. Yet, in the world of this novel, where the community dominates all life, to forget the claims of society is to sin against it. But the sin has no reference beyond its social dimension, and society has no reference beyond itself. (209)

The fact that Hester and the Reverend Master Dimmesdale forget about their ties to society is what they are punished for in the novel more than the act of adultery. This is closely related to Puritanism as a religion. The Puritans believed that all men were tainted by sin from birth and most of them were destined for hell. In such a society there is little room for forgiveness and sympathy, since an individual's destiny lay in the hands of God alone. Furthermore, in addition to believing in unconditional election, the Puritans thought that they were a group of elect, destined to create an ideal society upon earth and to be redeemed after death and go to heaven (Boonyaprasop 10). The fact that the Puritans saw themselves as a group of elected people shows why it is so critical when a person belonging to this group commits a crime or sins, since this would be seen to affect the whole group. As such, there can be no private life or individuality in a Puritan community. This explains why Hester is treated as she is by the Puritans in the novel, and why Dimmesdale's conscience suffers so much. In the eyes of the Puritan society these people have not only done something wrong according to their own beliefs and therefore damaged their own destinies, but their actions have consequences for the whole community.

In a society which struggles to differentiate between the public and private sphere it proves to be difficult to live with the consequences of angering the public. Although their mistake is considered both a crime and a sin in *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne writes that "this had been a sin of passion, not of principle, nor even purpose" (150). Baym supports this view as she states that "The sexual encounter which forms the *donnée* of *The Scarlet Letter* was an act neither of deliberate moral disobedience nor of conscious social rebellion" (209). It becomes evident when Hester and Dimmesdale meet in the forest that at the time they committed adultery they did not see it as an evil crime or as a sin against society, and that they did not do it to rebel against the Puritan society: "What we did, had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other. Hast thou forgotten it?' 'Hush, Hester!' said Arthur Dimmesdale, rising from the ground. 'No; I have not forgotten!'" (Hawthorne 146). Still, even though their sin has no direct consequences for the public, the Puritans punish Hester while Dimmesdale's conscience punishes him. Although Hawthorne cannot be said to promote adultery in any way, he does point out that Hester and Dimmesdale's sin was not intentional or indeed committed in order to hurt society or any individuals belonging to it.

According to Barriss Mills the worst sinner in *The Scarlet Letter* is not Dimmesdale but Chillingworth as he states that "Chillingworth's revenge has been blacker than the sins of the two lovers" (94). This view also finds support in the novel as Dimmesdale expresses that

“We are not, Hester, the worst of sinners in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man’s revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!” (Hawthorne 146). While Hester and Dimmesdale make what proves to be an unconscious but fatal mistake when they commit adultery, Chillingworth makes a conscious effort to seek out Hester’s partner and punish him. Even though Hester has not heard from her husband for many years, and the townspeople all believed him to be “at the bottom of the sea” Chillingworth feels that he has been wronged by the actions of Dimmesdale (Hawthorne 47). As Chillingworth meets with Hester in the prison he states that “I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine” (Hawthorne 56-7). Chillingworth seems to be driven by pure revenge, and he will not rest until the person he considers to be guilty is found out and punished.

By degrees Chillingworth discovers who Hester’s secret partner is and he makes it his mission to torture him. Whereas Vivaldi only has the threat of torture hanging over him when he is held captive by the Inquisition in *The Italian*, Dimmesdale feels the effects from Chillingworth’s torture on his body. Arguably, Chillingworth uses his skills as a physician to make his enemy suffer, since he lengthens Dimmesdale’s life, and therefore also his torture:

In a word, old Roger Chillingworth was a striking evidence of man’s faculty of transforming himself into a devil, if he will only, for a reasonable space of time, undertake the devil’s office. This truly unhappy person had effected such a transformation by devoting himself for seven years to the constant analysis of a heart full of torture, and deriving enjoyment thence, and adding fuel to those fiery tortures which he analysed and gloated over. (Hawthorne 127)

The work Chillingworth does to bring him closer to revenge is described as the devil’s work. Hawthorne clearly thinks that Chillingworth is a grave sinner indeed, as he chooses to compare him and his work to the devil himself. Not only does Chillingworth torture his victim, but this brings him pleasure. In *The Scarlet Letter* there are many sinners portrayed, but there is only one “Gothic villain”, and this is the old Roger Chillingworth. There is a contrast between the almost accidental fall experienced by Hester and the reverend, and the grotesque search for revenge which Chillingworth takes on. Still, because the Puritans believe that Hester and Dimmesdale are guilty of sinning against the Puritan community they are punished by it. Chillingworth, on the other hand, whose sin does not affect the Puritan

community in this way, does not receive any form of punishment from the Puritan society, although Hawthorne does seem to say that he is a worse sinner than Hester and Dimmesdale.

I have suggested that Hester copes better both physically and psychologically than the reverend after they commit their sin, both because Hester does not have the option to hide it, and because she does not feel as gravely towards their act of adultery as the Reverend Master Dimmesdale does. It seems as if Hawthorne is saying that because Hester wears her shame upon her bosom, she does not have to feel the full weight of her sin on her conscience. Dimmesdale, on the other hand, who hides his past actions, feels the sin weighing heavily on his conscience. Nina Baym has suggested that the characters of Pearl and Chillingworth can be seen as an embodiment of Hester and Dimmesdale's sin. She points out that Pearl has the same connection to Hester, as Chillingworth has to Dimmesdale. In the eyes of Hester her daughter really is the scarlet letter, as she reminds her daily of her sin. Importantly, Baym points out that Pearl and Chillingworth "represent the sin as it is felt and understood by each of the two actors, and since these two feel and perceive very differently about what they have done, the deed assumes a different embodiment in each one's emotional life" (217). Just as Hester wears her shame openly and Dimmesdale keeps his a secret, Pearl follows Hester wherever she goes and reminds her of her sin publicly, while Chillingworth tortures Dimmesdale in secret. Baym states that the clear difference between the little child and the old physician "is one of the sharpest and clearest statements about the hero and heroine" as this shows how they feel about their own sin and how they suffer because of it. She adds to this by saying that while "Hester perceives her deed in the shape of the beautiful child, wild, unmanageable, and unpredictable, who has been created from it; Dimmesdale sees his in the form of the vengeful and embittered husband who has been offended by it" (217).

Towards the end of the novel when Dimmesdale once more finds himself on the scaffold, he perceives that Chillingworth was sent to make him suffer and repent his sins:

'Hush, Hester – hush!' said he, with tremulous solemnity. 'The law we broke! – the sin here so awfully revealed! – let these alone be in thy thoughts! I fear! I fear! It may be, that, when we forgot our God – when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul – it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion. God knows; and He is merciful! He hath proved His mercy, most of all, in my afflictions. By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast! By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat! By bringing me hither, to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the

people! Had either of these agonies been wanting, I had been lost forever! Praised be His name! His will be done! Farewell!’ (Hawthorne 192)

The “burning torture” on Dimmesdale’s breast which is kept at “red-heat” by old Roger Chillingworth functions as his own scarlet letter. Because it is only visible for himself, he has to feel its effect even more than Hester does hers, since she can share hers with the rest of the Puritan society. Dimmesdale also seems to believe that this torture was necessary in order for him to repent and be forgiven by God. Furthermore, this ending of Dimmesdale earthly life seems to show once and for all that escaping the consequences of sinning, especially if it is committed in a place where it is searched out and punished, is impossible, and that Hester and Dimmesdale’s effort to run away together was all in vain.

4.5 Hester and the Scarlet Letter

In addition to having Pearl to remind her daily of her sin, Hester is forced to wear the scarlet letter on her bosom. In the beginning of the novel this letter functions as Hester’s badge of shame, as it reminds her and the Puritans who surround her that she has committed adultery. The scarlet letter changes its meaning as the novel progresses. Korokbin suggests that Hester can be seen as “an Ann Hutchinson of the mind alone” as she states that Hester submits to the Puritan law and the punishment she receives (200). However, I argue that Hester can be seen to rebel against the verdict through her embroidery of the scarlet letter itself. Hester is able to show off her skills at the needle through the scarlet letter as it is “fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom” (Hawthorne 40). When Hester is forced to stand in the market place for three hours, one of the onlookers comments upon the fantastic scarlet letter:

‘She hath good skill at her needle, that’s certain,’ remarked one of her female spectators; ‘but did ever a woman, before this brazen hussy, contrive such a way of showing it? Why, gossips, what is it but to laugh in the faces of our godly magistrates, and make a pride out of what they, worthy gentlemen, meant for punishment?’ (Hawthorne 40).

By embroidering the scarlet letter, her badge of shame, with beautiful golden thread, Hester might be seen to rebel against the verdict and the punishment which the magistrates saw fit to give her. It is also her work at the needle which later connects her to the town, as she makes garments for the population both for happy and grave occasions. As time progresses Hester also manages to change what some of the inhabitants of the town associate with the scarlet

letter. Hawthorne writes that “The letter was the symbol of her calling. Such helpfulness was found in her – so much power to do, and power to sympathise – that many people refused to interpret the scarlet letter A by its original signification. They said it meant Able, so strong was Hester Prynne, with a women’s strength” (120-1).

After Dimmesdale dies Hester leaves the colony and the country with her daughter, but after many years she returns to New England to once again take up “her long-forsaken shame” (Hawthorne 196). The reader might wonder why Hester would choose to return to a place which has given her so much grief, but Hawthorne states that “there was more real life for Hester Prynne here, in New England, than in that unknown region where Pearl had found a home. Here had lain her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be her penitence” (196). Furthermore, Hawthorne writes that as the letter gradually had altered its significance “the scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma which attracted the world’s scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too” (196). Hester once more finds her place in society, this time as a counselor or friend to wretched women who sought her advice and sympathy:

Hester comforted and counselled them, as best she might. She assured them, too, of her firm belief that, at some brighter period, when the world would have grown ripe for it, in Heaven’s own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and women on a surer ground of mutual happiness. (Hawthorne 197)

This ending indicates that a better time is yet to come, where iniquity is not searched out and punished in front of the whole town, and where the public and private spheres are separated from each other, and where forgiveness and sympathy are possible. Hester has undoubtedly worked towards this “new truth”, but Hawthorne seems to say that the age is not ready for such changes yet. The connection between the private and the public, and between law and religion in the Puritan community is still too strong and will stay strong until the time will be ripe for change. Until that time comes, crime will be equal to sin, and to commit a sin in private will still mean angering or sinning against the Puritan public.

5 Conclusion

In this dissertation I have examined how three individual Gothic authors treat three different denominations of Christianity in their novels. I have investigated why religion is used as a central theme in the novels, and how religion as a theme ties in with the Gothic genre and the different sub-genres. The focus has been on examining whether or not the Gothic genre deserves its reputation as a fundamentally anti-religious genre, or whether it has been too harshly judged when it comes to its treatment of religion. The link between the different religions and the societies depicted in the novel has been analyzed in order to show that the lack of separation between different spheres can be seen to cause problems for the characters in the novels, and that it is this lack of separation which is often criticized in the novels, rather than the religions in themselves. I have suggested that the critique of the connection between religion and society in the novels has contributed to giving the Gothic genre a reputation for being fundamentally anti-religion, or at least hostile towards religion.

Religion is an important theme in the three Gothic novels examined in this dissertation, and I have argued that religion is chosen as a theme by the authors of these novels partly because it ties in neatly with various tropes within the Gothic genre. Religion is used as a tool to create mystery in the novels, and the use of various religions as a theme makes a selection of literary devices available to the authors, such as buildings, persons and mystical creatures connected to a specific religion, as well as religious doctrines. The use of supernatural creatures can also be seen to intersect with the use of religion in the three Gothic novels. In Radcliffe's *The Italian* I argued that Catholic Italy was chosen as a context for the English, Protestant authoress as an excuse to play on superstition and use seemingly supernatural elements in her writing. In James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* the use of tradition in the Scottish Gothic ties in neatly with the use of religion. This is for example evident through the representation of the devil in the novel. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* the representation of the Puritan society as a strict, stern and unsympathetic community ties in neatly with the Gothic genre. Furthermore, the tales about the "Black Man" not only fit in well with the history of the Massachusetts Bay colony, but with the history of Puritanism as well.

I have argued that the three Gothic novels I have examined in this dissertation do not deserve to be labeled fundamentally anti-religion, and I have suggested that if these novels can be seen as representatives of different sub-genres, the English, the Scottish and the American Gothic, then this might indicate that the Gothic genre has been too harshly judged

when it comes to its treatment of religion. In the chapter on *The Italian* I examined the monk Schedoni as a character, and I argued that he cannot be seen as a representative of Catholicism because he uses the role of monk more as a disguise than as a uniform of religion. Radcliffe also expresses some ambiguity about the monk in the novel, and I have suggested that even if Schedoni could be seen to represent Roman Catholicism, this would not necessarily render the novel anti-Catholic. Radcliffe also presents two different takes on Catholicism through her descriptions of two separate convents in *The Italian*. The positive portrayal of the governess of the Santa della Pièta as well as the convent does not support the idea of *The Italian* being fundamentally anti-religion. There is even some ambiguity expressed towards the Inquisition in the novel, since even in this terrifying institution there are some positive features present, such as the Vicar General. Although there is some critique of the Roman Catholic Church present in *The Italian*, I have argued that the novel and its authoress do not deserve to be labeled fundamentally anti-Catholic.

In the chapter on *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* I have argued that the novel cannot be labeled anti-Calvinistic because of the perversion of religion which is evident in the novel. Robert cannot be seen as a representative of Calvinism because his religious ideas differed too much from and at times directly contrast those represented in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, which is the official doctrine in the Scottish society depicted by Hogg. The novel can also be seen to function more as a cautionary tale where its readers are warned against taking religious practice to an extreme. This does not mean that Hogg warns his readers about religious practice all together. I have argued that Hogg felt that Calvinism as it is practiced by his protagonist should not be emulated, and that this is evident through Robert being labeled a “religious fanatic” in the novel.

In the chapter on *The Scarlet Letter* I have argued that Hawthorne expresses too much ambiguity in the novel for it to be labeled anti-Puritanism. This is for example evident through statements such as “he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil” (Hawthorne 7). Hawthorne seems to at times respect and admire the rules and moral of his ancestors, whereas he at other times seems to sympathize with his suffering protagonist. Hawthorne can be seen to voice some concerns regarding the strictness and the lack of sympathy present amongst the Puritans in his novel, and it seems that he wants to opens up for the possibility of forgiveness, repentance and sympathy in the Puritan society.

Although the different religions might be said to be scrutinized in the novels, I have argued that the religions in themselves are not criticized, at least not enough in order for the novels to be labeled fundamentally anti-religion. Furthermore, I have argued that it is the ties

between religion and society in the novels which are under critique. In *The Italian* there is a lack of separation between church and state which is criticized by Radcliffe. This is evident in for example the opening chapter, where the Italian and the English culture, religion and mode of government are being compared to each other. The lack of separation between church and state and religion and society enables Schedoni to use religion as a tool and persecute Vivaldi and Ellena. It is because Schedoni receives power through his position as a Catholic monk that he is able to do this. In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* there also seems to be lacking a separation between religion and society, as the morals and laws of Scottish society seem to be heavily influenced by the Calvinistic doctrines. Robert is unable to exist peacefully in this society because his religious ideas differ too much from the ideas expressed in the laws of society, and he is rendered an outsider because of this. In *The Scarlet Letter* no one seems to distinguish between law and religion, and because of this the protagonist is unable to co-exist harmoniously with the Puritans. There seems to be lacking a separation between the private and the public sphere, and Hester is treated as if she has committed a gruesome crime against the Puritan society as well as a sin in the eyes of God.

Judging from the way religion is presented and used in the three Gothic novels I have examined in this dissertation, I will conclude that they have in fact been too harshly judged, and that they do not deserve to be labeled anti-religion. I have shown that there is at least too much ambiguity expressed towards religion in these novels for them to deserve this label. This, I argue, might indicate that the Gothic genre as a whole might have been too harshly judged when it comes to its treatment of religion. At least it might suggest that the ways in which the genre presents various religions deserves to be investigated further. I have shown that it is the ties between religion and society in the novels which are being criticized by the different authors. It might be valuable for the understanding of the Gothic genre's treatment of religion to investigate how the ties between religion and society are treated by authors of other Gothic novels as well.

Religion is a central theme in *The Italian*, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and *The Scarlet Letter*, and the societies portrayed in the novels are heavily influenced by various denominations of Christianity. The lack of separation between church and state, and religion and society causes problems for many of the characters in these novels. This connection between religion and governing is criticized by the authors at several points in their novels, and this critique is often mistaken for anti-religious sentiment by readers, and it has contributed to these Gothic novels being labeled hostile in its treatment of religion.

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