

# Intertextuality in James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and James Robertson's *The Testament of Gideon Mack*

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## 1 Introduction

What can this work be? Can it be anything other than the ramblings of a mind terminally damaged by a cheerless upbringing, an unfulfilled marriage, unrequited love, religious confusion and the stress and injury of a near-fatal accident? Who would dare, in this day and age, to suggest that Gideon Mack was, as he maintained to the end, telling the truth? (361)

This is what the fictitious publisher of James Robertson's novel *The Testament of Gideon Mack* (2006)<sup>1</sup> asks the reader in the opening lines of his epilogue which frames the strange account of the protagonist's life: Gideon Mack, a 'son of the manse' and Church of Scotland minister, meets the Devil after an almost fatal accident at a dangerous and mysterious river gorge. Indulging in his company, he more and more retreats from the people around him, ends up in a deplorable

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<sup>1</sup> The *Testament* was first published by Hamish Hamilton in 2006. In this thesis the 2007 Penguin edition is used.

outcast state and eventually sees suicide as the only escape from the world. This is merely one of the themes explored in Robertson's novel that remind of James Hogg's *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), in which the 'sinner' Robert Wringham is haunted by the devil-figure Gil-Martin until he finally commits suicide.

James Hogg's 'classic' novel has been discussed very extensively.<sup>2</sup> Except for a few internet articles and a brief discussion in Gillian Hughes' article on the after-lives of the *Confessions* (143f.) there has not been much criticism on James Robertson's *Testament*.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to the discussion of Robertson's work. In my thesis I will analyse and compare these two Scottish novels in order to point out how James Robertson's contemporary adaptation of Hogg's *Confessions* takes up main ideas, narrative techniques and structural features of the original and transfers them into twenty-first century Scotland. Apart from this, I argue that both novels have a very similar purpose: by subverting hierarchical structures in language and questioning the belief in master narratives they call for a multi-layered and diverse representation of Scottish history and culture.

For the analysis of the novels at hand I will use the literary concept of intertextuality, including the poststructuralist theorists Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, who played a major role in the emergence of the concept in general, and Gérard Genette's structuralist systematisation of the concept which can be regarded as a tool for the analysis of intertextual relations in literary texts in particular. After having established this theoretical framework in the first part of my thesis I will then analyse and compare four major aspects in the novels. First of all, I will look at the editorial function in both novels before going on to discuss the narrative strategies that are used by the first-person narrators. Then I will analyse how the use of master narratives for the depiction of history and especially religious history is undermined, pointing out the thematic similarities between the novels. Finally, I will investigate how the novels' Gothic qualities contribute to this challenge of unquestioned belief in master narratives by revealing the limits of 'enlightened reason' to account for supernatural events.

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<sup>2</sup> Penny Fielding (132ff.) gives a very detailed overview of earlier and recent criticism on the *Confessions*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Robertson's own homepage on the *Testament* (<http://www.scotgeog.com/>) and one very useful review by Irvine Welsh ("The Devil in the Gorge").

## 2 The Theoretical Background of Intertextuality

### 2.1 The Historical Development of the Concept: Bakhtin's 'Dialogism'

The term 'intertextuality' was introduced by Julia Kristeva in the middle to late 1960s (Allen 14). As early as in antiquity, texts had referred to other texts as *imitatio veterum* and the practice of literary imitation and influence had persisted throughout almost all subsequent literary epochs until the 1960s, but it was Kristeva who revolutionised theoretical thinking about the relations between texts with her concept of intertextuality (Pfister 1). She introduced the term by explicitly referring back to the Russian literary theorist Mikhail M. Bakhtin and his concept of 'dialogism' (Pfister 1). In her essay *Word, Dialogue and Novel* (1969) and related publications she introduced Bakhtin's work to the French-speaking world and thus made him known in circles outside Eastern Europe (Allen 15). As Kristeva's theory of intertextuality was mainly influenced by Bakhtin, I will point out the central ideas of his concept of dialogism in the following.

Bakhtin first published his works in 1919, but only in the 1960s they were recognised outside Eastern Europe (Worton/Still 15). The starting point of his theory is the question how literature and society are related (Pfister 2). At the core of his political and aesthetic thinking is the assumption that in society, there is an opposition between dialogic forces that promote plurality and critical discourse, and monologic forces that repress plurality and support authority and tradition (Pfister 2). According to Bakhtin, this opposition has a political dimension as it dominates society and it has an aesthetic dimension, as language and art always mirror current discourses of society (Pfister 2). He argues that hierarchically structured societies will try to promote monologic discourse that affirms unity of meaning and the canonical truth. If dialogic principles enter the realm of politics and society, however, these singular truths are questioned and challenged (Pfister 2). Bakhtin also sees this struggle between monologic and dialogic principles in the realm of language and discourse. In this context, he especially criticises Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist approach to language which, from his point of view, undermines the pluralistic nature of language (Allen 16).

One premise of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism is that "all linguistic communication occurs in specific social situations and between specific classes and groups of language-users" (Allen 15). He criticises Saussurean synchronic linguistics which analyses language as closed system and thus, in his opinion, fails to take into account that language is always used in certain contexts (Allen 16). According to Bakhtin, the meaning of an 'utterance', which he regards as the basic unit of linguistic communication, will only be intelligible if the context in which the speaker addresses the addressee is considered (Martinez 431). The use of the word 'utterance' is very significant as it "captures the human-centred and socially specific aspect of language lacking in formalism and Saussurean linguistics" (Allen 17).

What is not included in Saussure's abstract account of language is its social dimension. In their joint work *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1986) Bakhtin and the Russian linguist Volosinov argue that "there is no real moment in time when a synchronic system of language could be constructed" (qtd. in Allen: 18). If this social dimension of language is considered, "no word or utterance [...] is ever neutral" because language always reflects "class, institutional, national and group interest" (Allen 18). Therefore, the real meaning of an utterance and the real intention of the addresser can only be fully understood if certain factors, such as the speaker's political, social, or ideological background, are considered. Furthermore, Bakhtin insists on the diachronic nature of language, as no utterance is singular in meaning and unconnected to previous or future utterances (Allen 19). Instead, all utterances are part of a complex discourse system in which "all language responds to previous utterances and to pre-existent patterns of meaning and evaluation" (Allen 19). As a result, Bakhtin regards all utterances as "dialogical" as "their meaning and logic [are] dependent on what has previously been said and on how they will be received by others" (Allen 19). For Bakhtin, this dialogic nature of language is a constitutive element of all language (Allen 21). Therefore, Bakhtin's point of view, the structuralist presumption that there is unity in meaning of language is an illusion (Worton/Still 15).

According to Bakhtin, there is an ongoing struggle between centrifugal and centripetal, unifying and disunifying forces of language, as the social and interpersonal dimensions of language can either be promoted or repressed (Allen 21-22). While centripetal forces promote one 'official', authoritative language, centrifugal forces celebrate a variety of dialects, sociolects, and idiolects, meanings, approaches and views (Pfister 2). Bakhtin argues that this struggle within society is also reflected in literature. He differentiates between two kinds of literature: On the one hand, he labels poetry as a monologic art form in which writers "artificially strip language of others' intentions" (Worton/Still 15). On the other hand, there is the modern novel which, according to his 1984 work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, has a dialogic character (Allen 22). He sees the novel as the modern inheritor of the carnival tradition. Carnival, most explicitly visible in medieval and Renaissance holidays and feast days, overturns the hierarchical structures of society and questions dominant ideologies of state power (Allen 22). The Early Modern twelfth night festivities, which celebrate servants as kings and nobles as servants, can be regarded as one very prominent example of such feast days where normal social hierarchy was overturned.

Bakhtin argues that the modern dialogic novel has emerged from the monologic genre of poetry (Martinez 437). While, according to Bakhtin, Aristotelian poetics and its successors encouraged and confirmed hierarchical and centralising forces, the modern novel was shaped by revolutionary and popular traditions (Worton/Still 15-16). He especially regards Dostoevsky's novels as the first accomplished pieces of dialogic literature and even calls him the creator of the "pol-

lyphonic novel” (Martinez 437). Polyphony is another key concept which complements that of dialogism. Allen concisely defines this concept with respect to the polyphonic novel:

In the polyphonic novel we find not an objective, authorial voice presenting the relations and dialogues between characters but a world in which all characters, and even the narrator him- or herself, are possessed of their own discursive consciousness. The polyphonic novel presents a world in which no individual discourse can stand objectively above any other discourse; all discourses are interpretations of the world, responses to and calls to other discourses. (23)

Like the carnival which subverts dominant structures of power and authority the polyphonic novel “fights against any view of the world which would valorize one ‘official’ point-of-view, one ideological position [...] above all others” (Allen 24). This concept of polyphony can easily be applied to *The Testament of Gideon Mack*. The novel’s protagonist Gideon Mack, who at the same time is the unreliable narrator of the main plot (cf. chapter 3.2), has a very different world view than the characters that surround him. His insistence on having seen the Devil clashes with the rational approach to the world of most of his friends and the Christian belief of his church members. In the second part of this thesis this conflict will be analysed in more depth. It can already be stressed, however, that *The Testament of Gideon Mack* does not present a hierarchically structured order of world views but a complex mixture of co-existing ideas, which exactly fits the Bakhtinian concept of the polyphonic novel.

Not only a novel as a whole but also one single character, speaker or voice can be dialogic. Like a novel that incorporates different discourses, one single character’s personal discourse can be dialogic, which is what Bakhtin calls ‘double-voiced discourse’ (Allen 24-25). Allen refers to Robert Burns’s poem *A Red, Red Rose* (1794) in order to exemplify that one single lyric voice can be dialogic – or ‘double-voiced’ in Bakhtinian terms. The speaker of the poem uses a mixture of official, high-register literary English (“And I will love thee still, my Dear”) and Scottish dialect (“Till a’ the seas gang dry”) (qtd. in Allen: 26). The words that are used in Burns’s poem are double-voiced as “all of them sound a clash between different ideological, class and literary positions” (Allen 27). In both novels that are analysed in this thesis, the use of dialects plays a crucial role. While the enlightened, English-speaking, rational editors are questioned as reliable sources, marginalised Scots-speaking characters give important insights into the true nature of the related events (cf. chapter 3.1).

Allen stresses the importance of Bakhtin’s concept of double-voiced discourse for the emergence of the theory of intertextuality:

With this notion of double-voiced discourse and its powerful place within the dialogic novel, and for us, in all dialogic texts, we begin to come close

to what must appear a major theory of intertextuality. All utterances depend on or call to other utterances; no utterance itself is singular; all utterances are shot through with other, competing and conflicting voices. (27)

However, Pfister points out that Bakhtin's theory is more "intratextual" than "intertextual" (4-5). He argues that Bakhtin's dialogism above all hints at the dialogic nature of one utterance or one text which is captured in the polyphonic novel which again ideally reflects the multi-layered discourse of the whole historical epoch. According to Pfister (4), the recourse of one text to a pretext does not seem to be in the centre of Bakhtin's work. Nevertheless, Bakhtin's insistence on the interdependency of language can be regarded as a major contribution to the emergence of intertextuality, or, as Allen puts it: "The most crucial aspect of language, from [Bakhtin's] perspective, is that all language responds to previous utterances and to pre-existent patterns of meaning and evaluation, but also promotes and seeks to promote further responses" (Allen 19).

## 2.2 Kristeva's Concept of Intertextuality

The cultural background and theoretical context of 1960s France explains why Kristeva discussed Bakhtin's work at that specific point of time. In the intellectual scene of late 1960s Paris, more and more theorists began to challenge Saussurean linguistics and structuralism in general (Allen 30). A critique of structuralist methodology emerged and traditional literary notions like authorship were questioned (Allen 30-31). Many of the most important theorists of this movement, which was subsequently called poststructuralism, exchanged their ideas in the literary magazine *Tel Quel* (Allen 31). *Tel Quel* was the intellectual forum where its contributors could investigate the role of literature and literary language in society with special emphasis on literature's relation to political and philosophical thought (Allen 2000, 31). The emergence of post-structuralism in this rather philosophical context relates to the very different origins of structuralist and post-structuralist thinking which Peter Barry describes in his *Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*: While structuralism "derives ultimately from linguistics" and believes in "method, system, and reason as being able to establish reliable truths", post-structuralism derives from philosophy, a discipline which tends to question the belief in secure knowledge (61). Among *Tel Quel's* contributors were major poststructuralist thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Philippe Sollers, and Michel Foucault – and so was Julia Kristeva as a very important member of the group (Allen 31).

Kristeva was attracted by the revolutionary potential of Bakhtin's work (Pfister 6). While Bakhtin wrote against the post-revolutionary canonisation of Socialist Realism, she challenged bourgeois ideology that promoted authority and unity in meaning (Pfister 5-6). In her work she attacks notions of stable signification and the belief in scientific and objective truths gathered from linguistic analysis (Allen 31). This belief was at the heart of structuralist semiotics, as Allen points out:

Semiotics in mid-1960s France argued for its own objectivity by employing Saussurean concepts such as *langue* (the system) to stabilize the 'signifieds' it studied. Myths, oral cultural traditions, literary texts, indeed any cultural text, can be scientifically analysed, so structuralist semiotics argued, because at any moment signifiers exist and function within a synchronic system which provides determinable signifieds for those signifiers. (31-32)

From Kristeva's point of view, this semiotic approach ignores three factors: human intentions of utterances, the historical implications and their cultural relations. According to Allen, these are the "hidden spaces within which Kristeva works and from which emerges her theory of intertextuality" (32). Being "at the vanguard" (Allen 33) of the *Tel Quel* movement, she offers and promotes a new kind of semiotics which she calls 'semianalysis' (Allen 34).

In her fundamental essay *Word, Dialogue and Novel* (1969) Kristeva not only discusses Bakhtin's work but also uses his concept of dialogism in order to develop her own theory (Moi 34). She defines intertextuality as a basic feature of all texts: "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double" (qtd. in Moi: 37). This quotation implies two very important ideas. First of all, Kristeva has a very wide notion of 'text', for she sees literary texts as part of the "cultural (or social text)" (Allan 36). This is a very important parallel to Bakhtin's dialogism, which also treats literary texts as part of the larger cultural context. However, Kristeva's definition also extends Bakhtin's theory as she insists that a text is independent from its author and thus produces meaning itself (Martínez 442).

This insistence on the text's own productivity is at the very heart of Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. She regards texts as being always in a "state of production" rather than being fixed entities (Allen 34). Challenging the author's authority over a text, she emphasises the connection between author, reader, and literary analyst. The reader does not simply analyse a text in order to find out the author's one true intention, but becomes an active member in the production of meaning him-/herself: "Author, reader or analyst join a process of continual production, are 'in process/on trial' ("le sujet-en-procès"), over the text" (Allen 34). Pfister calls this "theoretical tool" ("texttheoretischer Hebel") with which Kristeva attempts to dismantle the bourgeois notion of the autonomous subject (8). As soon as the text becomes part of discourse, the connection to its author is literally severed and the text has its own independent productivity ("subjektlose Produktivität") (Pfister 8). As a result, "the subject, as poststructuralists like Kristeva and Barthes are fond of declaring, is lost in writing" (Allen 40). This is why 'intertextuality' replaces 'intersubjectivity' in Kristeva's definition.

If there is a 'process of continual production over a text', there can never be a finished analysis claiming to have pointed out the true meaning of a text. As a result, Kristeva attacks the illusory assumption that texts possess a meaning

unique to themselves (Allen 37). By arguing that texts never reveal absolute truths she points to aspects of language which “escape the dominant tradition of Aristotelian monologism” (Moi 35) and attack “foundations of Western logic” (Allen 43), expressed in Aristotle’s principle of non-contradiction (‘something cannot be A and not-A’). According to Kristeva, the subversive, revolutionary potential of language can be seen in literary texts, which she calls ‘poetic language’:

If we accept Bakhtin’s vision of society as always exhibiting a conflict between monologic and dialogic forces, then the monologic forces will argue for what it takes to be logical (0-1), whilst dialogic forces, for Kristeva ‘poetic language’, will constantly struggle to express the non-logical (0-2). Notions of unquestionable authority and singularity – ‘God, Law, Definition’ – always work on the side of monologic power. (Allen 45)

This idea takes up the Bakhtinian notion of centripetal and centrifugal forces in society. While centripetal forces support dominant ideology by conveying unquestionable truths and repressing plurality, centrifugal forces like poetic language challenge dominant ideology by subverting ‘truths’ and pointing to more diverse perspectives. According to Kristeva, poetic language reveals the “inability of any logical system based on a zero-one sequence (true-false, nothingness-notation)” (qtd. in Allen: 45). As a result, Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality clearly opposes any attempt to promote unity in meaning and the belief in monologic truths:

If intertextuality stands as the ultimate term for the kind of poetic language Kristeva is attempting to describe, then we can see that from its beginning the concept of intertextuality is meant to designate a kind of language which, because of its embodiment of otherness, is against, beyond and resistant to (mono)logic. Such language is disruptive, revolutionary even. Intertextuality encompasses that aspect of literary and other kinds of texts which struggles against and subverts reason, the belief in unity of meaning or of the human subject, and which is therefore subversive to all ideas of the logical and the unquestionable. (Allen 2000, 45)

In the *Testament* and the *Confessions* very similar topics are addressed. In both novels traditional notions like author, reader, and narrator are questioned. Moreover, the belief in religion and historiography as authoritative purveyors of universal truths is challenged. Before focusing on these aspects in the analysis part of this thesis, however, it is first necessary to refer to another theorist of intertextuality whose systematisation of the concept serves as a helpful tool for the analysis of the two novels at hand.

### 2.3 Gérard Genette’s Structuralist Approach to Intertextuality

Bakhtin’s and Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality is a very general approach which treats literary texts as part of the larger cultural text. The structuralist theo-



rists who responded to the poststructuralist ideas of the 1960s had a more “circumscribed” approach to intertextuality (Allan 94). Unlike poststructuralist theorists like Bakhtin and Kristeva, the structuralist approach uses intertextuality as a tool to analyse a closed system of literary texts, which Martinez describes as “begrenztes Verfahren innerliterarischer Sinnbildung” (Martinez 442). Apart from this, there is another basic difference between these two theoretical schools. While poststructuralists use the concept of intertextuality in order to show that there is no stable signification of meaning in literary texts, “structuralists retain a belief in criticism’s ability to locate, describe and thus stabilize a text’s significance” (Allen 97). What distinguishes the structuralist notion of intertextuality from an earlier structuralism à la Saussure is its shift of attention away from the study of a single text, which is analysed as a closed system of decipherable and interpretable “inner structures” (Allen 111), towards the study of a system of texts out of which the single text is constructed (Allen 97).

The French literary theorist and critic Gérard Genette can be regarded as one major contributor to the concept of intertextuality as far as the structuralist approach is concerned. In his three works *The Architext* (1992), *Palimpsests* (1993), and *Paratexts* (1997)<sup>4</sup> Genette develops his theory of transtextuality which Allen defines as “intertextuality from the viewpoint of structuralist poetics” (Allen 98). He also introduces an extensive systematization of transtextuality, subdividing the ways in which texts are related to other texts into five subcategories (Allen 101). As this systematization provides an important tool for my discussion of the *Confessions* and the *Testament*, I will outline the most important ideas of Genette’s transtextuality in the following.

In contrast to the poststructuralist call for plurality, Genette attempts to establish a “viable and stable poetics of theme, genre and mode” on the basis of what he calls “architexts” (Allen 99-100). Architexts can be defined as “basic, unchanging (or at least slowly evolving) building blocks which underpin the entire literary system” (Allen 100). In Aristotelian terms an example of such architextual building blocks would be the generic categorisation of texts into drama, epic and lyric. As already shown above, poststructuralist theorists challenged this monologic representation of literature, regarding traditional Western poetics as one form of repression of plurality. Genette also recognises the problem that such a definition of fixed building blocks fails to take into account the evolving nature of literary categories but he proposes a solution to the problem which is radically different from the poststructuralist one. Instead of rejecting the whole field of traditional poetics he contextualises it by adding a new perspective to it called “transtextuality” (Allen 100). A transtextual approach does not study a single text with the help of fixed literary conventions but takes into account the system of texts out of which the text evolved. Genette’s approach is still a structuralist one as he believes

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<sup>4</sup> These publication dates refer to the first English and German publications of Genette’s works.

in the possibility to gain viable and stable truths from the study of literary texts, but it is a more flexible and contextualised one. He calls this an “open structuralism”, which can be defined as

a poetics which gives up on the idea of establishing a stable, ahistorical, irrefutable map or division of literary elements, but which instead studies the relationship (sometimes fluid, never unchanging) which link the text with the architextual network out of which it produces its meaning (Allen 100).

Genette’s concept of structuralism aims to be “open” but “pragmatic” at the same time (Allen 100). The recognition that the relationship between the text and its architext is never unchanging does not lead him to the conclusion that the text’s meaning is unstable as well. His theory of transtextuality which includes his notion of the architext implies that one can find the text’s meaning if the architext out of which it evolved is considered. This new approach to poetics is the basis for Genette’s systematisation of relations between texts.

In his major work *Palimpsests* (1993) Genette defines transtextuality as “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” (qtd. in Allen: 101). He subdivides transtextuality into five subcategories: the first kind of transtextuality is called intertextuality, representing something different than Kriseva’s use of the term. While in poststructuralism the term ‘intertextuality’ stands for “semiotic processes of cultural and textual signification”, Genette defines it as “a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts” and “the actual presence of one text within another”, meaning that a text can be present in another in the form of quotation, plagiarism and allusion (Allen 101). According to Allen, Genette’s reduction of the term intertextuality reveals the “clash of critical and theoretical motivations” (102) between the poststructuralist and structuralist approach to this field. While poststructuralists analyse “the text’s relation to the entirety of cultural signification”, Genette’s more restricted approach focuses on “the supposedly closed, or at least semi-autonomous field of literature” (Allen 102).

The second kind of transtextuality is called paratextuality. In this very important concept “the paratext [...] marks those elements which lie on the threshold of the text and which help to direct and control the reception of a text and which help to control the reception of the text by its readers” (Allen 103). The paratext again encompasses two minor categories: the peritext, “consisting of elements such as titles, chapter titles, prefaces and notes” and the epitext, “consisting of elements such as interviews, publicity announcements, reviews by and addresses to critics” (Allen 103). Being located on the text’s threshold the paratext occupies “the space which is both inside and outside” of the text (Allen 103). Peritextual elements like titles can be found inside the text, epitextual elements like interviews and reviews are outside the actual text but nevertheless contribute to its meaning. The third subcategory, metatextuality, is concerned with the meta level

of literary discussion. One can speak of a metatextual relation “when a text takes up a relation of ‘commentary’ to another text” (Allen 102). The fourth subcategory is what has already been defined above as architextuality. Genette includes this concept as a subcategory because, according to him, architextual elements like generic, modal, thematic and formal characteristics influence “the reader’s expectations and thus their reception of a work” (Allen 102). For example, an author can indicate that his/her novel follows a certain genre tradition by adding a subtitle (Allen 102). In this case a paratextual element (the subtitle) indicates that the text at hand refers to the architext of literary conventions in a certain way, which shows that the five different types of transtextuality can overlap: “Genette warns his readers, the five types of transtextuality [...] are not ‘separate and absolute categories without any reciprocal contact or overlapping’” (Allen 103).

With respect to my discussion of the two novels at hand Genette’s last subcategory, hypertextuality, is of special importance. He defines it as “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary” (qtd. in Allen: 107). Genette’s use of the word hypotext is similar to what most critics call the ‘inter-text’, both terms referring to “a text which can be definitely located as a major source of signification for a text” (Allen 108). One important aspect of Genette’s theory is that he particularly focuses on forms of literature which are “intentionally inter-textual” and self-consciously refer to other texts (Allen 108). In this context Genette speaks of a “text in the second degree” which implies the idea that the hypertext is a non-original re-writing of a pre-existent hypotext (Allen 108). It is important to note that this is not a mere re-writing in the sense of plagiarism – which would be an intertextual relation – but a re-writing for the purpose of pastiche.<sup>5</sup> Only elements are taken up from an earlier text and these elements have to be recognised by the reader to get the meaning of the new text. Genette explicitly argues that “the meaning of hypertextual works [...] depends upon the reader’s knowledge of the hypotext” (Allen 108-9). This is also what distinguishes hypertextuality from architextuality: an architextual relationship does not imply that a text refers back to a specific hypotext but rather describes a text which imitates certain generic or formal conventions (Allen 108). This is what Martinez calls the difference between “Einzeltextreferenz” and “Systemreferenz” (443).

In general one can say that Genette sticks to a more conventional notion of “author”, “text”, and “reader” (Martinez 442). In his theory he presumes that intertextual relations between two texts are intended by the author, marked in the text, and have to be recognised by the reader (Martinez, 442). Allen (111) highlights the problem that there are some texts which explicitly foreground their hypotexts while others hide their hypotexts or depend upon sources that are no

<sup>5</sup> Pastiche can be defined as “a literary work composed from elements borrowed either from various other writers or from a particular earlier author” (Allen 216).

longer available. Indeed, the degree of intertextual marking can vary from a high degree to a very low or no marking at all.<sup>6</sup> In the case of the two novels which will be discussed in this thesis there is a very high degree of intertextual marking. The analysis part aims to show that the *Testament* explicitly foregrounds the *Confessions* as a major source of influence.

For the discussion of intertextual relations between the *Confessions* (in Genette's terms the hypotext)<sup>7</sup> and the *Testament* (hypertext) I will use both the structuralist approach of Genette and the poststructuralist approach of Bakhtin and Kristeva. On the one hand, I will point out how the *Testament* takes up and transforms the *Confessions* as a hypotext by looking at different areas, such as structural, narrative, thematic and generic similarities. On the other hand, I aim to show that both novels correspond to Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and Kristeva's theory of intertextuality as both novels question unity in meaning, for instance by calling for a multi-layered representation of history, challenging the belief in master narratives and subverting hierarchical structures in language.

### 3 Analysis of Intertextual Relations between the *Testament* and the *Confessions*

#### 3.1 Structural Similarities: the Editorial Function

The first very striking similarity between *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and *The Testament of Gideon Mack* is the novels' structural composition. Both novels are made up of a framing narrative (the editor's narrative/the publisher's prologue and epilogue) and the inner narrative (Robert Wringhim's private memoirs and Gideon Mack's testament). I will first look at the framing narratives in order to analyse their editorial function before focusing on the two first-person narrators. The *Testament* begins with the publisher's prologue which is intended to inform the reader about the circumstances of Gideon Mack's case:

In presenting to the world the following strange narrative, I find it necessary to offer a word of explanation as to its provenance. Being a firm believer in the principle of the division of labour, I do not usually divert myself from the business of publishing books in order to write prologues to them. However, Mr Harry Caithness having declined to provide an introduction – on the grounds, he says, that he has more than cancelled any debt he owed me by (a) sending me a copy of the original manuscript in the first

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion of different degrees of intertextual marking see Broich (31ff.).

<sup>7</sup> Having introduced Genette's theory, I will use the term 'hypotext' to refer to the *Confessions* as the major pre-text of the *Testament* from now on.

place and (b) submitting the report which forms the bulk of the epilogue – I am left with no option but to write this myself. (T 3)<sup>8</sup>

What do we learn about the publisher<sup>9</sup> in his opening words? First of all, he presents himself as a man of business. As a “firm believer” in the principles of modern economy he has a sober, down-to-earth approach to his job as publisher, which is a “business” for him. It is a business which normally does not allow for the time-consuming endeavour of writing prologues. Yet he still writes the prologue declaring to provide the reader with an explanation about the “strange narrative” she/he is about to read. It is also indicated that he is a very systematic and thorough person. Using the numerals „(a)” and „(b)”, he gives the reader an insight into his sources: the copy of Gideon’s hand-written manuscript and the journalist Harry Caithness’s report, which includes Harry’s interviews with the inhabitants of Monimaskit. Right from the start of the prologue the reader is made to believe that the publisher is a trustworthy person who takes his publishing job seriously. The use of different sources is also highlighted by the editor in his opening words of the *Confessions*:

It appears from tradition, as well as some parish registers still extant, that the lands of Dalcastle (or Dalchastel, as it is often spelled) were possessed by a family of the name of Colwan, about one hundred and fifty years ago, and for at least a century previous to that period. [...] I find, that in the year 1687, George Colwan succeeded his uncle of the same name, in the lands of Dalchastle and Balgrennan; and this being all I can gather of the family from history, to tradition I must appeal for the remainder of the motley adventures of that house. (C 3)

For several reasons the reader is tempted to trust the editor as well. First of all, he refers to the “parish registers” in order to show that his narrative is based on historical facts. To give the reader a complete account of events he also refers to “tradition” as an important source of information. Velasco describes the editor’s approach in the following way: “Tradition and documentation are compared for degree of correlation and discrepancy, and hypotheses and conclusions formulated on those grounds are decided (filtered, hierarchised and ordered) on the basis of enlightened ‘reason’” (40-41). Douglas Mack (1999) calls this a seemingly “judicious and even-handed evaluation of the evidence” (2).

By saying “I find, that in the year 1687” (C 3) the editor also stresses that he is actually scrolling over the registers while he is writing his narrative. In the *Testament* a very similar passage can be found: “The photocopied manuscript duly arrived the next day, Tuesday 5th October, 2004. It consisted – consist, in fact, for I

<sup>8</sup> For reasons of clarity I will use the abbreviations “T” (for *Testament*) and “C” (for *Confessions*) where necessary in order to refer to the respective primary text.

<sup>9</sup> By saying “publisher” I refer to the *Testament*, by saying “editor” I refer to the *Confessions*.

have it before me as I compose this – of 310 pages of A4 paper” (T 11). Both, the editor and the publisher, emphasize that they are actually referring to a document which they have in front of them and thus stress their authority. As a result, both opening passages invite the reader to trust the editor/publisher who appears to be reliable, accurate, and thorough in his work.

In the course of the prologue the publisher uses several other strategies to make his account sound trustworthy. First of all, he gives exact dates and place details when he informs the reader about Gideon Mack’s story. He says that “one Monday morning at the start of October 2004” (T 5) he receives a phonecall from his friend, the freelance journalist Harry Caithness, who tells him about Gideon Mack. The reader learns that Gideon has stayed at Mrs Nora MacLean’s B&B near Ben Alder for two nights, “the 15th and sixteenth January to be precise”, and that it is a “cottage in the village of Dalwhinnie, some fifty miles south of Inverness” (6). The publisher continues with his documenting style when he relates how he received Gideon Mack’s manuscript, which “duly arrived the next day, Tuesday 5th October, 2004” (11). When the publisher describes what the manuscript looks like, the reader gets the impression that he is very accurate and thorough:

It consisted – consists, in fact, for I have it before me as I compose this – of 310 pages of A4 paper, numbered, very neatly written for the most part, in black ink, with deletions and additions clearly marked, extra passages inserted at the margins and on the reverse of many sheets, and the whole thing divided into sections headed by Roman numerals. Only towards the end of the document does the handwriting deteriorate, although it is never illegible. (11)

Not only does this quotation reveal the publisher’s accuracy but it also implies a direct intertextual reference to the *Confessions*. The editor finds Robert’s memoirs on his trip to the highlands, which he embarks on together with Mr John Gibson Lockhart in order to see Robert’s corpse. It consists of a printed and a hand-written part. Like Gideon’s “very neatly written” (T 11) testament, the hand-written part of Robert’s memoirs “is in a fine old hand, extremely small and close” (C 209). Apart from the intertextual reference, the publisher’s and the editor’s mentioning of the original manuscripts also has a similar strategic function as their detailed description adds to the overall intention to sound reasonable and convincing.

Furthermore, the publisher makes frequent use of explanatory footnotes, for example when he describes what “Munro-bagging” means: “For those unfamiliar with the term, it is perhaps necessary to explain that a Munro is mountain in Scotland over 3,000 feet in height” (T 18). These footnotes appear again and again; also in Gideon Mack’s testament. The use of explanatory footnotes is just one device the publisher employs to take the reader by the hand. Apart from that, he also summarises information for the reader in order to avoid deviations. For ex-

ample, he only presents the “relevant part of the libel” against Gideon Mack, patronisingly saying that the complex procedures of the Presbyterian court system “need not long detain us” (13-14). For the same reason of brevity he only presents “the relevant part of the entry for Sunday 1st August” (16) from Dr Tanner’s journal, which gives an account of how Dr Tanner meets Gideon Mack near Ben Alder.

In addition to his frequent use of time references, footnotes and summaries, the publisher also presents many different sources and invokes several authorities to make his account sound trustworthy: he refers to his friend, the freelance journalist Harry, whom he presents as a “a first-class reporter” (4); he refers to the press and the media, saying that “there had been quite a bit in the papers at the time” (5); he includes witnesses like Dr Tanner and the other two hikers who saw Gideon Mack near Ben Alder (15ff.); finally, he refers to the police report, the libel from the Presbytery and the Procurator Fiscal’s information. As a result, the publisher’s account seems to be based on a very diverse collection of facts, documents and oral reports.

The editor who opens and closes the *Confessions* uses very similar strategies to make his narrative sound trustworthy. He incorporates several features of the ‘conventional’ editor, representing a kind of authority that a reader “accustomed to the editorial function might be tempted to take at face value” (Campbell 180-1). One very important feature which supports this authority is his eloquent, high-register language. According to the norm of the time, educated (British) English discourse was associated with ‘good’ and reliable characters (Campbell 183). Although there are plenty of examples of the editor’s elegant language, it is particularly interesting to look at the way in which he describes Lady Rabina Colwan and Reverend Wringhim: “Great was the dame’s exultation at the triumph of her beloved pastor over her sinful neighbours” (C 16). In this context Mack 1999 points out that in the first part of the editor’s narrative “the Scott-like editor displays good humour, a reasonable tone, and gentlemanly good sense” (3-4) when he describes the conflict between the Colwans and the Wringhims. With respect to his gentleman-like behaviour it is important to mention that he also takes the reader by the hand. Like the publisher who avoids deviations and summarises information for the reader, the editor makes frequent use of expressions like: “We cannot enter the detail of the events that now occurred, without forestalling a part of the narrative” (41); and: “But this story we cannot enter on at present” (59). By saying “we” instead of “I” he also creates a certain familiarity with the reader.

As a result, the editor and the publisher share many important features: both present themselves as rational, thorough and responsible and thus seem conform to the conventional editorial function. However, in the course of the publisher’s prologue and the editor’s narrative the reader begins to question their infallibility.

In the *Testament* there is an important turning point when the publisher refers to Gideon’s accident at the Black Jaws for the first time: “Before that happened,

however, the Scottish media got hold of the story, but the diverting embellishments of the tabloid press need not concern us here. The facts concerning Gideon Mack were these" (T 12). By distancing himself from the sensationalist yellow press he emphasises that he is a serious publisher who sticks to the facts. His very drastic dismissal of the tabloids reminds of the editor's comment on the Blackwood Magazine towards the end of the *Confessions*: "so often had I been hoaxed by the ingenious fancies displayed in that Magazine, that when this relation met my eye, I did not believe it" (C 202). Both, the publisher and the editor, distance themselves from the sensationalist press, claiming to give a reasonable, objective account of events. In fact, neither of them really meets this task, as will be shown in the following.

After having declared to enlighten the reader about the facts concerning Gideon Mack's accident, the publisher only gives very vague information, which seriously casts doubt on the publisher's omniscience for the first time. His choice of words changes significantly, as his confident, objective language from the beginning is replaced by expressions of doubt and astonishment: "Not only had the water apparently carried him through its unknown course, but, even more amazingly, he was alive, and without a broken bone in his body" (T 12-13). Another aspect which casts doubt on the publisher's omniscience is that he hardly mentions the stone at all. There is only one passage in the prologue where he mentions the stone to his friend Harry Caithness: "The stone in the woods is where it all starts, and from there we move on to the Devil in the cave. Far-fetched, you see. Maybe Mack was just mad and that's all there is to it" (19).

Moreover, several passages reveal that the publisher not only gives vague information but also presents the story from a very biased point of view. For example, he sides with the Kirk when he says that at the gathering in the church hall after his accident Gideon "made declarations of such a scandalous nature that the Monimaskit Kirk Session had no option but to refer the matter to the local Presbytery" (13). In addition to this, he condescendingly refers to the three witnesses (Mr Sean Dobie, Miss Rachel Ammand, Dr Roland Tanner) who contacted the police after having seen Gideon Mack in the area around Ben Alder: "I include these here less in expectation of their being taken seriously by any rational reader than because they are typical of the kind of stories that spring up around almost any unusual death" (15). On the pretence of furnishing further evidence he even includes Dr Tanner's journal entry but rejects it right away: "Dr Tanner might have been a brilliant historian, but he didn't sound to me like a very reliable witness" (18). These quotations show the arrogant attitude of the publisher in this part of the prologue.

The editor shows very similar signs of arrogance, which undermine his seemingly neutral perspective. Mack (1999:3)<sup>10</sup> has pointed out that his sympathies are

<sup>10</sup> The name "Mack" is used for the critic Douglas Mack. The *Testament's* protagonist Gideon Mack is referred to as "Gideon".



clearly in favour of the Colwans. This can be spotted in the text. The editor describes the Laird George senior and George junior in a very positive way: about the Laird he says that “he had hitherto believed that he was living in most cordial terms with the greater part of the inhabitants of the earth, and with the powers above in particular” (C 4). His description of George sounds very similar: “He was a generous and kind-hearted youth; always ready to oblige, and hardly ever dissatisfied with anybody” (17). In contrast to this he sheds a very negative light on Reverend Wringhim and Robert. For example, he dismisses Reverend Wringhim’s “creed” as “arbitrary” and “unyielding” (17) and describes him as “terrier” when referring to his role in Edinburgh politics (19). One very striking example of the editor’s negative depiction of Robert can be found in the context of Robert’s encounter with George on Arthur’s Seat: “From the moment that he heard he was safe, he assumed his former insolence and revengeful looks – and never were they more dreadful than on parting with his brother that morning on top of the hill” (39). It is quite clear what kind of picture the editor tries to convey: by presenting Robert Wringhim as “a fanatical and apparently insane heir of the Covenanters” (Mack 1999: 1), he reinforces the values of enlightened Scotland which he embodies to a great extent.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from his lack of neutrality there are other things which cast doubt on his omniscience. Campbell (179) emphasizes that the reader hardly learns anything about Gil-Martin from the editor. According to him, the reader soon realises “that Gil-Martin is completely uncontrolled by the narrative and functions beyond the Editor’s knowledge” (179). Gil-Martin first appears in Robert’s memoirs,<sup>12</sup> not in the editor’s narrative “where only the most oblique explanation is given of his nature and function” (Campbell 179). When George enquires on Arthur’s Seat how Robert could have known that he was there, the reader is given the first very vague reference to Gil-Martin: „So then, you indeed knew that I was here? ‘I was told so by a friend, but I did not believe him’” (C 38). The editor’s inability to account of Gil-Martin’s role in the course of events can be labelled as “the failure of the omniscient narrator” (Campbell 180).

In this context it is important to come back to the editor’s language again. As outlined above, his educated written language seems to convey a certain kind of reliability. Mack (1999: 4) argues that the questioning of the editor begins with the oral tale of Bell Calvert. From the editor the reader only learns very little about the circumstances of George’s murder. The relevant passage reads: “George stepped out; the door was again bolted [...] the report had spread over the city, that a young gentleman had been slain, on a little washing-green at the side of the North Loch” (C 45). It is Bell Calvert who clarifies the circumstances as she discharges Thomas Drummond who has been suspected of murder:

<sup>11</sup> I will focus on the depiction of religion and history in chapter 3.3.

<sup>12</sup> Robert’s relationship to Gil-Martin will be analysed in detail in chapter 3.4.

This is what I wish you to pay particular attention to. I had only lost sight of Drummond (who had given me his name and address) for the short space of time that we took in running up one pair of short stairs; [...] when I got my eye on him again, he had not crossed the mouth of the next entry, nor proceeded above ten or twelve paces, and, at the same time, I saw the two men coming down the bank on the opposite side of the loch, at about three hundred paces distance [...] it was quite clear that he neither could be one of them, nor have any communication with them. [...] When I looked down at the two strangers, one of them was extremely like Drummond. (62)

As a result, it is the prostitute Bell Calvert, an outcast of society, who informs the reader about the real circumstances of George's murder, while the powerful, 'enlightened' editor fails in his role as omniscient narrator. This reminds of Bakhtin's notion of double-voiced discourse which challenges hierarchical structures in language, stating that no dialect or form of speech can be regarded as superior to any other (cf. chapter 2.1). According to Mack, the contrast between the Editor's written account and Bell Calvert's oral tale is "disturbing, and invites the reader to reconsider the Editor's account of other events" (1999:6). Furthermore, "Bell Calvert's oral tale alerts the reader to the need to distrust and question the Editor" (Mack 1999: 7). This is especially the case if one takes the Editor's use of historical references into account. He names many historical dates in order but they turn out to be contradicting. For example, the editor tells the reader that Robert is born after his brother, "in the course of another year" (C 16), which would be around 1690 (Mack 1999: 17). Robert himself says that in the year 1704 he "had just entered the eighteenth year of my age" (C 99). Garside (202) points out that at the time of the 'famous session' Robert should be fourteen but he himself pretends to be seventeen. Mack justly notes that the reader has to be "fairly alert" (1999:18) to spot these mistakes but, once they are spotted, they reveal the editor's misleading use of historical references in general which "tantalise rather than confirm" (Fielding 132) and warn the reader "to tread carefully in the historical field" which the editor presents (Fielding 135). The same can be noted about the publisher's use of historical references in the *Testament*. At first glance, his explanatory footnotes seem to be helpful for the reader but turn out to contain historical errors on closer inspection. When Gideon talks about and how Archbishop Sharp was "dragged from his coach by nine vengeful Covenanters" (T 168-9), the publisher provides biographical information in his footnote: "Archbishop Sharp (1613-79)" (T 169). According to *The Birlinn Companion to Scottish History* (Donnachie 71), Sharp actually lived from 1618 to 1679, which reveals that the publisher's use of historical references is as 'tantalising' as in the *Confessions*.

Finally, there is another important similarity between the publisher and the editor. In general, the editor can be labelled as a "child of the Scottish Enlightenment" (Mack 1999: 12) who gives a rational scientific account of events. One very

prominent example of the editor's scientific world view is the description of the halo which George sees during his ascension of Arthur's Seat:

He beheld, to his astonishment, a bright halo in the cloud of haze, that rose in a semi-circle over his head like a rainbow. He was struck motionless at the view of the lovely vision; for it so chanced that he had never seen the same appearance before, though common at early morn. But he soon perceived the cause of the phenomenon, and that it proceeded from the rays of the sun from a pure unclouded morning sky striking upon this dense vapour which refracted them. (C 34-35)

The editor demystifies the appearance of the halo right away by giving a scientific explanation. His choice of words reveals that he is deeply entrenched in Enlightenment thinking: for him, a "vision" is nothing supernatural but a "phenomenon" which has a "cause". These causes can be found through observation of nature with the help of inductive principles. Therefore, a halo is nothing mysterious as it is "common at early morn". The subsequent passage represents the self-confident belief of Enlightenment thinkers that there is no limit to scientific discovery:

But the better all the works of nature are understood, the more they will be ever admired. That was a scene that would have entranced the man of science with delight, but which the uninitiated sordid man would have regarded less than the mole rearing up his hill in silence and in darkness. (35)

It is very important to note that this passage marks a drastic change from the gentleman-like narrative voice that takes the reader by the hand to an arrogant and biased tone, as Mack observes: "Even as the Editor conveys the excitement and value of the scientific methods and insights of the Enlightenment, there is a jarring note in his dismissal of 'the uninitiated and sordid man'" (2012: 67).

The publisher shows a very similarly arrogant behaviour, which can be seen in the opening lines of his epilogue:

What can this work be? Can it be anything other than the ramblings of a mind terminally damaged by a cheerless upbringing, an unfulfilled marriage, unrequited love, religious confusion and the stress and injury of a near-fatal accident? Who would dare, in this day and age, to suggest that Gideon Mack was, as he maintained to the end, telling the truth? (T 361)

The opening question "What can this work be?" (361) at the beginning of the publisher's epilogue is a direct quotation from the *Confessions*, appearing at the very same structural position. I have pointed out above that the publisher incorporates many structural and functional features of the editor. One could even argue that the publisher is a modern 'child of the Enlightenment'. For example, he signs his prologue with the words: "Patrick Walker, Edinburgh, June 2005" (T 21). Therefore, he is situated in the Lowlands, in the 'enlightened' city – not in Monimaskit,

in the countryside, where strange and mysterious things happen. Like the editor who claims not to dare “venture a judgement” (C 209) on Robert’s memoirs, he still pretends to present Gideon’s case from a neutral perspective, claiming to “leave every reader to judge it for him or herself” (T 21). However, neither the editor nor the publisher is really able to free himself from his preconceived opinion. Their final judgements – for they in fact do not leave the reader to judge for him or herself – are almost identical: While the editor says that “in this day, and with the present generation, it will not go down, that a man should be daily tempted by the devil, in the semblance of a fellow creature” (C 210), the publisher is convinced that “in this day and age” nobody will dare to claim that Gideon was “telling the truth” (T 361). However, neither of them is able to give a satisfying explanation for what happened to Robert or Gideon, leaving the reader in uncertainty due to their lack of omniscience. As a result, it can be noted for both novels what Campbell suggests with respect to the *Confessions*: “With the realisation that the ‘omniscient’ Editor is as fallible as the mortal characters any critical reading of the book acquires freedom – by denying any empowering or authoritative function to any strand of narrative” (180). As a result, both novels correspond to Bakhtin’s idea that in a polyphonic novel “no individual discourse can stand objectively above any other discourse” (cf. chapter 2.1). In addition, Kristeva’s insistence that in language there cannot be any unity in meaning reverberates in the editor’s/publisher’s unmasking as fallible narrators. Their attempt to give a monologic representation of events turns out to be insufficient.

Having shown how the editor’s/publisher’s authority is undermined and deconstructed I will now focus on the other narrative strategies that are used in both novels, especially the function of Robert and Gideon as unreliable narrators. With respect to the concept of intertextuality it can be noted that the *Testament* takes up the fallible editor as one vital element of the hypotext, the *Confessions*. Moreover, the editor’s/publisher’s fallibility corresponds to Bakhtin’s and Kristeva’s notion that in a polyphonic novel or poetic language in general the promotion of one ‘official’ world view and unity in meaning is challenged.

### 3.2 Narrative Strategies: Gideon Mack and Robert Wringhim – Two ‘Mad Monologists’?

For the discussion of Gideon’s and Robert’s role as first-person narrators it is helpful to use Gaby Allrath’s (62ff.) categorisation of textual indicators for unreliable narration. She defines these categories with special emphasis on the ‘mad monologist’ as a special form of homodiegetic narration.<sup>13</sup> Robert and Gideon can

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<sup>13</sup> Allrath (62) also highlights the problematic nature of the term ‘mad monologist’. Due to the lack of objective criteria it is impossible to judge whether a narrator is really ‘mad’. This problem will also be discussed at the end of this subchapter. For the purpose of detecting general tendencies

both be regarded as homodiegetic narrators as they tell the story from their own personal perspective, giving no more information about other characters than what their actions reveal.<sup>14</sup> It will be shown in the following that both narrators show several signs of unreliability and correspond to Allrath's definition of a mad monologist.

According to Allrath, one very important indicator of unreliable narration is the mad monologist's outcast state: "In ihren Beziehungen zur Außenwelt und in ihrer Kommunikationsfähigkeit mit ihren Mitmenschen erscheinen viele der Protagonisten als gestört; sie werden als einsam und abgekapselt lebend geschildert, fühlen sich als Außenseiter und sehnen sich nach Anerkennung" (62). In order to point Gideon's outcast state it is important to first look at his disturbed emotional state which makes it difficult for him to interact with the people that are important to him. Right at the start of his testament Gideon tells the reader that he has "walked through this world pretending emotions rather than feeling them" (T 27). Gideon's repression of feelings is one central theme of the *Testament* which is underlined by the pervading use of fire imagery. Gideon repeatedly compares his repressed feelings to a fire that burns inside him which he learned to control: "And all the while this fire was burning deep inside me. I kept it battened down, the door of the furnace tightly shut, because that seemed necessary in order to get through life" (28). His inability to express feelings and emotions becomes most evident when Gideon describes his relationship to Jenny during his student years: "I did not love Jenny as I should have: I was not capable of doing so. [...] But if there was a raging passion waiting to be released in me I did not let it out. I kept myself clamped down" (112).

Gideon's disturbed emotional state is mirrored by the description of his childhood as a "son of the manse" (42). The oppressive atmosphere of the manse corresponds to the description of Gideon's repressed feelings: "The manse was a place, overwhelmingly, of silence. [...] What scant noise the three of us made, while outside the world's volume was getting constantly louder!" (49). This contrast between the manse's silence and the roaring world outside reflects Gideon's growing up in an environment which is dominated by rules and repressed emotions. The lack of emotions is especially revealed by his father's distant, biblically-derived language: „The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour"; and, on occasions of supreme achievement, such as when I learned to ride a bicycle, to applaud thunderously with the words, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" (46). Gideon is named after an "Old Testament hero" but only embodies a "pale imitation" (46) of him, an imitation that is unappreciated by his father: "Did my father love me? Was he capable of love at all? I think he loved the idea of a son more than he loved the actuality. He wanted a Gideon, but what he got was Gide-

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of unreliability in the two inner narratives this term will be used despite its problematic connotation.

<sup>14</sup> This definition of homodiegetic narration can be found in Allrath (62).

on Mack” (46). This longing for recognition, classified by Allrath (62) as one important indicator of a mad monologist, characterises Gideon as well. When Gideon finally decides to study Divinity to enter the Kirk he says to his dying father, lying in hospital after his second and fatal stroke: „Dad,’ I said, ‘you were right all along. I’m going to follow in your footsteps. I’m going to be a minister in the Kirk” (127). This can be regarded as a son’s desperate attempt to be accepted by his father at last.

It is not only a lack of emotions which characterises Gideon’s childhood and makes him keep “a lid on his passions” (53) but also a predominance of negative, even frightful feelings towards his father, which is symbolised, for instance, by his description of “the minister’s study”: “It was the nerve-centre of our existence. The gloom seeped out from there and filled our lives” (52). The “gloom” which seeps out from “the minister’s” – his father’s – study highlights the problematic relationship between Gideon and his father which plays a crucial role for the discussion of Gideon’s emotional state.

Gideon describes himself as a “dutiful wee boy growing in the shadow of his father and of the Kirk” (27). The contrast between the “wee boy” and the powerful alliance of his father and the Kirk gives the sense of the authoritative surrounding Gideon grows up in.<sup>15</sup> There is one very important passage, linked by the use of anaphora, in which Gideon describes the family constellation:

The minister: grave, forbidding, slow to anger but fearsome when roused, emotion displayed by a slight reddening of the usually grey upper cheeks; sense of humour not entirely absent but so dry you could have used it for kindling; the lawmaker, the sayer of grace before and after meals, the inculcator of good manners. [...] The minister’s wife: dutiful, timid, destined always to wear beige and browns, or unshocking blues [...] And the son: gangly, nervous, good at schoolwork [...] a lonely boy politely storing up rebellion until it would least inconvenience his parents, probably after they were dead. (44)

This quotation clearly shows that the father, whom Gideon significantly calls “the minister,” dominates the whole family. His mother, like himself, lives in the shadow of her husband. His father is the undisputable “lawmaker”, who has unquestioned authority. This is also revealed by Gideon’s choice of words when talking about how he is “being catechised” (89) by his father. During his religious education at the manse his father decides which topics to talk about and when to have “little diversions” (89). When Gideon is thinking about his study plans he is “summoned” (91) to his father’s study like a servant who pays a dutiful visit to his master. Gideon’s uneasiness about his father turns into actual fear when he is caught in front of the TV set on a Sunday afternoon. In this scene Gideon’s father

<sup>15</sup> In this context one can again refer to Bakhtin and Kristeva. For Gideon, his father and the Kirk are unquestionable authorities which promote one ‘official’ world view.

gets monster-like features which make him appear inhumane and uncanny<sup>16</sup>: Gideon describes how “his huge right hand” grips his neck so that he cries out, how “the blood in his fingers pulse[s] furiously” and he compares his breathing to “that of some monstrous creature in its den” (65). His father’s punishment has a long-lasting effect on Gideon: “To be told by your father that the sight of you offends him is a terrible thing. The contempt in his voice sounded as though it would last forever. Which it has. Here I am, four decades on, and I can still hear it” (66).

As far as Gideon’s outcast state is concerned, it can be noted that in the course of the *Testament* Gideon more and more retreats from the outside world and his fellow human beings. This self-imposed escape is reflected by the language he uses, which changes after his encounter with the Devil: “For the next two days, Friday and Saturday, I stayed shut away from the world while I typed up the recording” (301). From now on, this ‘rhetoric of isolation’ frequently reappears in the further course of the testament: “I had a solitary evening in the manse that Saturday night. I read from the Bible, the Book of Jonah, and then I read a chapter or two of Moby Dick, Captain Ahab and his obsession with the whale” (311). Gideon even begins to enjoy his outcast state, seeing “a great contentment in it” (319). His outcast state reaches its culmination after his speech at Catherine Cragie’s funeral which shocks the whole congregation and leads to his complete isolation: “I made for the manse, my place of refuge, my shelter from the storm, and I got in and I was alone.” (343) It is very significant that the manse, which he used to regard as a place to break out from, now becomes his only refuge. Even the study, which Gideon describes as “gloomy” (52) in the beginning of his testament, now gets a positive connotation as he calls it “his study” where he is “safe from the world” (344). First he goes out “less and less often” (347) then he only goes out at night. As a result, Gideon’s outcast state fits one important criterion for unreliable narration.

In the *Confessions*, Robert’s outcast state is one of the predominant themes as well. At the very beginning of his memoirs Robert says that he “was born an outcast in the world” (C 81) and laments the lack of recognition by his natural father George Colwan who “disclaimed all relation or connection [...] and interest in [him], save what the law compelled him to take” (81). Robert tells the reader that is only salvation is the “faithful minister of the gospel” (81) and his “mother’s early instructor” (82) Reverend Wringhim.<sup>17</sup> In Wringhim’s manse Robert grows up in an environment which sets him apart from the outside world as well. From his “reverend father” (82) he learns to divide his fellow human beings into ‘sinners’ and ‘elect’ and how to discern “good and evil, right and wrong” (82), a kind of religious extremism which he willingly accepts and thrives in, strengthening the

<sup>16</sup> The term ‘uncanny’ will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.4.

<sup>17</sup> According to Mack 1999, it is “strongly hinted” (3) that Reverend Wringhim is Robert’s real father.

desire to set himself apart from “the wicked of his world” (81). According to Dagmar Sims (119), Robert’s outcast state leads to an emotional coldness which is revealed by his use of biblically-derived, impersonal, rarely appropriate language. This coldness can especially be perceived in his condescending attitude towards his mother and his father’s servant John Barnet. During one of the family’s religious discourses Robert corrects his mother, claiming her misinterpretation showed how much she said “these fundamental precepts by rote, and without any consideration” (82). He even admits that he does not have “any great regard for her person” (95). John Barnet, who seriously questions Robert’s behaviour and religious thinking, is addressed by Robert in a similarly condescending way: “Who made thee a judge of the actions or dispositions of the Almighty’s creatures – thou who art a worm, and no man is in sight? How it befits thee to deal out judgements and anathemas!” (84). It is very important to note that it is the Scot-speaking character Barnet who sees through the hypocritical nature of Robert’s religious extremism: “There he goes! sickan sublime and ridiculous sophistry I never heard come out of another mouth but ane” (84). This is just one example of the use of different dialects in the *Confessions* that reminds of Bakhtin’s notion of double-voiced discourse in which the hierarchical structure between an allegedly educated, biblically-derived language and a more original local dialect is subverted.

In the same manner as Gideon’s outcast state aggravates, Robert becomes increasingly isolated in the course of the memoirs. The more Gil-Martin takes possession over him the more he retreats from the outside world. He describes how in “this state of irritation and misery” he is “dragging on an existence, disgusted with all around [him]” (152). Like Gideon, who retreats to his manse, his “shelter from the storm” (I 343), Robert locks himself in his chamber: “So miserable was my life rendered by these continued attacks, that I was often obliged to lock myself up for days together, never seeing any person save my man Samuel Scrape” (160). Finally, Robert describes himself as “an outcast and a vagabond in society” (180). As a result, there is a very close intertextual relation between the description of Gideon’s and Robert’s outcast states.

Apart from the mad monologist’s outcast state, Allrath (65) mentions another important indicator of unreliable narration. As mad monologists incorporate the role of a character who is part of the story as well as the role of the narrator who tells about the experienced events, they tend to retrospectively attribute meaning to certain events, which Allrath calls “retrospektive Sinnstiftung” (65). In the case of Gideon and Robert this tendency plays a very dominant role. They both present themselves as being exposed to an inevitable fate, showing a lack of responsibility for their own actions and decisions.

One very striking example of retrospective construction of meaning in the *Testament* is Gideon’s description of how he becomes a minister in the Church of Scotland despite his oppressive upbringing as a “son of the manse” (I 42). He finally decides to enter the Kirk after having visited his parents together with Jen-



ny during his student years: “I didn’t realise it at the time, but from the moment Jenny and I walked down the brae to the bus-stop I was moving towards a life in the Kirk” (122). This decision marks an important turning point because after his student years, his time of liberation from his oppressive childhood, he decides to return to life in the manse again. It is important to note that he does not present this decision as an act of his own will but as a decision which has been imposed from an outside force. There are other situations in which he presents himself as controlled by an outside force which prevents him from taking action, for example when he is unable to make a decision in the polling booth: “Scotland had been cheated. I was as vociferous in my outrage as the others. I admitted nothing, but I almost came to believe that I’d been duped into spoiling the ballot paper against my will” (123). While writing the testament, Gideon retrospectively connects this event with his choice to enter the Kirk:

Meanwhile I continued on the road to the Kirk and perhaps my moment of humiliating self-denial in the polling-booth made it easier to contemplate that future. If I could be so false-faced when it came to a vote on the future of my country, why should the fact that I didn’t believe in God debar me from the ministry. (123)

His choice of words is significant here, as he “contemplates” his future instead of taking action to change it and he describes himself as “false-faced”, a self-characterisation which reappears at a later stage, when Jenny confronts Gideon with their unhappy marriage. She asks him if he can “be dishonest in one part of your life but not in another” (155). Actually, Jenny is the strong character who sees through Gideon’s false pretences but he does not have the strength to admit it: “I put my arms around her and she began to cry. [...] ‘You haven’t lost me.’ But inside I felt a horrible queasiness, as if she’d found me out” (155).

Robert’s account is especially dominated by his religious interpretations of events. According to Sims, his religious extremism is one of the main indicators for his unreliability (Sims 119). Velasco also stresses Robert’s tendency to interpret his experiences in “mythic archetypes” (46)<sup>18</sup>, which alerts the reader not to take Robert’s account of events at face value. When Robert attacks his brother George during the tennis match, he interprets this “victory” (C 126) as a sign of God’s approval of his deeds: “This was a palpable victory gained over the wicked, and I thereby knew that the hand of the Lord was with me” (126). After he learns from Gil-Martin that George’s friend has been accused of murdering George, he asks in a direct address to the reader: “how could I doubt, after this, that the hand of heaven was aiding and abetting me?” (142). He also repeatedly compares himself to figures from the Bible, for instance by calling himself “a scourge in the hand of

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<sup>18</sup> Robert’s conception of religion will also play an important role in the chapter 3.3.

the Lord; another Jehu, a Cyrus, or a Nebuchadnezzar” (90).<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Robert fails to see his own responsibility, which is indicated by his frequent use of passive constructions, for example when he describes how he murders Mr Blanchard (116: “and at that moment my piece was discharged”) and George (139: “I was compelled to take the rapier, much against my inclination”). Although he even confesses at one point to feel “considerable zeal” for his and Gil-Martin’s mission after “the ice being broke” (118), he still blames his “illustrious friend” for his downfall: “if it had not been the instigations of this illustrious stranger, I should never have presumed to begin so great a work myself” (114). Like Gideon, he presents himself as being exposed to an inevitable fate: “I found myself constantly involved in a labyrinth of deceit, from which it was impossible to extricate myself” (90).

Furthermore, Allrath points out one very significant structural indicator for unreliable narration: “Das wohl wichtigste solcher strukturellen Signale resultiert aus multiperspektivischem Erzählen und besteht in der Kontrastierung von Perspektiven, die nicht synthetisierbar sind“ (73). In this context, the love scene between Gideon and Elsie plays a crucial role. Gideon presents his affair with Elsie as a singular event, claiming that Elsie ends the affair before it actually starts: „‘Come on, Gideon,’ she said, ‘let’s quit while we can’” (T 172). However, his account clearly contradicts what Elsie says to Harry Caithness at the end of the publisher’s epilogue:

But it didn’t just happen once. That was the first time, but we made love all that summer. And for years afterwards I used to go to the manse at different times of the day and we’d make love. So it was an affair all right, it was passionate and intense and secret, it was like stealing fruit from a beautiful garden, but I think right from the start I knew it was doomed, that it would never be anything more than stealing. (382)

As a result, Elsie’s account reveals that Gideon retrospectively alters facts while writing his testament. Furthermore, it invites the reader to look at Gideon’s and Elsie’s relationship from a different perspective. Gideon presents himself as a victim who is rejected by Elsie. However, Elsie’s interview with Harry Caithness casts doubt on his point of view: “He was never going to really love me, whatever he said. I don’t think he ever loved Jenny either. He wasn’t capable of loving her or me or anybody, including himself” (383).

In the *Confessions* there are similar contradictions which cannot be synthesized, especially between Robert’s and Bell Calvert’s account of George’s murder. In the editor’s narrative it is already revealed by Bell Calvert that Robert hides in a dark corner and stabs George from behind (C 50ff.). In Robert’s version of the murder

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Sims: “Der Rekurs auf Figuren der Bibel zur Selbstcharakterisierung bezeugt nicht nur einen totalen Realitätsverlust, [...] sondern er kommt auch einer Verweigerung von Verantwortung gleich“ (120).

scene, he addresses his brother before he fights a “fierce” duel with him in which “the might of heaven” (141) finally prevails. It is indicated right away, however, that Robert’s account is unreliable: “I will not deny, that my own immediate impression of this affair in some degree differed from this statement. But this is precisely as my illustrious friend described it to me afterwards” (142).

Finally, Allrath (71) highlights the mad monologist’s desire to justify him-/herself as a typical sign of unreliable narration. According to her, this desire is particularly expressed by the use of direct addresses to the fictional reader (71). In both novels, the protagonists’ self-justification plays an important role and both have their fictional readers in mind when they write down their confessions. At the beginning of his testament Gideon explains why he wants to write down his story: “Then they can find me neither bad nor mad but absent, permanently absent [...] and the case will be closed. But not quite, for I will have my say – and hence this pen and this paper” (T 37). He does not want his case to be closed but wants to “have his say”, thinking that his written testament might add a new valuable perspective to the case. He thinks that a written account is more appropriate to convey his view of events than his oral declaration at Catherine Cragie’s funeral:

My mistake, if it was a mistake, was that I did not write this testament first, before I spoke. Had I done so, if people could have read this full and honest account rather than heard me announce it amid the din and confusion of that day, then perhaps they might have reacted with more open minds.  
(344)

It is his desire to be understood and not condemned which makes him write the testament. The same desire to “have [one’s] say” can also be observed in Robert’s memoirs: “when my flesh and bones are decayed, and my soul has passed to its everlasting home, then shall the sons of men ponder on the events of my life” (C 97). Like Gideon, who wants his readers to judge his case with “open minds” (T 344), Robert wants the reader to form his/her own opinion: “I shall go on to write such things as I remember, and if any one shall ever take the trouble to read over these confessions, such a one will judge for himself” (C 113). For Gideon and Robert the completion of their testament/confession becomes their only remaining purpose in life. Gideon finishes his last pages, which “contain nothing but the true history of [his] life” (T 357), hoping that “the truth will make its way to the surface of this troubled world and be recognised for what it is by those who have eyes to see” (T 357). Before he leaves “this detested world” (C 197), Robert is equally anxious that his written account remains in its original form: “I will now seal up my little book, and conceal it; and cursed be he who trieth to alter or amend” (C 198).

As a result, both narrators show many signs of unreliability and correspond to Gaby Allrath’s definition of a mad monologist. It is, however, problematic to entirely dismiss their accounts as ‘madness’. Dagmar Sims (119) argues that there

is no doubt that Robert falls victim to his religious delusion and shows signs of a split personality. However, Campbell is more careful in this context, arguing that “Robert, like Gil-Martin, indeed like the Editor, is true up to a point” (185). According to him, the admission of several versions of the plot and the recognition that all the characters have their say is “the key to the novel” (185). Analogous to this idea one can say that although Gideon incorporates many features of an unreliable narrator he cannot be labelled as entirely ‘mad’. The question of madness will also play an important role in the discussion of the two novels’ Gothic qualities. In the next chapter, however, I will first look at the depiction of history and religion. Having pointed out that neither the editor/publisher nor the first-person narrators Robert and Gideon are fully reliable, I will analyse what kind of approach to history and religion this entails.

As far as narrative strategies in general are concerned, there is a very close connection between the two novels and Bakhtin’s and Kristeva’s theoretical framework: the ‘official’ point of view that Gideon and Robert are ‘mad’ – which is especially promoted by the ‘rational’ accounts of the publisher/editor – is undermined. The two mad monologists have their own say in the case, even if their accounts turn out to be unreliable. In addition, it is the minor characters like Elsie Moffat in the *Testament* and the Scot-speaking John Barnet in the *Confessions* who give revealing information about the plot. In Bakhtin’s terms one could argue that both novels promote ‘centrifugal forces’, celebrating a variety of dialects, meanings and views (cf. chapter 2.1). Finally, the analysis of narrative strategies has shown that the two protagonists Gideon and Robert have significant similarities which can be regarded as major intertextual references between the *Testament* and its hypotext.

### 3.3 Deconstructing Master Narratives: The Depiction of History and Religion

The analysis of narrative strategies in the framing narratives and the inner narratives of the *Confessions* and the *Testament* has shown that neither the editor/publisher nor the two first-person narrators are fully reliable. Therefore, the following part of my analysis will focus on the question what the lack of omniscience on the editors’ side and the first-person narrators’ unreliability means for the depiction of history and religion in the two novels. As far as intertextual theory is concerned, I aim to show that there is a very close thematic relationship between the *Testament* and its hypotext. Tracing the connection between the texts and the poststructuralist approach to intertextuality, I will also point out that both novels challenge the belief in religion and historiography as authoritative purveyors of universal truths and thus correspond to Bakhtin’s and Kristeva’s insistence on the dialogic nature of language.

The novels' approach to history is also highly relevant for the discussion of the novels' Gothic qualities. As Duncan points out, one of the defining features of the particular Scottish Gothic tradition is its preoccupation with national history:

The thematic core of Scottish Gothic consists of an association between the *national* and the *uncanny or supernatural*. To put it schematically: Scottish Gothic represents (with greater historical and anthropological specificity than in England) the uncanny recursion of an ancestral identity alienated from modern life. (70)

The *Confessions* figures very prominently in this tradition as “the novel’s Gothic qualities express the structural conditions of Scottish cultural history” (Fielding 133). Furthermore, it can be regarded as one of the “most original versions of Scottish Gothic” (Duncan 77). Garside emphasizes that the *Confessions* is “undeniably an intensely Scottish work, touching on some of the most pivotal events in national history” (200), especially the Revolution Settlement of 1689/90 and the Union between the Scottish and English parliaments in 1707. According to Wright, the Union of Parliaments marked one of “the most significant crises that the eighteenth century brought to Scotland” (73). This historical turning point, including its antecedents and aftermaths, propelled “tales of haunted doubles, disowned sons and ineffectual heroes” as “fictional representations of Scotland’s past” (Wright 73).

Before focusing on these particular Gothic qualities by analysing the role of Gil-Martin in the *Confessions* and the function of the stone and the Devil in the *Testament*, I will first look at how historical events like the Union of Parliaments are reflected in the *Confessions* and how the problematic relationship between Scotland and England is taken up in the *Testament*. In this context it is equally important to consider the religious context of the *Confessions* as its comment on the depiction of Covenanter history is explicitly taken up in the *Testament*.

As indicated above, the *Confessions* covers two “crucial moments in Scottish history” (Garside 200): the Revolution Settlement of 1689/90 and the Union of Parliaments in 1707. Both events had a significant impact on the Scottish nation. With the ascension to the throne of William of Orange after the flight of James II and VII to France in 1688 the centuries-old Stuart dynasty was replaced (Garside 200). King William accepted first the crown of England in 1688 as William the III and then, in 1689, the crown of Scotland, which had dramatic consequences for Scotland: “In Scotland this meant in political terms the triumph of the Whigs over the Royalist party, and in religious terms that of Presbyterianism over Episcopacy” (Garside 200). As far as Scotland’s cultural identity is concerned, the Union of Parliaments in 1707 can be seen as a watershed event:

the 1707 Union of the Parliaments, against the background of which the story [of the *Confessions*] is set, and to a degree the whole preceding century since the Union of the Crowns in 1603, may be said to mark the transition

of Scotland into a situation of split identity where Scottish nationality was no longer exclusively Scottish, nor of course English, and where the word British conveyed less a sense of common identity between these two nationalities than a sense of paradox or unfair English domination. (Velasco 48)

While nationalists regarded the Union as a betrayal of Scottish identity, unionists saw it as “emancipation from backwardness and superstition and the dawn of progress and Enlightenment” (Velasco 48).

In various ways these divisions within Scottish Society are reflected in the *Confessions*. Garside highlights that the birth of George and Robert lie on “either side of the Revolution divide” (200). George, the son of George Colwan senior, is born in 1688, just after the end of the Stuart rule. Robert, probably the son of Reverend Wringhim, is born in 1689 or 1690, when Presbyterianism is dominant (Garside 200). According to Garside, this division of the Colwan household “reflects a profound dualism in Scottish political and religious life” (200). Duncan supports this idea by saying that “the fatal antagonism between the brothers, or stepbrothers [...] mirrors the religious and political divisions of Scottish society” (Duncan 78).

In the *Testament* Scotland’s relationship to England plays a crucial role as well. When Gideon describes the beginning of his student years, this topic is mentioned for the first time: “Scotland was a land of unwashed jeans, rotten beer, heavy industry creaking at the joints and endless arguments about something called devolution, and the United Kingdom as a whole was stumbling towards the tender arms of Margaret Thatcher” (T 104). The question whether Scotland should become independent from England or not dominates the political discussion of Gideon’s student years. Political divisions within society are especially reflected by Gideon’s group of friends, including Jenny, Elsie and John. John is described as “the most nationalistic” (122) among them, regarding the Scottish Assembly as a step towards complete Scottish independence. Although Jenny, Elsie and Gideon are more moderate they still vote – or pretend to vote in Gideon’s case – in favour of the Assembly: “We all felt [...] that the country needed to be better governed, [...] that an inadequate Assembly could be built on and strengthened” (122). However, the result of the referendum is a “resounding *maybe*” (122), leaving the Scottish nation in a state of insecurity about its future. This vague political identity of the Scottish nation as a whole which is expressed by the “resounding *maybe*” is reflected by the characters, in particular by Gideon and John. As pointed out above, Gideon experiences a “moment of humiliating self-denial in the polling booth” (123), not being able to make a choice when he is to vote for or against a devolved Scottish Assembly. John’s rigorous nationalism of his student years dwindles to a bitter mixture of disappointment and indifference as he gets older:

The open-minded nationalism he had espoused in the 1970s seemed to me to have shrivelled into something less wholesome. After years of political frustration Scotland had at least got a Parliament, but when John mentioned it now it was to sneer at its cost and the uselessness of its members. (165)

Gideon even sees a “sense of failure” (165) in John’s attitude. This bitterness is expressed even more drastically at the Wishaw’s dinner party, when John complains: “Nobody feels, nobody cares any more. There are no causes left. Even Scotland doesn’t feel like a cause anybody’s going to get angry about” (219). However, at a later stage in the novel John’s bitterness and Gideon’s indecisiveness are replaced by a certain determination, which – at least on the level of the novel – also represents a transition within Scottish society from a sense of insecurity towards an almost unanimous confident call for a certain degree of political independence from England: „[My mother] came to me in September, not long after Princess Diana was killed and the Scots voted, decisively and overwhelmingly (I among them), for a Parliament in Edinburgh” (233). As a result, Scotland’s role as a nation and its resistance against English domination plays a crucial role in the *Testament* as well.

Apart from this, there is another very important parallel between the two novels. As indicated above, not only political but also religious divisions dominated nineteenth-century Scotland (Duncan 78). In both novels the depiction of religious history plays an important role, as religious divisions are especially reflected by the description of the Covenanters.

For a long time, critics have argued that the *Confessions* is a critique on Calvinism in general. For instance, Dagmar Sims writes about the role of religion in the *Confessions*: “Hogg kritisiert in seinem satirischen Roman mittels Robert Wringhims hysterisch übersteigter Religiosität die lebensfeindlich-starre Haltung der Calvinisten” (121). More recent criticism argues, however, that this interpretation of the novel is too short-sighted to fully understand the complex topic of religion in the novel, as Gribben points out: „[L]iterary critics have generally failed to realise that Hogg’s novel satires a system of theology that was totally unrepresentative of the orthodox Calvinism of any of the Scottish Presbyterian churches” (13). Campbell goes in a similar direction when he emphasizes that Hogg’s novel “satires not religion, not Calvinism, but excess” (190). This kind of excess, which is especially represented by the Wringhims’ religious extremism, can be labelled as “antinomianism”, a religious doctrine which means “opposition to the law” and comprises “the belief that religious salvation comes from divine grace rather than from adherence to the moral law” (Fielding 138). Redekop also points out that “Gil-Martin traps Wringhim in antinomianism, a heresy which assumes a world rigidly plotted by the law of God into sheep and goats” (160). While the novel criticises excess of religion on the one hand, it also criticises a misrepresentation of religious history on the other. As already outlined in chapter 3.1, the editor’s

sympathies are clearly distributed in favour of the Colwan family. Gribben points out that the editor “represents Wringhim’s theology as the doctrine of seventeenth-century Covenanters” (12). However, as the editor turns out to be untrustworthy, his negative depiction of the Covenanters is challenged as well. In this context Mack argues that the *Confessions* can be seen as a critique on Walter Scott’s depiction of history and religion, which is especially evident in Scott’s novel *Old Mortality* (1816): “[It] represents extreme Covenanters as dangerous and deranged fanatics, prototypes of the revolutionaries who had driven the excesses of the Terror in France during the 1790s” (2012: 68). Mack 2012 states that in a time of political and social divisions “Scott used *Old Mortality* to advance the Tory cause by depicting the era of the Covenanters in a way that would serve as a warning against the subversive radicals who were working for revolutionary change in Britain in the 1810s” (2012: 68).

It is important to look at the actual historical context of the Covenanters in order to understand what exactly Hogg criticises in Scott’s representation of Covenanter history. The Covenanters were a seventeenth century militant Presbyterian movement which had originated in the south-west of Scotland (Mack 2012: 68). Its members were strictly against episcopacy and State control of the Church and thus found the results of the Restoration Settlement unacceptable, which was passed after the return of Charles II (1630-85) to the thrones of England and Scotland (Donnachie 272). Among other things, this Settlement included a revival and reinforcement of the episcopal system and the reintroduction of patronage (Doannchie 70). From now on ministers had to obtain presentation from a patron as well as episcopal collation (Donnachie 70). 262 ministers who refused to follow this rule were ‘outed’ and replaced by conformist ministers (Donnachie 70). Nevertheless, many continued to hold service, especially in the southwest of Scotland where they had many supporters (Donnachie 70). In order to stop these secret congregation gatherings troops were sent into these areas, which aggravated the situation and provoked the Pentland Rising (1666), the major armed Covenanter rebellion (Donnachie 71). After ten years of further government measures against the Covenanters the conflict culminated with the murder of Archbishop Sharp (1618-79) in May 1679 (Donnachie 71). He had been an enthusiastic supporter of repressive government measures and therefore his murder “was a signal for a full-scale Covenanter rebellion” (Donnachie 71). It was an armed rebellion against what the Covenanters regarded as arbitrary abuse of royal power by the Stuart monarchs (Mack 2012: 68). The rebellion culminated in the battle at Bothwell Bridge in which the Covenanters were easily defeated (Donnachie 70). This final defeat had disastrous consequences for the remaining Covenanters:

In the course of the 1680s – dubbed the ‘killing time’ by Wodrow – about a hundred Covenanters were executed and perhaps eighty more were cut down by troops in the field. It was an unprecedented volume of repression in a country which had until then largely escaped large-scale show trials and



martyrdoms. [...] it also showed a fatal misreading of the strength of religious extremism. (Lynch 295)

This “fatal misreading” of religious extremism is what Hogg criticises in his novel. By undermining the editor’s authority and his “monopoly of wisdom” (Gribben 17), the one-sided dismissal of Covenanters as dangerous religious fanatics is questioned.

Mack (2012: 93) identifies Scott’s *Old Mortality* as major addressee of Hogg’s critique. The very same novel is alluded to in the *Testament* and there are many other references to Walter Scott, too. The most important one is Gideon’s father’s comment on Scott’s impact on the shaping of the political and historical thought of his time:

‘[Scott] gave a wrong view of history’, my father said. ‘A learned and godly man called Thomas McCrie exposed him when he defamed the Covenanters in *Old Mortality* [...] The Victorians then were like the Americans now. They thought the story of the world was theirs, and that it had been written by authors like Scott. It is the great danger of romance: too many people succumb to it, and forget the one true author. But, as I say, Scott is harmless now.’ (93)

He even says that Scott’s view of history was harmful when he actually wrote his works: “The damage was all done when he first wrote them” (93).

Apart from this, there are important similarities between the Wringhims and some of the characters in the *Testament*. Especially Gideon’s father and Peter Macmurry embody the same kind of rigorous, dogmatic form of religion that the Wringhims represent. Gideon describes how during Sunday service his father talks “about God’s infinite wisdom, how he knew what was best for us all” (44). His understanding of religion does not allow any questioning or freedom of thought and it also includes a fear of authorities. Besides, he cannot accept any deviation from this devout behaviour, which is conveyed when during a service a boy in his congregation challenges the minister’s authority: “All my father’s concentration now focused on that boy. ‘Really?’ he said. ‘Not – even – the tiniest – bit – afraid?’ The words came out like pebbles. There was a long silence: a contest of wills between the minister and the errant boy” (45). In this situation the boy is “errant” from the minister’s point of view because he does not conform to his will. There is a similar situation when Gideon brings Jenny home to meet his parents. His father cannot accept that Jenny does not believe in God: “My father gave [Jenny] one of his long, unblinking stares. ‘There is no hope,’ he said, ‘without Christ.’ [...] ‘There is nothing more terrible than to lose your faith’” (118-9).

Peter Macmurry is as intolerant as Gideon’s father, being almost a mirror image of him. When Gideon promotes his idea to run a marathon for charity, Macmurry dismisses this idea as unchristian: “Macmurry thought I was undoing the work of 450 years, by opening up that old debate between justification by faith

and justification by good works. ‘Without faith,’ he once said, [...] ‘without faith, we are nothing’” (140). From now on he realises that Macmurry sees through him and that he is his “enemy” (141). Macmurry’s conception of religion resembles the Wringhim’s strict distinction between ‘sinners’ and ‘elect’. For instance, he and his friends from the Session mind Gideon’s habit of visiting Catherine Cragie, saying “it’s the ungodly communing with the godless” (222). Macmurry is even more enraged when he hears about Gideon’s plans to conduct her funeral service: “And I hear that the service you intend to conduct is an improper one. God knows what you have in mind. [...] She was a proud, wicked woman and a fallen one at that” (324). Like Reverend Wringhim, Macmurry distinguishes between the saved and the damned: “By day he is an accountant and by night, Jenny used to say, he adds the saved and subtracts the damned, and always comes out with a minus figure” (321). Harry’s final interview with Macmurry reveals that he thinks in the same “mythic archetypes” (46) which Velasco attributes to the Wringhims. Macmurry tells Harry Caithness that Gideon’s behaviour revealed “the depths of his dabbling in the black arts.’ [...] ‘Sin will out, Mr Caithness, and it did so spectacularly in his case’” (372). With respect to the *Confessions* Velasco points out that “the three fanatics, the Sinner, his mother and her pastor use mythic archetypes and biblical images as “frameworks within which to interpret their existence” (46). According to him, this extreme form of religion, which is also embodied by Gideon’s father and Peter Macmurray, has the potential “to be used to legitimise the suppression of difference in the name of the higher truth” (46). Like the hypotext, the *Testament* criticises this kind of excess.

However, there is also another kind of religion which is depicted in the *Testament*, especially conveyed by the character of Lorna Sprott. Gideon describes her as “brimful of faith” and “the only minister [...] who was also a friend” (166), always having a “sympathetic ear for him” (167). Besides, there is one very important passage which conveys her approach to religion:

‘Prayer’s a wonderful thing Gideon, isn’t it? But you have to be careful with it. You have to really listen to what God’s telling you, not what you want him to tell you.’ [...] There was something very comforting in such an innocent approach to religion. (167)

Therefore, there is a difference between the extreme form of religion, represented by Gideon’s father and Peter Macmurry, and a moderate form of belief, represented by the kind-hearted, reliable, forgiving Lorna Sprott. Velasco sees the same phenomenon in the *Confessions*, as he differentiates between Robert’s “excess of religious enthusiasm” and “the sane religious belief of the moderate Blanchard or the common sense religion of John Barnet” (47). Not only does Mr Blanchard see the danger of Robert’s extremism, he also preaches a very moderate approach to religion, which is conveyed when he warns Robert of Gil-Martin’s influence: “but you do not seem to perceive, that both you and he are carrying these points

to a dangerous extremity. Religion is a sublime and glorious thing, the bond of society on earth, and the connector of humanity with the Divine nature” (C 109).

As a result, both novels challenge two extremes: the unquestioned belief in religious doctrines and extremism and the belief in historic master-narratives. Velasco argues that the political and religious divisions that are reflected in the *Confessions* refer to a more fundamental struggle within Scottish society during the time of the Scottish Enlightenment: a struggle between “a modernising, anglicised, cosmopolitan, rationalist, post-Enlightenment world view” and a “pre-Enlightenment *Weltanschauung*”, which is “autonomous, indigenous, religiously fragmented, and rooted in a popular oral culture” (38-39). The post-Enlightenment world view was closely connected with a linear and positivistic notion of history, which Mack calls “the Whig master-narrative of the time” (2012: 64):

This master narrative was deeply influenced by Adam Smith’s famous theory that there are four stages in the development of human society: nomadic hunting, shepherding, agriculture and commerce. [...] The four-stage scheme encouraged the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment and their understand history in terms of the progress of society from one stage of development to another, more advanced stage. (64)

This master-narrative implies that as soon as one stage has been overcome it will not reappear; it is literally erased from cultural discourse. In the *Testament* a similar phenomenon is addressed, for example when Gideon looks if the stone is marked on a map: “I got off my knees and folded the map, thinking as I did so how total is our trust in maps. [...] They are not real terrain, only representations of it. But our inclination is nearly always to believe the map” (T 200). This quotation refers to a very similar master narrative: once we have produced a map of an area, this area is in our possession. Although according to the map the stone should not be there, Gideon is haunted by it. Likewise, the *Confessions* shows “with exceptional vividness how a Gothic premodernity bubbles up through the Edinburgh New Town pavements that invented it in the first place” (Fielding 134). As a result, both novels correspond to what Wright outlines as defining feature of the Scottish Gothic genre: “Scottish Gothic embarks upon the excavation of a nuanced, multi-layered version of Scotland’s history” (Wright 80). This also reminds of Kristeva’s attack on the notion that there is unity in meaning when it comes to a representation of reality. While the allegedly ‘unquestionable’ “Whig master-narrative of the time” (Mack 2012: 64) is undermined in the *Confessions*, the *Testament* takes up Hogg’s critique on the ‘monologic’ representation of Covenanter history. This very close intertextual connection between the two novels is reinforced by many generic similarities which will be outlined in the following. The theme of being haunted by some uncanny force is a predominant theme in both novels. There-

fore, the next chapter will focus on the function of Gil-Martin in the *Confessions* and on the role of the stone and the Devil in the *Testament*.

### 3.4 Gothic Elements and the Role of the Devil Figures

Before focusing on the Gothic elements in the *Testament* and the *Confessions* it is necessary to briefly establish a framework of Gothic terms which capture the main Gothic themes in the novels. Jerrold Hogle defines some “general parameters” (2) which characterise the Gothic genre. First of all, he says that “a Gothic tale usually takes place (at least some of the time) in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space”, including castles, foreign places, graveyards, primeval frontiers or islands (Hogle, 2). This is a very classic list of Gothic settings, referring to the first generation of Gothic stories but it already indicates that in the first phase of Gothic writing the “paradigm of the horror-plot is the journey from the capital to the provinces” (qtd. in Mighall: 54).<sup>20</sup> During the period of Romanticism “sublime landscapes” became the predominant setting of Gothic stories (Botting 38). The gloom and darkness of these landscapes, including mountains as “the foremost objects of the natural sublime”, represented “external markers of inner mental and emotional states” (Botting 38). In the same period Scotland came to represent a typical Gothic setting, which was also confirmed by Scottish writers of Gothic fiction like Walter Scott and James Hogg: “Scott and Hogg’s apparent confirmation of their nation’s inhospitality may well cement the reader’s equation of Scotland with a Gothic, hostile territory.” (Wright, 75) As a result, in more general terms a typical Gothic setting can be defined as an inhospitable, hostile, uncanny space.<sup>21</sup>

In this space, as Hogle goes on to explain, characters of Gothic stories are typically haunted by ghosts, specters or monsters that “manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view” (2). One could ask why ghosts have such a prominent position in this context. In their introduction to *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (1999) Peter Buse and Andrew Stott go into this matter. According to them, “the answer lies in their relationship to reason and rationality [...] With the advent of the Enlightenment, a line was drawn between Reason and its more shadowy others – magic and witchcraft, irrationality, superstition, the occult” (3). The Gothic genre undermines this boundary between the rational side on the one hand and the supernatural on the other:

<sup>20</sup> Robert Mighall mentions this ‘paradigm’ with reference to the first generation of Gothic stories. In his article on *Gothic Cities* (2007) he explores how the division between the civilised urban world and the wild and superstitious countryside was overturned during the Victorian period and how cities like London became representations of a Gothic setting.

<sup>21</sup> This is of course a generalisation of Gothic settings and the Gothic genre in general. David Punter highlights the problem that only at first glance Gothic fiction seems to be a “homogeneous body of writing” (7). Nevertheless, for the purpose of this chapter it is helpful to stick to these ‘classic’ elements.

As much is already implied by Freud in “The Uncanny” where he points out that the meanings of heimlich (the homely, the familiar) and unheimlich (the uncanny, the strange, the hidden) tend to dovetail. The familiar and secure is always haunted by the strange and unfamiliar, while the unfamiliar often has a troubling familiarity about it. (Buse/Stott 9)

Therefore, the Gothic oscillates between two poles, “between the earthly laws of conventional reality and the possibilities of the supernatural” (Hogle 2). Just as the homely is always haunted by the uncanny in Freud’s concept, the concept of an ordered, rational sphere inherently implies an unstructured, supernatural ‘other’ against which it sets itself apart. According to Hogle, “this oscillation can range across a continuum between [...] the ‘terror Gothic’ on the one hand and the ‘horror Gothic’ on the other” (Hogle 3):

The first of these holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety, and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past, while the latter confronts the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution, explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the repression) of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting, consequences. (Hogle 3)

Overall, one can synthesize three main aspects that I will focus on in my discussion of Gothic elements in the *Testament* and the *Confessions*: I will ask in how far the setting contributes to an uncanny atmosphere, how the main Gothic theme of being haunted is played out, and which effect supernatural events (terror or horror) have on the novels’ protagonists.

As far as these Gothic elements are concerned, it is vital to look at the devil-figures in both novels. In the *Confessions* Robert is haunted by Gil-Martin, whose identity is left uncertain right up to the end of the novel. In the *Testament* Gideon first comes across a mysterious stone and then meets the Devil who has very striking similarities to Gil-Martin. Therefore, it is very useful to outline which elements from the hypotext are taken up in the *Testament*.

Robert meets Gil-Martin for the first time after he is told by his reverend father Wringhim that he has been accepted among the small group of ‘elect’. Believing that he is now “a justified person” (C 96), he goes out “into the fields and the woods” (96) in order to pray. In this lonely surrounding he sees “a young man of a mysterious appearance coming towards [him]” (96). It is very important to note that right from the start Robert feels drawn towards Gil-Martin: “I felt a sort of invisible power that drew me towards him, something like the force of enchantment, which I could not resist” (96). Very soon, Robert becomes preoccupied with him, regarding him as his “guide and director” who will help him to “learn the right” (105). He even shows signs of inner restlessness when Gil-Martin is not around: “There was something so flattering in all this, that I could not resist it.

Still, when he took leave of me, I felt it as a great relief; and yet, before the morrow, I wearied and was impatient to see him again" (105).

Robert's first encounter with Gil-Martin and his instant inclination towards him is very similar to the scene in which Gideon sees the Stone for the first time, while he is running through Keldo Woods: "And there it is. To the right of the path, in the middle of this space, a stone, looming in the mist like a great tooth in a mouth full of smoke. It brings me to a sudden and astonishing halt" (I 29). Like Robert, who sees Gil-Martin while walking lonely through the fields, Gideon finds the "looming" stone in a typical Gothic setting. He goes there "in early January", during the "cold heart of the winter", and finds the stone "deep in the woods, where few people venture" (29). Right from the start, Gideon becomes obsessed with the Stone, regarding it as his discovery: "The stone acquired a capital S in my mind. The stone became the Stone" (34). He also shows signs of inner restlessness, caused by his new discovery: "I went to bed early, but I did not relax. [...] that Sunday night I was restless, waking every hour or so to find the Stone massively present in my mind" (164).

Apart from this, he very soon becomes protective of the stone, not willing to share his secret with anyone else, which is especially indicated by his frequent use of possessive pronouns, for example when he talks about "my Stone" (202) and "my mystery" (231). This protective attitude can also be found in Robert's relationship to Gil-Martin:

I rejoiced in him, was proud of him, and soon could not live without him; yet, though resolved every day to disclose the whole history of my connection with him, I had it not in my power: something always prevented me, till at length I thought no more of it, but resolved to enjoy his fascinating company in private, and by all means to keep my own with him. (C 105-6)

Robert does not only keep his company with Gil-Martin for himself but also more and more retreats from his surroundings. He describes how he absents himself from home "day after day" (106) and even religious discourse with his reverend father Wringhim, whose doctrines Robert describes as "high conceptions and glorious discernment between good and evil" (82) at the beginning of his memoirs, now becomes "exceedingly tiresome to [his] ear" (107). Instead, he is increasingly dominated by Gil-Martin's influence: "All my dreams corresponded exactly with his suggestions; and when he was absent from me, still his arguments sunk deeper in my heart than even when he was present" (112).

In the *Testament*, the devil-figure, which resembles the Gil-Martin of the *Confessions* to a great extent, first appears after Gideon's accident at the Black Jaws. Gideon describes him as "absurdly well dressed for his surroundings" (I 271), as empathetic and very polite (273) and he says that the Devil is "constantly on the move" (274). Gil-Martin also has a "gentlemanly personage" (C 184), is dressed in elegant cloths which mark him as a foreigner and due to his eloquence he has a

very powerful rhetoric appeal. In addition, Robert observes that he is constantly on the move as well: “he made a rule of never lodging in any particular house, but took these daily, or hourly, as he found it convenient” (119). Apart from this, the Devil exerts an equally strong influence on Gideon as Gil-Martin on Robert. After the accident the Devil is omnipresent for Gideon, hovering over him like a shadow:

My friend was certainly present in the town during this period, but for how long at any one time I do not know. I assume that he came and went in that nervous, restless way of his, but what he was doing remains a mystery to me, for he never approached me, nor did he allow me to get close to him. I saw him almost every time I was out. He was always at a distance. (T 348)

Gideon sees him “entering Boots”, outside a newspaper shop, in a window of a bus and in the kirkyard (348-9). It is also very significant that he calls him “my friend” now, as this address reminds of Robert’s name for Gil-Martin, whom he calls “my illustrious friend” (C 131).

However, Robert’s attitude towards his friend changes in the course of his memoirs. While he first calls him “my illustrious friend and great adviser” (131), he later speaks of a “dreaded and devoted friend” (192), until he finally sees him as a “great tormentor” (171). This changed perception is indicated at one important turning point in the memoirs, when Robert’s initial enthusiasm about his powerful friend and his mission of “cutting the sinners off” (102) from the world turns into fear and despair: “The worst thing of all was, what hitherto I had never felt, and, as yet, durst not confess to myself, that the presence of my illustrious and devoted friend was becoming irksome to me” (151). Although he is repeatedly confronted with severe doubts about his infallible state as a “justified sinner” in the first part of the memoirs, he always gives in to Gil-Martin’s seductive power and commits the murders against Mr Blanchard and his brother George. Being confronted with new accusations against him, such as seducing a young lady and thereby ruining her family, he now shows actual signs of physical distress: “I was many times, in contemplating it, excited to terrors and mental torments hardly describable. [...] I was under the greatest anxiety, dreading some change would take place momentarily in my nature” (151).

Gideon does not have to face the consequences of any murders he has committed but there is a similar change in his behaviour, as far as his perception of the stone is concerned. At first he is proud of his discovery and wants to keep it for himself. Then his preoccupation with the stone becomes like a burden for Gideon: “I willed myself not to run in Keldo Woods, as if by not going there I could *manage* the Stone, keep whatever it signified at bay, possibly even make it disappear” (T 201). However, he is not able to free himself from it. Instead, he decides to go the stone again in order to take a picture of it. The nearer he gets to the stone the faster he walks, as his “impatience and excitement” makes him behave

“irrationally” (203). When he arrives at the stone he puts his palm against it and thinks that it looks “like an old friend waiting for [him]” (203). At the same time, the stone comes to represent Gideon’s deteriorating mental state which is indicated by clear signs of physical distress:

A crisis was upon me. I was sweating, seething with energy. If I didn’t do something the energy would burst out of me and leave me wrecked on the floor. My left arm was twitching as if in contact with an electric fence. I wanted to go to the Stone, yet at the same time was afraid to go. It seemed to me that the Stone had provoked this crisis, had engineered it in some way. I paced round the manse, in and out of every room, up and down the stairs. (247)

The same ambivalence between fascination and excitement on the one hand and an increasing desire to free oneself from an unbearable burden on the other can also be observed in Robert’s relationship to Gil-Martin. His initial enthusiasm for his “great companion and counsellor” (C 155) vanishes and turns into fear and despair, especially when he realises that he cannot free himself from Gil-Martin any more: “Sooner shall you make the mother abandon the child of her bosom; [...] Our beings are amalgamated, as it were, and consociated in one, and never shall I depart from this country until I can carry you in triumph with me” (156-7). Gil-Martin’s words indicate that Robert’s flight is hopeless and foreshadow his final suicide. Robert’s choice of words in this part of the memoirs reveals that his uneasiness about Gil-Martin now turns into a feeling of terror. He compares Gil-Martin’s speech to an “announcement of death to one who had of late deemed himself free” and describes how his “nature [shrinks] from the concessions” (159). Now Robert’s flight begins: “I resolved to shake him off, cost what it would, even though I should be reduced to beg my bread in a foreign land” (169). The oppressiveness of his situation is underlined by the use of several comparisons and images. For example, Robert compares Gil-Martin’s “ascendancy over [him]” to that of “a huntsman over his dogs” (169) and he stresses to be “willing to encounter any earthly distress” to free himself from “the chains of [his] great tormentor” (173). In order to escape from his “tormentor” Robert is willing to “travel to the farthest corners of the world” (181). Robert’s escape, therefore, corresponds to the “paradigm of the horror-plot” which has been outlined above because Robert leaves his familiar surroundings in order to retreat to the countryside and, while travelling, he only takes “the bye and unfrequented paths” (181). During Robert’s escape the terror of being haunted is played out very dramatically and his deteriorating physical and mental state is reflected by many uncanny events. No matter where he lodges, Robert is haunted in his sleep. At the county weaver’s house he is restless during the night: “I fell asleep, and a more troubled and tormenting sleep never enchained a mortal frame” (177). The word “enchained” takes up the image of the “chains of [his] great tormentor” (173), indicating that an escape from Gil-Martin



is impossible. When he lodges in the “village of Ancrum” he is “seized with terrors” during the night and wakes up “bathed in cold perspiration” (191).

Gideon does not have to fear a tormentor but he is also haunted by something which drives him into utter despair. The more isolated Gideon gets, the more intense a certain sense of entrapment becomes. Robert, after he is thrown out of the weaver’s house, describes himself as “an outcast and a vagabond in society” (C 180). Likewise, Gideon alienates himself from his friends and acquaintances because of his insistence on having seen the Devil and the stone. When Gideon tells Elsie about his unsuccessful attempt to take a picture of the stone, Elsie is afraid of him: “Why are you looking like that, Gideon? [...] You look strange” (T 246).<sup>22</sup> After having recorded Gideon’s story about his encounter with the Devil, Bill Winnyford looks “horribly uncomfortable” (300).<sup>23</sup> Gideon’s outcast state reaches its culmination when he gives his speech on Catherine Cragie’s funeral in which he tells his congregation about his encounter with the Devil. After this event he lives in total isolation: “I made for the manse, my place of refuge, my shelter from the storm, and I got in and I was alone” (343). In this state of inner despair he decides to go to the stone again, where he can no longer repress his feelings:

I clung to the Stone and suddenly all my unspoken pain and anger and misery came pouring out of me. I went down on my knees. I didn’t care about the soaking ground. I howled and howled and howled. I beat my fists against the Stone until they were raw. There was no sympathy out there in the woods, no give, no mercy, no redemption. That was all I wanted, but there was none. Everything I had ever done had failed, had been a total waste. I’d had enough. (353)<sup>24</sup>

The only person he still wants to see is the Devil: “There is someone out there with the foxes and birds, and I am waiting for him. I am anxious to see him but I know he will not come till I have finished writing this” (37). At last, Gideon welcomes the Devil in his own house. In this passage there are many allusions to the *Confessions* which underline the many similarities between the two devil-figures. For instance, the Devil reveals that he is actually called “Gil Martin” (355).<sup>25</sup> Like

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Robert’s mother’s reaction after his first encounter with Gil-Martin: “‘Ah, Robert, you are ill!’ cried she; ‘you are very ill, my dear boy; you are quite changed; your very voice and manner are changed’” (C 99).

<sup>23</sup> This is another interesting parallel: Robert and Gideon need another ‘medium’ to secure their stories. In Gideon’s case it is Bill Winnyford’s tape recorder, in Robert’s case it is the printing office.

<sup>24</sup> This passage is almost identical to Robert’s emotional outbreak after having been thrown out of the yeoman’s house: “Again was I on my way southward, as lonely, hopeless, and degraded a being as was to be found on life’s weary round. As I limped out the way, I wept, thinking of what I might have been, and what I really had become.” (C 187)

<sup>25</sup> The publisher even explains in his explanatory footnote “that this is the very name given by James Hogg to the mysterious, devil-like figure that haunts the anti-hero of his novel [the *Confessions*]” (355).

Gil-Martin in the *Confessions*, who stresses that his and Robert's beings are "amalgamated" (C 156), the Devil has become inseparably connected to Gideon: "I am with you in spirit, if not in person. I'll always be with you, Gideon" (T 356). However, Gideon is not terrified by the presence of the Devil, but feels rather comfortable when he is around. The perspective to meet the Devil on Ben Alder after having finished his testament is Gideon's only remaining relief, which is indicated by the reappearing fire imagery: "The fire burns in me still, fiercer and brighter. *Nec tamen consumebatur*. Tomorrow I leave Monimaskit, never to return" (357).<sup>26</sup>

Gideon's retreat to Ben Alder follows the same "from the capital to the provinces" pattern as Robert's escape from Gil-Martin. He arrives at Mrs MacLean's B&B cottage when the weather is "wet and misty" (T 7). There he finishes his testament which he leaves in his room for posterity. From Harry's report the reader also learns that Ben Alder is a "remote spot" where a "young Frenchman" had chosen to end his life (11). The uncanny atmosphere of the place is reinforced by the witnesses' reports which the publisher includes in his prologue. For example, Dr Tanner's journal entry reports how Gideon mysteriously disappears: "No sign, not a trace. Begin to wonder if I should do these walks alone any more. Very peculiar" (17). Robert commits suicide in an almost identical surrounding. After having almost finished his memoirs in a "humble cot" of a poor widower (C 194), he leaves for "the open moor", heading to the north-west, "because in that quarter [he] perceive[s] the highest and wildest hills" (195). In the end, he sees his suicide as final relief from his terrors: "My devoted, princely, but sanguine friend, has been with me again and again. My time is expired, and I find a relief beyond measure" (196).

As a result, both protagonists are haunted by a devil-figure until they finally commit suicide. The important question is how the function of Gil-Martin on the one hand and the Devil/the stone on the other can be interpreted. As far as the *Confessions* is concerned, many critics have focused on psychoanalytic approaches to the novel and understood the role of Gil-Martin "particularly through the figure of the double" (Fielding 132). Following this approach one would have to treat Gil-Martin as "a delusion of Wringhim's imagination", which indeed has been a "feasible reading" for many critics (Campbell 185). In this view, Gil-Martin represents an unconscious anxiety which haunts Robert until he finally ends up in a state of utter despair. Likewise, one could argue that Gideon is haunted by his repressed desires and feelings which find their expression in the figure of the Devil and the stone. Irvine Welsh suggests that the Devil, "rather than any absent God, is revealed to be the observing presence in [Gideon's] life" ("The Devil in the Gorge") who begins to haunt Gideon during his childhood years, physically manifests himself "by occasional spasms in one solitary twitching arm" (2) and

<sup>26</sup> The Latin motto of the Church of Scotland ("Yet it was not consumed") is another reference to the *Confessions*, as Robert's memoirs are headed by a Latin inscription as well ("Fideli Certa Merces": C 209).

finally appears in person.<sup>27</sup> With respect to the *Confessions* Campbell points out that a psychoanalytic reading of the novel “might involve a more extensive knowledge of the subconscious mind than could be expected of Hogg’s time” and adds that “the book fiercely resists single readings and single interpretations” (185-6). There are several aspects that contradict the assumption that Gil-Martin is only an invention of Robert’s mind. Campbell mentions that there are several characters “who actually see Gil-Martin” (186), such as the men in the printing office and Mr Blanchard. There is another uncanny event which remains unresolved. When Robert lodges at the country weaver’s house his clothes and his poniard are mysteriously removed, “though under double lock and key”, supposedly by the force of Gil-Martin, which strikes the weaver and his wife with extreme “terror” (180).

As far as the role of madness in the *Testament* is concerned, one could definitely argue that Gideon shows some signs of a mental illness. Right before the Devil visits him at the manse, Gideon goes to see the stone on a “grey, miserable afternoon”. There he sees a figure beside the stone and takes it to be the Devil: “It was him, I knew it was him” (353). This uncanny event is clarified in the publisher’s epilogue. Significantly it is not the publisher but Elsie who demystifies this scene, telling Harry Caithness that it was her whom Gideon must have seen that day (384). At the same time, she confirms that she saw a stone that day, indicating that Gideon might have been telling the truth. Apart from this, his description of the Devil is almost identical to the description of the devil-figure in “The Legend of the Black Jaws” (188ff).<sup>28</sup> In this legend, which like the Auchtermuchty story in the *Confessions* is told in Scots, the Devil is described as a “black-avised gentleman, dressed in the finest cla’es” (192) who lives in a cave beneath the Black Jaws and speaks eloquently “wi’ a gentle voice” (192). These are just a few parallels which could indicate that the Devil is Gideon’s own invention. However, this is not a satisfying explanation as many mysteries about Gideon’s disappearance and his encounter with the Devil are not resolved. At the hospital the medical staff cannot explain how he could have survived the accident. Neither can they explain what happened to his leg: “The bone appears to have been subjected to extreme heat. It’s very unusual” (265). It is also unresolved how Gideon comes into possession of the Devil’s shoes (cf. 272). As a result, the true nature of the Devil and the stone is finally not resolved. According to Campbell, it is exactly this “technique

<sup>27</sup> Right at the start of his testament, Gideon talks about this observing presence: “As that wee boy I was taught that, solitary though I might be, I was never alone. Always there was one who walked beside me. I could not see him, but he was there, constant at my side. I wanted to know him, to love and be loved by him, but he did not reveal himself” (T 27).

<sup>28</sup> This is a very important reference to the Auchtermuchty story in the *Confessions*. Both oral tales are embedded in the inner narratives and reveal one possible way of interpreting the devil-figure. In the Auchtermuchty story Robert Ruthven saves his town by making the powerful preacher out to be an impostor, revealing to his fellow villagers that they have been tricked by the Devil (cf. Mack 1999: 16f.).

of imprecision” which also characterises the *Confessions* and the role of Gil-Martin (187).

It is very significant that the journalist Harry Caithness has the final word in the *Testament*. Harry tells the publisher how he went to the Black Jaws, an endeavour which he retrospectively deems “strictly outwith the bounds of his remit” (386). He describes the place in the following way:

There’s this permanent mist of water droplets in the air, like an almost invisible veil or a film between you and the bottom of the chasm. And “film” is the right word because the light plays on it, there are these fragments of rainbow everywhere, and through them you see shapes and images shifting among the projecting trees and in the shadows of the cliffs. If you look for a while you become mesmerised, you start to see a whole world of things. (386-7)<sup>29</sup>

Even Harry Caithness, whom the rational publisher describes as a “first-class reporter”, starts to see “a whole world of things” at the Black Jaws. His puzzling statement invites the reader to read Gideon’s story from an unbiased perspective. As a result, in both novels the Gothic qualities undermine the editor’s and the publisher’s attempt to provide the reader with a satisfying explanation of supernatural events.

This chapter has shown that the *Testament* takes up many important Gothic elements of the *Confessions*. Both protagonists are haunted until they finally commit suicide. In the *Confessions*, the “terror Gothic” is especially revealed by the depiction Robert’s hopeless attempt to escape from his tormenting persecutor Gil-Martin. In the *Testament*, the Devil does not have as frightening an effect on Gideon as Gil-Martin on Robert because Gideon finds his presence rather comforting until the end.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Gideon’s increasingly desperate situation in connection with his discovery of the stone and his more and more outcast state conveys a very similar sense of entrapment and hopelessness as in the *Confessions*. Another important Gothic element in both novels is the occurrence of several uncanny and supernatural events that remain unresolved, which is why the reader is kept in suspense. In addition, there are settings in both novels which can be described as Gothic: Robert and Gideon meet Gil-Martin and the Devil/the stone in an uncanny, lonely surrounding, they both retreat from their familiar surroundings in order to escape their tormenting troubles, and finally head for an inhospitable, hostile space to end their lives.

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<sup>29</sup> This passage can be regarded as a reference to the halo scene in the *Confessions* (34ff.). While climbing on Arthur’s Seat George is suddenly caught in “dense vapour” which makes him see “a bright halo in the cloud of haze” (35).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Hughes who compares the two devil-figures in the *Testament* and the *Confessions* and says that Gideon “encounters the devil without real terror of hell or murderous crime” (144).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that although there are many Gothic elements, both novels resist a strict genre categorization. The critic Magdalene Redekop has labelled the *Confessions* as “a kind of premature post-modernist novel” (162). Campbell similarly argues that Hogg’s novel is a “book which opens itself to multiple readings in a manner more akin to the post-modern than to any single hypothesis or interpretation” (190). The same holds true for the *Testament*: it is only one possibility to interpret the Devil as a double figure, which is one central element of Gothic fiction. In fact, Robertson’s novel calls for several interpretations because, as in the *Confessions*, the many different strands of narratives that have been pointed out above are true up to a point. Therefore, the novel invites for a postmodernist approach: “For the postmodernist, by contrast, fragmentation is an exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of our escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief. In a word, the modernist laments fragmentation while the postmodernist celebrates it” (Barry, 81).

## 4 Conclusion

In my thesis I have shown that there is a very close intertextual relationship between the *Testament* and the *Confessions*. Both novels have a very similar structure, being made up of a framing narrative, an inner narrative and several other fragmenting elements, such as legends, oral tales and interviews. Furthermore, similar narrative strategies are employed. On the one hand, the editor’s/publisher’s authority is deconstructed by revealing that these seemingly omniscient narrators are fallible. On the other hand, both first-person narrators turn out to be unreliable while minor characters give revealing information. As far as the thematic similarities are concerned, both novels discuss the representation of history and religion, following the key feature of Scottish Gothic and its preoccupation with national history. By criticising the one-sided representation of religious history and depicting Scotland’s fractured state with respect to its relationship to England the *Confessions* and the *Testament* challenge two extremes: the unquestioned belief in religious doctrines and the use of master narratives to justify cultural hegemony. In both novels the undermining of this master narrative which understands history in terms of progress from one stage to a further advanced stage which sets itself apart from its allegedly ‘superstitious past’ is achieved by the use of Gothic elements, especially the theme of being haunted. At the same time, I have argued that although both novels follow the Scottish Gothic tradition they call for a postmodernist reading which takes into account the novels’ techniques of vagueness and fragmentation.

Apart from these major intertextual references there are other intertextual markers in the *Testament*, such as direct quotations from the *Confessions*, similar character constellations and the mentioning of the hypotext in a footnote. As a result, one can say in Genette’s terms that the *Testament* (the hypertext) explicitly

and self-consciously refers to the *Confessions* (the hypotext) as a major source of influence. In addition, it is important to note that both novels as singular texts fit Bakhtin's and Kristeva's poststructuralist approach to intertextuality. Both challenge a monologic representation of reality, question allegedly powerful authorities and subvert hierarchical structures in language by giving every character their say and providing a complex mixture of narratives.

Finally, coming back to the fictitious publisher of the Gideon's testament, we have to ask ourselves again: was Gideon Mack telling the truth? The answer is: we cannot tell. The *Testament* confronts the reader with several fragmented narrative strands, unreliable narrators, unresolved supernatural events and the question of madness. This opaqueness, which Irvine Welsh calls a "skilful blend of religion, the supernatural and mental illness" ("The Devil in the Gorge"), is one key feature which Robertson takes up from the *Confessions*. He thereby transfers the powerful conflicts and ideas that are explored in Hogg's novel with respect to early-nineteenth-century Scottish society into present-day Scotland, calling for a multi-layered representation of Scottish history and culture and a dialogic discourse between different forms of belief and approaches to reality 'in this day and age'.

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