The Dark Classroom:

An Analysis of Gothic and Supernatural Elements as Educational Tools in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Macbeth*, and *The Scarlet Letter*

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Introduction

In 2017 Noordhoff Uitgeverij BV published a set of "Blackbird Classics" for the following academic year which included Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606), and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). What is so telling about this set is that all three of these works are associated with the Gothic genre through similar tropes and themes. While finding Shakespeare in this set might raise a few questions, Desmet and Williams explain that to fully understand the Gothic it is important to recognise the genre's "Shakespearean Origins" (2). Intrigued, I looked further into the publishing history of the Blackbirds and found many instances of Gothic and supernatural novels being published for high-school students. The list included many editions of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, several books by Susan Hill, who wrote *The Woman in Black* (1983), and many other modern Gothics, and a simplified version of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* adapted to be understandable for a younger reading audience. This discovery led me to ask the question what the appeal is of such works for the high-school classroom. Why does the main publisher of educational material for Dutch high schools persistently turn to Gothic classics and other dark supernatural fictions as teaching texts?

One observation has to be made when considering this question. In recent decades Dutch popular children's literature, as well as international children's literature, has been characterised by a sustained interest in the Gothic and supernatural. Hanna Kraan's first book in her series on "De Boze Heks" was published in 1995, Paul van Loon's series "De Griezelbus" were published between 1991 and 2008, and his "Dolfje Weerwolfje" series (1996-present) has been one of the most successful Dutch children's series ever and has been translated into many languages, including English (as *Alfie the Werewolf*). J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series has been popular all over the world since 1997. This boom in Gothic and supernatural children's literature could explain the persistent publication of Gothic and

supernatural literature for secondary education, because the shared themes and motifs will relate to high-school students' previous reading experience. But of course, high-school students will also be expected to develop their reading skills and literary interests. Therefore, the generic link between currently popular children's series and classic gothic and supernatural texts cannot be the sole factor in Noordhoff's decision to persistently reprint British and American Gothic and supernatural classics for the classroom.

Moreover, in literary courses on university level Gothic fiction is just as popular. In their book *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction: The British and American Traditions*, Diane Long Hoeveler and Tamar Heller suggest that there is a "rich and exciting range of critical possibilities stimulated by the Gothic" (35). This shows that there is more than just thrill, excitement, and familiarity to explore in Gothic texts. But where university-level courses on the Gothic will engage with complex formal, psychological, and philosophical critical frameworks, such an approach is not suitable for the high-school class room, where the emphasis is still more on gaining a general understanding of the formal and thematic aspects of the texts in question. What follows is a critical examination of what the genre of the Gothic, and specifically the three texts published for 2017 by Noordhoff, have to offer literary education in Dutch high-schools.

Ideally, what schools want students to learn from literature is "a set of critical reading skills they can apply to the world of language, literature, and culture around them throughout their lifetime" (Showalter 26). However, in the current form of literary education in The Netherlands what this entails remains rather vague. Theo Witte, Gert Rijlaarsdam and Dick Schram suggest that high-school students have no idea which books to choose for their final examination and they also remain in the dark as to the purpose of the exercises and texts offered in methods on literature provided in class (Witte et. al. 25). The learning objectives the government poses for literary education in Dutch high-schools reflect this confusion. They

are very general guidelines open to multiple interpretations. Literary education in Dutch high-schools lacks direction (Witte et. al). As a result, both students and teachers can become confused about what should be learnt by studying the canonical works assigned. Moreover, they comment on the absence of a "doorlopende leerlijn" from the start of secondary education through to their final exam (Witte et. al. 25). This thesis aims to examine what Gothic and supernatural fiction can add to literary education, how it can provide structure, and how their conventions and themes allow teachers to make more concrete the broad learning objectives set in by the ministry of education. My research has revealed that the Gothic and supernatural texts chosen by Noordhoff contain strong moral themes. These often complex moral themes, expressed through the Gothic and supernatural conventions familiar to many high-school students, provide high-school teachers with the necessary material with which to achieve the main teaching objectives. In short, these Gothic texts balance thematic complexity with formal familiarity.

Erik Kwakernaak suggests that a thematic approach to teaching literature will educate students on social themes which they must be introduced to as part of their socializing experience. Such themes include: war, family, love, and death (410).[1] However, such an approach would only cover a part of the skills required to fulfil the learning objectives given for their final examination. Fortunately, as Kwakernaak suggests, the thematic approach to literature can be combined with the literary historical approach by combining texts from different periods and movements that discuss a similar theme (411).[2] This means that through the combination of a thematic approach with a historic approach multiple aspects of canonical texts can be elaborated upon in high-school courses. In this thesis the common thread running through the three works discussed can be seen as the Gothic and its obsession with history and

[1] "maatschappelijke thema's (waar leerlingen in hun socialiseringsproces mee geconfronteerd (moeten) worden, zoals oorlog, gezin, liefde, dood; vele variaties zijn mogelijk, bijv. *De held, Mens en natuur, De buitenstaander* of *De Vreemdeling* enz)"

[2] "De thematische aanpak is met de literair-historische te combineren door bij een bepaald thema teksten te zoeken die telkens typisch zijn voor een bepaalde periode of stroming (bijvoorbeeld *van ridder tot frontsoldaat*)"

the ethical insights to be gained from a critical engagement with a dark past. Moreover, the three texts highlight different views on the same theme, from the perspective of different historical periods, societies, and even countries. Thus covering the different aspects suggested in the learning objectives for literary education which will be defined in detail in chapter one. Furthermore, the Gothic and supernatural elements in these texts make them interesting and accessible for high-school students, to some extent, they will relate to the literature they read and the movies they watch in their free time.

Elaine Showalter published *Teaching Literature* in 2003 with the hope it could "be relevant for teachers in very different institutions and programs, in a wide range of national setting, and in other languages than English" (xi). In her chapter "Theories of Teaching Literature" she suggests that "when English literature became a course of study at University College of London in the 1820s, its purpose was to moralize, civilize, and humanize" (22) and the approach suggested in this thesis aims at a similar objective. Moreover, Gothic literature from its outset has had moral and ethical themes as becomes clear from the final paragraphs of most of Ann Radcliffe's seminal Gothic romances. In *A Sicillian Romance* (1790) the narrator concludes that in the story told "we perceive a singular and most striking instance of moral retribution. We learn, also that those who do only THAT WHICH IS RIGHT, endure nothing in misfortune but a trial of their virtue" (199). The narrator of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) instructs the reader "that, though the vicious can sometimes pour affliction upon the good, their power is transient and their punishment certain" (672). In the nineteenth century, the American romancer, Nathaniel Hawthorne followed Radcliffe's example in constructing Gothic fictions that had an overtly moral purpose. According to Marina Boonyaprasop, Hawthorne is always concerned with "the reader himself" and how "his well-chosen symbols serve as vehicles to convey his moral teachings to the audience" (42). The analysis of *Dorian Gray*, *Macbeth* and *The Scarlet Letter* will show that this is true of each

text examined in this thesis. While Nathaniel Hawthorne is well known for including moral lessons in his work, Oscar Wilde's novel was criticised in the press for not containing an explicit moral. Wilde challenged this criticism by suggesting an implicit lesson (Berkman). Finally, Shakespeare's work can be viewed as following the medieval morality plays (Degünther). The Gothic tropes in these works are the images that signal the presence of a moral lesson.

Moreover, the Gothic is especially valuable for high-school teaching because of its interest in duality. As Fred Botting suggests "ambivalence and uncertainty" in Gothic texts "obscure singular meaning" (3). This forces students to consider the multiple possible meanings of the symbols, and possibly forcing them to reconsider their own views on the ethical dilemmas explored in these works of fiction. This ambivalence breaks down the rigid structure of good and evil, moral and immoral. The Gothic comments on "[u]ncertainties about the nature of power, law, society, family and sexuality" (Botting 5). By being a genre that critically explores such topics within specific ethical frameworks, teachers and students can utilise the Gothic to comment and discuss not only the texts but also their ethical themes. This opens the text up to meaningful discussions on what kind of "lesson" a text may have "taught" in the time in which it was first published, and what it could "mean" for the modern students, and what impact it could have on an understanding of modern society.

This thesis will argue that the combination of Gothic conventions highlighting moral themes within the historical contexts of these works, with the presence of mystery and the supernatural as recognizable and enjoyable elements of these texts make Gothic texts very useful teaching texts. The combination of formal familiarity and thematic complexity provides the necessary information to accomplish the learning objectives set by the Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling (SLO), and will keep high-school students interested as they will be able to relate the themes to their everyday lives.

Before analysing the texts in question, it is necessary to critically discuss what the aims are of literary education in Dutch high-schools, and what this entails for teachers and students. Therefore, four key methods for teaching literature in Dutch high-schools will be examined to discover what kinds of educational strategies they offer teachers aiming to accomplish the learning objectives set by the SLO. Additionally, this chapter will elaborate upon what this thesis suggests as a method for accomplishing the learning objectives. Chapters two, three and four will respectively discuss in detail the Gothic and supernatural elements present in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and how these elements serve to illustrate the ethical theme of these works. Lastly, I will highlight how these Gothic and supernatural elements aid in accomplishing the learning objectives.

Chapter 1: Aims and Methods for High-school Level Literary Courses

To determine what goals Dutch high-school teachers have when compiling the reading list for their literary course, it is necessary to consider two factors: firstly, what teachers are expected to accomplish with the works they decide to put in a course, and secondly what it is they need to teach students on the basis of these works. Examining the learning objectives set for Dutch high-school students' final examination will most likely generate significant insights into what students need to learn from literature. However, the learning objectives set by Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling (SLO) in the "Handreiking schoolexamen modern vreemde talen havo/vwo" only offer a vague general description of what students should have accomplished by the time they undergo their final examination. The learning objectives relating to literature are as follows:

> *Eindterm 7*
>
> De kandidaat kan beargumenteerd verslag uitbrengen van zijn leeservaringen met ten minste drie literaire werken.
>
> *Eindterm 8 (alleen vwo)*
>
> De kandidaat kan literaire tekstsoorten herkennen en onderscheiden, en literaire begrippen hanteren in de interpretatie van literaire teksten.
>
> *Eindterm 9 (alleen vwo)*
>
> De kandidaat kan een overzicht geven van de hoofdlijnen van de literatuurgeschiedenis en de gelezen literaire werken plaatsen in dit historisch perspectief.

What teachers can take from this is that the focus should be on the recognition of different text types, understanding of literary terminology, and students' ability to apply this terminology in their analysis of different texts. Moreover, high-school students should be able to place different texts within the historical context in which they were written. However, the

goals do not specify which texts, which literary terms, or which historical contexts. This results in a multitude of possible interpretations of these goals. Schools, and individual teachers, can all have different interpretations of these goals and may adjust their program accordingly. A teacher with a preference for American literature might teach only literature written by American writers such as Hawthorne and Hemingway, whereas a teacher with a preference for theatre might leave out novels altogether and focus solely on plays. Theo Witte, Gert Rijlaarsdam and Dick Schram report on this lack of direction in their article "Naar een gestructureerd curriculum voor het literatuuronderwijs." They argue that high-school students have no idea which books to pick but also have no clue as to the use of the questions and exercises they are given for their literary development. Witte et. al. suggest teachers should be able to differentiate between which books to pick for which students, so every high-school student can develop their reading skills at their own pace. This is important because some students might come from a reading household and others will not have read more than internet articles or comic books. However, teachers are on their own when it comes to deciding how to do this without any research to back up their decisions (translated from Witte et. al. 25). This lack of direction and support is also reflected in the general nature of the learning objectives.

The examination below of several key teaching methods used for teaching English literature in Dutch high-schools will determine what sources teachers have available to them to navigate these general learning objectives, and what these methods have in common when it comes to accomplishing the learning objectives. These particular methods were chosen because they either discuss one of the works this thesis also examines, or one of the authors discussed in this thesis. It is helpful to examine how these methods approach these texts, or similar texts and periods, before explaining how the approach suggested in this thesis differs.

1.1 *Alquin*

Alquin's literature series is made up of a booklet for every literary period. These booklets do not only focus on literature from that period but also discuss relevant historic events. Moreover, the booklets also discuss the important literary movements, as well as ideological movements. The booklet for the Romantic period for example includes a short introduction on the concept of Romanticism, as historical as well as literary period, combined with a list of the key writers of that time. It discusses some basic characteristics of the Romantic period such as a "focus on the grandeur of nature" and the notion of the "superiority of emotion over intellectual thought" (*Alquin* 4) and combines the texts with other works of art that characterise this period.

The first poet that is discussed in the booklet on the Romantic period is John Keats. After a small biographical introduction the method turns to a discussion of his poem "La Belle Dame sans Merci." The introduction to this poem is rather suggestive. It immediately gives the students the subject of the poem, and makes a suggestion at the meaning of what Keats wrote. In the introduction it also says "Keats had little opportunity to explain what he had written" (Alquin 8) as he died after the publication of "La Belle Dame sans Merci." By asking students about what message the writer was trying to convey to the readers, this method gravitates towards the "literatuurgeschiedenis benadering" as explained by Erik Kwakernaak where authors take centre stage as representatives of their period (410). By pointing out that Keats's premature death stopped him explaining his work, the method commits the intentional fallacy, which can be said to hinder, rather than help a proper understanding of the poem in question.

The questions in this method in regards to "La Belle Dame sans Merci" include some basic questions such as: "What does the title of the poem mean?" and "Which words in the first 3 stanzas show that the knight feels ill?" (*Alquin* 9). Further questions are about the

rhyme scheme and the structure of the poem. The terminology in these questions shows that the writers of the method assume that students are already familiar with the terminology associated with dissecting poems, as they use terms such as stanza and rhyme scheme. This shows that the method takes an approach to teaching poetry that combines an interest in literary history with a focus literary terminology as illustrated in the works of different authors. Additionally, "La Belle Dame sans Merci" has an "internet assignment" which gives the students the opportunity to connect the poem to other art forms, such as paintings. Furthermore, an "additional assignment" on "La Belle Dame sans Merci" attempts to give the students an insight into literary theory by asking the students what "[n]umerous feminists" (*Alquin* 9) might think of the poem and its characters.

The additional assignments help students to bring the canonical texts discussed into their world and experience, by not only relating the texts to a few literary theories but also by making the students think of their own associations while reading the work. For example, in the section on John Keats' "To Autumn" the students are asked to think of a piece of music that they associate with the poem. This is in line with M. David Merrill's "First Principles of Instruction." In his fifth principle Merrill argues that "learning is promoted when learners are encouraged to integrate (transfer) the new knowledge into their everyday life." Furthermore, an important aspect of this principle is the corollary "watch me" which suggests students will want to show off their newly acquired knowledge to their peers, which these exercises allow the students to do (Merrill 50).

In its Romantic booklet, *Alquin* discusses other writers besides John Keats, namely: Lord Byron, Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Sir Walter Scott, William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Jane Austen. All are discussed quite thoroughly taking into account at least one and sometimes more of their literary works. In addition to "La Belle Dame sans Merci," for example, "To Autumn" is also discussed in the

section on John Keats. Moreover, different writers are used to explain different text types. After a short discussion on the different types of ballads popular in the Romantic period, "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is discussed, before discussing Coleridge's work in more general terms.

Alquin's approach to teaching literature is firmly rooted in "literatuur geschiedenis," as it puts the authors centre stage and uses their life and works as milestones in literary development (Kwakernaak 410) and combines this approach with a focus on "literaire begrippen" in which literary terminology is taught by using the author's work as examples. The questions serve to guide the students in what aspects of poetry they should look for when determining if a work can be considered Romantic. This shows the method is concerned with accomplishing learning objective eight by providing the necessary literary terms. Moreover, the context of the works presented in this method is also elaborated upon through a small introductory paragraph. The general information that is given on the periods is limited, and additional information is gained through exploration of authors and texts relevant to the period. Learning objective nine is partially accomplished through introductory paragraphs, and partially through the discussion of the texts. However, as the booklets are named for the period they discuss one would expect it to be more overtly present. The assignments that ask students to discuss their associations with the work, and find out more about literary theories surrounding the texts allow students to practice for their final examinations and thereby accomplishing learning objective seven.

Even though the method succeeds in accomplishing the learning objectives this method fails on one crucial aspect. The introductory paragraphs are too prescriptive when they suggest what the text "really" means. It diminishes the students' ability for critical thought, and thereby what teaching literature is all about. What, ideally, should be learnt from an examination of literary text is "a set of critical reading skills" (Showalter 26) which is not

promoted in this method, as the answers are already given without any critical reading on part of the students. Furthermore, by providing students with an answer before even asking the question of what a text means to them as readers reduces students to passive recipients of information unlikely to actively engage with the text.

1.2 *A Joy Forever*

The foreword of *A Joy Forever* thoroughly explains the aim of the editors in composing the method. As stated, this method aims to "help you develop your taste in reading. It will offer you the technique you need to be a critical and enthusiastic reader" (Budding et. al.). Therefore, the focus does not only lie on the literary aspects of a text but also on the students' ability to develop their appreciation of texts. However, it remains unclear on what level the students are supposed to appreciate a text; as a work of art, a mode of communication, or as entertainment for example. In his book *Vakdidactiek van het Vreemdetalenonderwijs*, Erik Kwakernaak suggests it is difficult to give structure to the objective to develop text appreciation. It becomes easier, he argues, when you combine text appreciation with other approaches to literature such as a literary-historical approach or a thematic approach (Kwakernaak 410-11). This is exactly what *A Joy Forever* does. By dividing the book into two sections, a thematic part and a historical part, the method employs two approaches to teaching the students the essentials they need to do well on their final exam, as well as give the students the chance to develop their own interest within the field of literature.

The thematic part consists of four themes, namely "Head and Heart," "A Magical Mystery Tour," and "The Road to Maturity." Each part contains six texts that are linked to the theme of the chapter. The texts are not limited to poems and novels, but include song-lyrics and even movie scripts. Section two, "A Magical Mystery Tour," starts with a description of how poems "make the silent, static world of the visual arts articulate" and uses U.A Fanthorpe's poem "Not My Best Side" as an example. Before the students actually read the

text there are two introductory exercises. Firstly, they have to look up everything they know about dragons, and in the other questions they have to compare their ideal dragon to one in a painting by Uccello "St. George and the Dragon" as depicted in the method. These questions help prepare the students to use their previous knowledge of, and associations with, dragons to analyse what the dragon could symbolise in Fanthorpe's poem. This is again a reflection of one of Merrill's "First Principles of Instruction." In the activation phase, Merrill suggests, "learning is promoted when relevant previous experience is activated" (46). Of course, students have no real life experience with dragons, but they may have read about them, or seen them on the small or big screen, so they have an idea in their mind of what they might or might not look like. Activating this knowledge helps "to direct students to the yet-to-be-learned new material and thus result in more efficient instruction" (Merrill 47). The introduction to the writer, poem, and period, are therefore constructed by the students themselves in this method rather than given the information at the onset. After reading the poem, students are asked to tackle a few questions on the text itself, for example: "Which figure speaks in which part of the poem?" This suggests the presence of multiple narrators (*A Joy Forever* 42). Whereas, "Write down why the speaker appeals to you or not" and "Think about the voice. What can you say about its tone – is it sad, happy, angry etc.?" are more about personal opinion and interpretation of the poem from the students' point of view. Furthermore, there are questions titled "The text and beyond" which ask the students to actively engage with the text by, in this case, acting out a part of the poem "in the tone of voice that you think appropriate" and thinking of a new title (*A Joy Forever* 43). After Fanthorpe's poem the method discusses "Through the Veil" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "It's a Kind of Magic" by Queen, *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R Tolkien, "Molly Means" by Margaret Walker, and lastly, "The Crucible" by Arthur Miller. All these texts relate to the theme of the chapter by having magic and mystery either in their text, theme, or title. Finally,

in subsection seven of "A Magical Mystery Tour," there is a "Looking Back" component that reminds the students of all the texts and helps them improve their methods by making them set SMART-goals for the next section (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Responsible, and Time-managed goals). Such goals help students get a grasp of what they have learnt, and how they can do better in the next chapter.

The historical part of *A Joy Forever* discusses three main periods in English literature: "The renaissance (1500 – 1660)," "The Romantic movement (1780 – 1830)," and "War and rumours of war (1914 – 1940)." The chapters all start with a short introduction on the time period and the school of thought that prevails in this period, combined with questions to help the students find out more about the period in question. Again, the method encourages the students to find out most information for themselves using whatever resources they have rather than just giving them the information to study in the book. This calls for more active engagement on the part of the students.

After the introduction the method divides the chapters into three sections: Poetry, Drama, and Prose, with each section discussing a few important writers. In the poetry section of the Renaissance chapter Sir Thomas Wyatt, Edmund Spencer and William Shakespeare are discussed, in drama William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe are discussed, and in the prose section students learn about Sir Thomas More and Thomas Nashe. Per writer, the students are introduced to a single poem, play, or story while the important literary terms are explained when they are relevant to the discussed work. For example, before the students read a poem in the poetry section of the Renaissance chapter an explanation is given of "lyric poetry," "sonnet," "simile," and "metaphor." The students are, thus, fully equipped to take on "Sonnet 7" by Sir Thomas Wyatt and can apply the terms previously explained in the method to the text.

The questions in the historical sections are divided into different types depending on whether they are discussing poetry, drama, or prose. “Find out the facts” are questions that belong to the introduction, as these help the students find out more about a certain period. “Compare the texts” are comparative questions of the different texts per section, as they ask the students to find similarities and differences between the texts. “Into the text” questions ask for close reading of the texts and their form. “Look across borders” questions ask the student to compare the English text to similar texts in other languages, similar writers from different countries, or even different art forms with similar themes. Lastly, “The text and beyond” questions, as in the thematic part of this method, are there to encourage the students to engage with the texts and view it from their own perspective and express their personal opinions.

By asking different questions at different times, the method makes the student think about and engage with the poem, or story at every moment. Firstly, the method tests the students’ previously acquired knowledge but also any existing biases and prejudices. The after reading questions help students find the right answers to the questions that were asked beforehand based on the information that they got from the poem, and make them engage actively with the work to make it their own, helping them to remember it. By combining all these different types of questions, the writers live up to their promise of making the students critical readers. However, whether the students become enthusiastic readers and “realise that reading literature is indeed ‘a joy forever’” (Budding et al.) remains to be seen.

The thematic part of this method does an excellent job of introducing high-school students to the field op literature by relating classic texts to their every-day lives. Moreover, by practicing literary analysis on recognizable texts and later transferring that knowledge onto canonical texts allows students to practice on a more basic level the skills they need to accomplish the learning objectives in their final examination. Learning objective seven and

eight are accomplished by both the thematic and historical part. Learning objective nine, however, is mostly accomplished through the historic part of the method.

1.3 *Eldorado*

The *Eldorado* method is a Dutch-language textbook. While there are texts and exercises specifically for English literature, the main theory and literary terms are in a separate book that is not made only for an English classroom but for all other high-school foreign language classrooms and Dutch literary courses in the upper levels of Dutch high schools. The "Basisboek" consists of two parts, one on literary terms and the other on literary history from a western European perspective. The first chapter in the first part is called "What is literature?" This is a question most of the other methods do not explicitly address. This method has the obligation to do so as it is a method that is used in multiple years and multiple language courses, whereas *Alquin*'s booklets are only used for part of a year. *Eldorado* has to extensively discuss basic topics as it is possibly the only method used within a school.

The rest of the first part is divided up into the different disciplines that can be argued to fall into the category literature, such as prose, poetry, theatre, comedy, film and TV. There are also two chapters dedicated to the reading of literature, one for prose and the other for poetry. The chapter on prose discusses how the writer aims to get their reader to a destination; the climax of the story, and what structural elements and narrative techniques the writer uses to get his audience to this climax. It also discusses the basic elements of a story and how these affect the story and thus the reader.

The chapter on reading poetry discusses poetry by form in one part and poetry by content in another part. In these chapters on how to read poetry, the students are provided examples of the literary terms, which they have learnt in previous chapters, put into practice. For example, in the section that discusses the sonnet they are introduced to terms such as: the quatrain, the octave, and the sextet. It is easy to point out the examples on paper in different poems they

discuss in this section. They also get an impression of how the volta works and how different rhyme schemes produce different readings of a text. However, almost all the examples of literature are translated into Dutch in the main book, which arguably does away with the concept of having a main book discussing literature in multiple languages. Although poets in different languages use the same structures and rhyme schemes poetry still works differently in different languages. Moreover, the difference between an English sonnet and a Petrarchan sonnet exists exactly because of these differences. Eldorado thus eliminates the nuances that exist in poetry in different languages.

The historical part of the main book has nine chapters which are each divided into four parts. The first part is about the era in general. The chapter on the nineteenth century discusses the industrial revolution, family and marriage, liberalism, and science. The second part is on the art in that particular time period. For the nineteenth century this includes romanticism, realism, impressionism and symbolism, photography, architecture and music. The third part discusses the important literature of the time period. The descriptions of certain artistic movements is fairly general, as they do not include many examples from different countries, or artists. The description seems to serve more as an introduction to the idea behind the movement to be elaborated upon in the texts and exercise books for each language course. Lastly, the fourth part gives students an overview of the timeline for that period, with important years and events for society in general, Dutch literature, and foreign literature

The text and exercise book is divided, like the historical part of the main book, into nine chapters each discussing a different period in English literary history starting at everything before 1100 and ending with the chapter on literature since 1980. Per chapter a few writers are discussed and sometimes the chapters are divided into British and American literature whenever this is relevant. In Chapter five “De 19e eeuw” is examined. This chapter opens with a “basisopdracht” which is about the historical and theoretical background of the

century that is given in the main book. After this, a few writers are discussed that were important for that period. In chapter five the first author discussed is Jane Austen. Every writer is introduced by means of a short biographical passage about their life and work. The work discussed in the section on Jane Austen is *Pride and Prejudice.* The method only uses scenes from the novel as it is an overview of literary history and does not provide enough time to discuss the novel in full. The scene from *Pride and Prejudice* is where Collins asks Elizabeth Bennet to marry him. The short excerpt is followed by more "basisopdrachten" on the characters in the texts. The questions ask, for example, why Elizabeth refuses to marry Collins, and focus on the personal opinion students have on the choices Elizabeth has as a woman in the early nineteenth century (60). Following the "basisopdrachten" are a few "verdiepingsopdrachten" which ask the students to engage with the text. For *Pride and Prejudice* the method asks students to rewrite the scene as a movie script, including stage directions. This will help students to find the important information in the text and think about how the characters thoughts and opinions can be displayed on screen and made explicit in conversation. The third type of exercise in this method is "extra opdrachten" which are often creative exercises that ask students to find extra information on the literary subjects. The "extra opdracht" in connection to *Pride and Prejudice* asks the students to compare the chapter on "the Netherfield Ball" to a scene from *Bridget Jones's Diary* in connection with the role first impressions play in both (61).

The chapter on the nineteenth century further includes discussion of Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Thomas Hardy, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in British prose. In American prose the chapter discusses Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mark Twain. Furthermore, in British and American poetry respectively this chapter discusses William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Edgar Allan Poe,

Walt Whitman and Emily Dickenson. Therefore, the focus is on writers, while the questions elaborate on themes and styles, in connection with the main book on the historical and literary background of the period. The questions related to Wordsworth's "My Heart Leaps Up" ask about why this is typically romantic, and if students have had such experiences with nature themselves (82) responding to the theoretical background given in the main book that the romantics of the nineteenth century wrote in awe of nature (*Basisboek* 164)

The *Eldorado* method discusses many authors, texts, and historical periods, but none in depth. It assumes all literary education, in whatever language, can be divided into the same historical periods, as well as be discussed using the same terms and theories. This is strange as Dutch literary history, for example, is known for not having definitive Romantic period. *Eldorado's* method falls short by attempting a universal approach to literature.

Yet, by employing three different levels of questions the students are more actively engaged with the texts and this helps in differentiating between the skills levels of the students. The "basisopdrachten" give enough information about the text and period to be able to discuss the period enough to pass an examination on the period. The more complex exercises are then for the more skilled students to be able to get an even better result on their examinations. Furthermore, by asking the students about their knowledge of a period or theme before reading the texts helps them confirm or dismiss their prejudices and learn new information.

Even though this method gives plenty of information to accomplish learning objectives eight and nine through discussion of multiple time periods and text types it discusses none of these in depth. This might cause high-school students to have trouble accomplishing learning objective seven as they will be unable to form arguments based on what they have read, as it is only applied to the works used in the method.

1.4 Leesdossier

The "Leesdossier" method consists of four short booklets that help students work on their reading portfolio. This is an important part of their oral examination at the end of their high-school period. Like *Eldorado* this method has different books for the different languages taught at Dutch high schools. However, this method is far less extensive than *Eldorado* as it only consists of four chapters: "Young love," "the short story," "the sonnet," and "book and film" (translated from Leesdossier 5). The method encourages students to relate the information given in these chapters to books they read for other language courses. Unlike the other methods, "Leesdossier" clearly states the learning objectives for students. For the chapter "young love" these are:

1. Het activeren van voorkennis over het thema.
2. Het luisteren naar leeservaringen van andere leerlingen.
3. Het herkennen en beschrijven van een bepaalde situatie of een bepaald gevoel.
4. Leren hoe een schrijver omgaat met het begrip jeugdliefde.
5. Verschillende teksten vergelijken op een aantal punten.
6. Reflecteren op je eigen gevoelens over het thema.
7. Leren samenwerken in groepen.
8. Een presentatie houden over het thema. (Leesdossier 6)

These objectives show an interest in both reader experience and text comprehension. Furthermore, it clearly states the end goal: give a presentation on the theme. Moreover the method also adds the set-up per chapter, what material you need, what the teacher should be doing, and what the student should be doing per chapter. This makes the method clear and concise, and it also gives the students a clear indication of what is expected of them, making them more likely to meet the objectives set for them as they are made aware of them from the beginning. This is in line with Monique Boekaerts principles of motivation. She suggests that

"[t]eacher expectations tend to shape what students come to expect from themselves, and should be communicated to the students up front, positively yet realistically" (97). By publishing the objectives of each chapter to the students before they even start "Leesdossier" is clearly stating what the students are expected to learn, making the students more motivated to work towards these objectives.

Every chapter contains texts, as well as "pre-reading questions" to help focus the students on the themes. There are also "check-questions" about the texts themselves, on issues such as characterisation as well as structure. The "getting into things" questions ask the students to explain their answers with examples from the text, and asks the students to explain why they think certain words might be used. Lastly, the "Rounding up" questions ask the students to compare the texts within a chapter with each other to look for differences and similarities. Students are also asked to formulate their critical opinion on the texts in the form of small essay-like answers. These last questions may also be used as class discussions. However, the set-up of each chapter is different making the book seem cluttered, and unstructured. Not every chapter features all types of aforementioned questions, nor do they include the same amount of questions, or maintain a similar layout.

Keeping in mind that this booklet is part of four, this method is nonetheless short, and rather unfulfilling. Four themes only to serve as a guideline for high-school students' reading skills does not seem like enough, even for a year. However, the method clearly states the learning objectives for the chapters, as well as what the teacher is doing and what the student is supposed to be doing, individually, or in groups. It may be used to fulfil the requirements of a reading portfolio, to help develop the skills needed to analyse literary works, but is unfulfilling as a source for the main literary skills needed to accomplish learning objectives on the students' final examination.

1.5 Conclusion

Looking back at the learning objectives set for the final examination of English literature by the SLO, the different methods' approaches to these objectives are in some ways quite similar. Each method discusses a plethora of different texts, ranging from novels to poetry, to short stories and theatre, but only few are discussed in full. Therefore, the responsibility of completing learning objective seven lies mostly with the students. The methods can only supply examples of texts and a form of analysis and it is up to the student to pick "at least" three for their final examination. Even though the methods can help narrow it down, there are no regulations on which works or what text styles students have to have read for their final exam, nor are there any guidelines on what may even be considered an appropriate "literary work" for their final examination. This is left up to the students, with some help from their teachers, to determine. The methods offer clearer guidelines for learning objective eight as there are some literary texts and terms that reoccur in the different methods. The sonnet, for example, is discussed in all five methods.

The final learning objective is present in all methods except *Leesdossier*. The history of both Britain in general as well as British writing is discussed extensively with the help of exemplary texts and even other art forms. The characteristics of the different periods are elaborated upon not only in the given texts but also in the questions the students have to answer, making sure that they are able to place a text in its historical context by merely looking at it. Each method discusses, for example, how the romantic period is characterised as being preoccupied by nature as you can see in *Eldorado* "terug naar de natuur, droom en fantasie" (164), *A Joy Forever* "a preoccupation with nature" (128), and *Alquin* a "focus on the power and grandeur of nature" (4). The similarity in the description of historical periods is useful for teachers because the methods then guide them in which literary terms and periods to discuss, as the teaching objectives provide little guidance. The historically focused methods

provide plenty of material allowing teachers to pick and choose whether or not they discuss a certain period in class. This is possible, especially, with a method like *Eldorado* where the other language courses are working through the same material, so skipping the Renaissance in English class does not mean the students will not have the relevant information in their toolkit.

These methods also give an insight in what a literary work should consist of to be suitable for teaching in the Dutch high-school curriculum as part of the final examination. A literary work should include typical aspects of its historical period (grandeur of nature, aestheticism, the sublime), it should be a certain type of text (novel, poem, play, novella), and it should be able to be discussed on the basis of certain literary terms (stanza, free verse, parody). These characteristics, then, show what needs to be done to accomplish learning objective seven: the students need to pick three novels that meet these criteria, in order to give a report of their reading experience throughout high school.

What these methods show is a plethora of approaches to literature, between different methods, but also within methods. What I propose in this thesis is an approach quite similar to the one taken in *A Joy Forever*, except I will combine the thematic and historical chapters rather than discuss them as separate approaches. I propose that a combination of the thematic approach and a literary historic approach gives plenty of opportunity to accomplish the different learning objectives through the three novels published in the Blackbird set. Considering the different aspects of each novel, while still being part of the same tradition, I argue *The Picture of Dorian Gray, Macbeth,* and *The Scarlet Letter* meet the above mentioned criteria. They include typical aspects of the different historical periods that shaped them, the texts include at least two different text types, and they can certainly be discussed using a plethora of different literary terms. Moreover, as some methods show a concern with reader experience, and reader enjoyment further emphasise why these novels are suitable for

high-school courses on literature. The exciting nature of these three works, through the Gothic and supernatural elements, corresponds to popular literature making these novels accessible to high-school students. The following chapters will demonstrate what is Gothic and supernatural about the chosen works and what is useful about these elements in teaching high-school students about literature, and literary history.

Chapter 2: The Portrait, The Mirror: Public and Private Corruption in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

In their book *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction: The British and American Traditions,* Tamar Heller and Diane Long Hoeveler suggest that when teaching *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) on a university level course, students "are usually able to recognize both the Gothic elements and their inextricable connections to eroticism, politics, and aesthetics" (127). However, they make only a passing suggestion at the Gothic elements students should recognise "in this typically Gothic narrative, which includes melodramatic characters and supernatural occurrences" (130). The focus in university-level courses will most likely be on the "inextricable connections" rather than the Gothic elements because students will most likely be familiar with what formal elements make a novel Gothic. However, the self-conscious and critical familiarity with Gothic conventions is not present when teaching this novel to high-school students, even if they do consume Gothic and supernatural fiction as entertainment. The learning objectives set for literary education in Dutch high-schools ask the students to be able to recognise the type of texts, to be able to discuss the novel using relevant literary terms, and to be able to place the texts into a historical context. Through an analysis that focuses on the Gothic elements as instruments in portraying the theme of the novel, rather than the connections these Gothic elements have to literary theory, high-school students are able to gain insight into the attitudes and views of the society from which this novel is a product as well as the literary conventions important to this novel.

To gain a better understanding of what Gothic and supernatural fiction can contribute to the Dutch high-school curriculum, besides a basic understanding of the genre, it is important to first consider what makes *The Picture of Dorian Gray* a Gothic text. The Gothic and supernatural elements in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can be mostly attributed to the mysterious portrait and its effect on Dorian's life, reputation, and sanity. However, Wilde's

novel does not necessarily fit the traditional framework of the Gothic novel, "[l]ocated in the historically remote past or in isolated, wild locations amid the suggestive relics of an ancient past" (Dryden 19). The setting of Wilde's novel is not at all historical, nor is it set in a far-away-place on the borders of civilised society. On the contrary, its setting is the vibrant social circles of high-society London. This, Dryden suggests, makes it a "modern Gothic" "focused on the urban present, refracting contemporary concerns through the lens of a literature of terror" (19). So instead of a focus on events in history that affect the present as the traditional Gothic does, Wilde's novel focusses on contemporary issues that affect contemporary lives. The contemporary issues in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* concern art, and the morality or immorality of art, as is made clear in the preface to the novel, in which Wilde claims "[t]here is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book" (13). However, the Gothic and supernatural elements in his novel all lead to the final destruction of Dorian Gray's corrupted soul, and with it the public mask of innocence Dorian kept had worn so well. This complex duality between a public and private persona, and the eventual collision of the two, is a prevailing theme in Gothic literature. Take for example Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, which both deal with the duality in good and evil, public and private. Through this duality high-school students can discern Wilde's exploration of moral hypocrisy as a human – not just a Victorian – dilemma, and discuss the possible presence of a moral lesson to be gained from Dorian's tragic fate.

2.1 The Gothic and Supernatural in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The Gothic theme of duality can also be found in Dorian's relationship with his "wicked" portrait. Dorian is able to see the consequences of his life of depravity in the corruption of his beautiful portrait, which both fills him with curiosity and "monstrous and terrible delight"

(132). He only rarely thinks "of the ruin he had brought upon his soul" (132). Yet, when Dorian finds the portrait unchanged after doing a good deed, according to his standards, it enrages him to think his soul is far past saving as the portrait has "brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy" (222). Dorian's anger at the portrait reflects a sentiment expressed in Wilde's preface to the novel: "The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass. The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in the glass" (13). Realism in the portrait starts out as a realistic image of what Dorian looks like, but over the course of the novel the reality portrayed in the picture is of Dorian's inner self, and the romanticised view is really his unchanged body. The supernatural abilities of the portrait changing but Dorian's appearance staying unchanged reflects nineteenth century conflicting attitudes towards what art should display. Society does not want realistic art as it shows an unpleasant reality, but they also do not want romanticised art as it does not reflect reality. This conflict reflects the moral of the novel concerned with public image and private corruption. Realistic art shows the corrupted soul of society, as it does with Dorian, and romanticised art shows the public mask, as does Dorian's body. The emotions Dorian feels towards the portrait change towards the end of the novel. The "[u]gliness that had once been hateful to him because it made things real, became dear to him now for that very reason" (186). Thus, by reflecting the very conflict of society Dorian Gray's portrait becomes a metaphorical vehicle for the expression of a moral theme.

The portrait's ability to change with the whims of its real life antecedent is in itself supernatural, but the horror that Dorian first feels towards the change apparent in the painting after Sybil Vane's death (still unbeknownst to Dorian) is uncanny because of the fear that "inanimate objects—a picture or a doll—come to life," as Freud argued in his essay "The 'Uncanny'" (13). "Surely a painted canvas could not alter?" (11) Dorian asks himself the

following morning, musing whether or not he had imagined it. The doubt about what changes the portrait casts doubt on whether or not Dorian is sane, or seeing the changes as a manifestation of his own conscience. Casting it off as "merely an illusion wrought on the troubled senses" (96) gives the impression that Dorian himself does not trust his sanity after the heart-breaking scene with Sybil Vane. Linda Dryden argues that doubts about sanity are a traditional trope of the Gothic as "Gothic fiction is often a literature of transformations where identity is unstable and sanity a debatable state of being" (19). The reader is left doubting whether the changes to the portrait are real or a figment of Dorian's paranoid imagination until Basil Hallward confirms it in chapter thirteen. This suggestion of possible insanity adds to the uncanniness of the portrait, and explains Dorian's increasingly paranoid behaviour towards the portrait.

Dorian's identity as a respectable London dandy is both true and untrue at the same time. The depravity visible in the portrait is a part of Dorian's identity he is desperately trying to hide from the outside world. Dorian himself claims "he was not really reckless, at any rate in his relations to society" (132), which suggests that even though he feeds his desires, he is careful about protecting his public persona of decadence and dandyism. Many of the guests at his elaborate parties look up to him as the "type that was to combine something of the real culture of the scholar with the grace and distinction and perfect manner of a citizen of the world" (133). The reader is the only one besides Dorian Gray to know anything of the corruption that grows behind the façade of perfection. If anyone were to find out the truth he would be ruined, as Dorian has ruined countless lives. Over the years, Dorian grows nervous about this secret and cannot stand to leave the picture on its own for very long. The portrait becomes uncanny, and therefore a very important Gothic element in the novel, because it is, as Freud suggests in his essay on the uncanny, "in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar … that has been estranged only by the process of repression" (13).

Dorian's identity is doubled, his private, repressed, identity, clashes with his public identity and therefore both his identities are compromised. As Dryden argues "[t]o be haunted by another … is uncanny enough, but to be haunted by yourself strikes at the foundations of identity" (41) reflecting the Gothic nature of Wilde's novel. That Dorian is haunted by the portrait is apparent in his constant search for distractions, first by collecting thing as "means of forgetfulness, modes by which he could escape" (142), later by using opium. In the end he intends to "kill this monstrous soul-life" (222) forgetting it is his soul he is destroying, and thus himself. The duality in his identity becomes obvious in this scene as he has completely disassociated his private life from his public life. Elizabeth MacAndrew quotes Poe suggesting that "man, however depraved, cannot obliterate his own conscience without shattering himself" (211) which is as much a theme in in Poe's *William Wilson*, as it is Wilde's novel, as is exemplified by Dorian's death.

2.2 *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the Classroom

The mysterious and supernatural qualities of Dorian Gray's ever-changing portrait are important features that make Wilde's novel Gothic. Moreover, the identity struggle the portrait represents important in how the students relate to this novel. As Louise M. Rosenblatt suggests in her book *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work,* "the reader brings to the text his past experience and present personality" (12) which shapes the text to be a personal experience for each reader. Linda Dryden argues that "Wilde's novel offers a mirror to the experience, imagination, and maybe even the soul of the reader" (3), and this is not only true for Wilde's contemporary audience but also for his modern audience. The sins that corrupt the portrait are left undescribed except for Sybil Vane's brutal rejection, and Basil Hallward's murder. Therefore, Dorian Gray's corruption becomes universal, and the moral attitudes displayed in the novel towards this corruption

become more universal as well. Dryden's argument is based on a statement made by Wilde himself that "each man sees his own sins in Dorian Gray… He who finds them has brought them" (Oscar Wilde qtd. in Dryden). Therefore, the reflection the portrait offers could be of the readers' own sins, making the protagonist's decay the readers' decay as well. Dryden suggests holding up the mirror to our own sins is a reversal of the tradition Gothic's tendency to "explore and expose fear of agents outside ourselves and their capacity to hurt us" (39). The modern Gothic looks at "our horror at what we may be capable of" (Dryden 39) and thus fearing the other in us rather than the other outside of us. This fear is something the Gothic genre explores in great depth throughout its existence, and is what, the renowned Gothic scholar Alison Milbank argues, makes it a popular genre. By exploring the horror of what mankind could do in Gothic fiction allows readers to act out their "desires for forbidden pleasures," as Milbank has recently stated.

The universality of Dorian Gray's corruption makes it easier for high-school students to relate to a novel set in a period they possibly know nothing about. The theme of public virtue and hidden corruption is not unknown to high-school students. Especially in the past few years, the news media have served both teachers and students almost daily reminders that this Gothic theme is not only a sin of the past, but very much of the present as well. Furthermore, Dorian Gray has been adapted for the small and big screen, its story re-tailored to fit present-day moral standards, making the Dorian Gray of 1890 a figure with whom some students might already be familiar. Carol A. Senf argues that when teaching older Gothic and supernatural fiction teachers should start with a piece of fiction the students are already familiar with to show the universality of some themes. She argues that

> beginning with students' existing knowledge helps demonstrate that, because Gothic is concerned with the social, economic, and political issues of its day, it has changed

> drastically since its beginning even as it continues to emphasize whatever is mysterious, frightening, and overwhelming for a particular culture. (86-7)

The Gothic fiction of today, then, has the potential to teach high-school students about their socio-political context in a setting familiar to them. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* consequently, can be used in the classroom to teach students about the "social, economic and political issues of its day" (Senf 87). Hence, the novel can be used to accomplish the learning objectives concerned with the historical context of the novel as well as helping the student in using the relevant terminology in present-day literature, and the ethical theme that characterises this novel is applicable to modern-day literature as well as society.

Moreover, the conflict between the public and the private is a theme that can be applied to high-school students' own lives. High-school students are at a time in their lives the way they see themselves becomes more and more influenced by the way they are perceived by others (Slot et al. 131-32) and their identity thus forms itself through the opinions of, for example, their peers. This is, in essence, a process which Dorian Gray is going through as well. The students' private identity is dictated by their parents and how they act at home, whereas their public identity is highly influenced by their peers. They might desperately try to hide their private identity from their peers as Dorian Gray hides his soul from his friends.

Besides the novel being suitable for teaching because students are able to identify with the protagonist, and thus increasing reader enjoyment, it also proves useful in accomplishing the learning objectives. As is stated in learning objective nine the student should be aware of the historical development of literature and should be able to place the works they read into this historical timeline. Reading *The Picture of Dorian Gray* helps in accomplishing this learning objective because it introduces the high-school students not only to an important period in the history of English literature but also to the themes, theories, and terminology

associated with this period. The ethical theme that prevails through this novel concerning public and private personas gives the students insight into various views and attitudes expressed in the Victorian period concerning themes of public image and private identity. In his introduction to the Blackbird edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Henk Pieter Berkman suggests that the term "victoriaans" is often associated with exaggerated prudishness and modesty, and a great obsession with denying sexuality and physicality (7).[3] Of course this is a rather generalised description of the period, as Berkman does not have the space to go into in depth discussion of the period. However, this general description gives students an idea of why this book was considered immoral, and is an excellent start for the discussion of this novel. Berkman also shines light on what Oscar Wilde says the moral in this book is: "All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment" (11). An analysis of the Gothic elements with which Wilde has attempted to portray his suggested moral shows a different moral. As argued above, the Gothic elements work towards a moral more focused on the ability to sin in everyone, and how hiding your private corruption behind a mask op public decency will destroy you in the end. The high-school students, with this information, can have a meaningful discussion as to the extent to which Oscar Wilde has been able to portray his suggested moral, and what the story suggests is the moral.

[3] "'Victoriaans' roept vooral associaties op met overdreven preutsheid en zedigheid. Aan de victorianen kleeft de reputatie van een zo grote obsessie met het ontkennen van seksualiteit en lichamelijkheid, dat zij zelfs de poten van hun piano's van draperieën voorzagen"

Chapter 3: Ghosts and Guilt: The Guilty Conscience as a Moral Instructor in *Macbeth*

William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) was performed well before the rise of the Gothic novel at the end of the eighteenth century and therefore finding it in this line-up might raise a few questions. However, as Desmet and Williams argue "a complete portrait of Shakespeare must include his Gothic shadow [and] in order to read the Gothic clearly we should contemplate its Shakespearean Origins" (2). The abundance of witches, ghosts, insanity and murder, allow for a Gothic reading of the play. More importantly, Shakespeare's tragedies are mentioned by Horace Walpole in the second preface to arguably the first proper Gothic novel: *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Walpole says in his preface that "Shakespeare was the model I Copied" (Walpole xxi) after explaining that the novel was an "attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern" (xvi). Walpole calls Shakespeare the "great master of nature," which explains Shakespeare's connection to the Gothic. The natural, the unnatural, and the supernatural all play a vital role in the Romantic period, and thus in classic Gothic fiction, for their uncanny and sublime characteristics. Reading plays such as *Macbeth* as a Gothic text is therefore a valid and useful approach to gaining a better understanding of the text, as Shakespeare influenced writers of the Gothic with plays like *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, all steeped in the supernatural.

Few people will be surprised at finding *Macbeth* on a university student's reading list. Such a canonical work offers many opportunities for in-depth analysis and research. However, *Macbeth* is also found on many high-school level courses in literature, where the kind of in-depth analysis conducted in university level seminars is not an aim. Fred Sedgwick suggests that studying *Macbeth* at high-school level can be useful because it "is an exciting, elemental play, and it is very fast … [a]nd at least one of its images – the witch – is part of most children's myth-kitty before they come to school" (ch. 4). In recent decades popular Dutch children's literature has been about the supernatural, including stories about witches. A

fairly recent series called "De Boze Heks" by Hanna Kraan has been extremely popular among children. The image of the witch is therefore not new to students. The fast pace of the play and the commonplace image of the witch makes this Shakespearean tragedy accessible to young learners.

Moreover, Sedgewick suggests "*Macbeth* offers us the chance to explore with children violence and its justification in certain times; state, official violence as opposed to … criminal violence; even the psychological violence we do to ourselves and eachother" (ch. 4). Violence, like the witch, is a recognisable feature of the play that, unfortunately, comes up frequently in the daily lives of high-school students. Through an analysis of what the witches and violent scenes illustrate about the society of which this work is a product, high-school students are able to learn not only about the development of the Gothic but also about a play, as well as Elizabethan society and its views.

3.1 The Gothic and Supernatural in *Macbeth*

The play opens with the Witches' meeting amid thunder and lightning, which immediately draws the audience, or the reader, into the supernatural atmosphere present throughout the play. Witches and the fear of witches were part of day to day life for the audience of Shakespeare's plays. Public punishment of witches was still very much part of the justice system as Agustin Mendez illustrates in his article "To Accommodate the Earthly Kingdom to Divine Will: Official and Nonconformist Definitions of Witchcraft in England (ca. 1542-1630)." During the reign of King James I, many acts of Witchcraft were punishable by death (Mendez 282-83). Within law of that time witches were defined as being able to "use, practice or exercise an invocation or conjuration of an evil and wicked spirit: or shall consult, covenant with, entertaine, imploy, feed or reward any evil and wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose" (Mendez 283). The Witches in *Macbeth* display these abilities by conjuring

the consulting apparitions for Macbeth. Witches are able to communicate with things unknown, beyond the natural world of the audience of the play, which makes them supernatural. Moreover, in her book *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*, Elizabeth MacAndrew argues that witches in Gothic fiction represent the "malignant aspect" of the "female spirit" (179). This side of women "is anomalous; it tempts, seduces, lures men to inevitable destruction" (MacAndrew 179). The Witches in *Macbeth* definitely reflect these aspects. With their promise of kingship they, in a sense, seduce Macbeth onto the path of obsession and murder that leads to his downfall.

Had the Witches not planted the seed of power in Macbeth's mind he would not have thought to be King as he notes right after the prophecy "to be King/Stands not within the prospects of belief" (I.3.76-7). How far the Witches influence extends is open for debate. They suggest Macbeth will be king but do not tell him how he will become king, but the murderous path he chooses seems to be all his own doing, with some encouragement from his equally ambitious wife. At first, he is not intent on pursuing the path of king as he suggests at the end of act I scene 3: "if chance will have me king, why, chance/may crown me/without my stir" (155-7). He expects to be crowned king suddenly, as has happened with him becoming Thane of Cawdor a few lines before. The vision he has of the dagger guiding him to Duncan suggests further influence by the Witches. Enforced by the cauldron scene, in act IV, this idea gains more ground, by showing the audience the Witches are indeed capable of conjuring up strange apparitions in the form of an armed head, a bloody child, and a crowned child with a tree in his hand.

Furthermore, the rhymed incantation the Witches perform before Macbeth enters, with its repetitions and strange ingredients, as well as their foresight of Macbeth arriving emphasises their supernatural nature. The eeriness in the cauldron scene is emphasised by how their speech is presented. The trochaic and iambic metres in which they deliver their

lines, as well as the repetition and alliteration, highlight the supernatural nature of the Witches as no one else in the play continuously speaks in in this poetic manner, setting the Witches apart from the other, moral, characters. In his article "The Sounds of Supernatural Soliciting in Macbeth," David L. Kranz argues that the patterns become "a kind of poetic signature for the ambiguous, partly supernatural characters who utter them" (357). Throughout the play the Witches' diction and speech rhythms are echoed by the other characters. The Witches sing-song ending to their first meeting "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I.1.11) is echoed in Macbeth's first words in the play "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (I.3.38). Even though Macbeth and the Witches have not met yet, their words are already in Macbeth's mouth suggesting "the connection between the hero and the supernatural hags is established well before the actual staged temptation" (Kranz 346). Moreover, as Kranz suggests "Shakespeare has also suggestively linked some of the patterns to human characters," like Macbeth, to signal their connection to the Witches' prophecy. The Witches are the only one, initially, to speak in rhyme, but when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have decided on killing Duncan, Macbeth ends their conversation in rhyme. "Away, and mock the time with fairest show;/False face must hide what the false heart doth know" (I.6.92-3). This signals to the audience that Macbeth's ideas of murder are as wicked as "the weird sisters" (I.3.33) are. In Kranz' argument "the form of the verse seems to have much in common with the character and actions of the infected characters" (367). Macbeth is indeed one of those infected characters. His decision to murder sends him into a downward spiral of damnation, starting with those versed lines in act 1. This ending with verse occurs again when Macbeth goes into Duncan's bedroom to murder him. Speaking of the bell that signals he must do the deed he says "Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell/That summons thee to heaven, or to hell." (II.1.72-3). The Witches are doubly supernatural through their witchcraft which both a contemporary and modern audience is all too familiar with, as well as through the way they speak.

Emphasising the unnatural speech of the Witches by contrasting "normal" prose spoken by the other characters.

The Witches are not the only supernatural characters in the play. After his death, Banquo reappears as a ghost. Soon after hearing of Banquo's death, Macbeth is plagued by his ghost. As they are sitting down for their feast, Banquo enters and sits on Macbeth's seat at the table and Macbeth goes into a fit of terror. However the lines, "take any shape but that, and my firm nerves/shall never tremble" (III.4.118-19) suggest Macbeth is not afraid of the ghost itself but of the shape it takes, the shape of Banquo, the man he ordered to be killed. However, in the play, the ghost is really there, it is not just a figment of Macbeth's guilty imagination. The stage directions say "Enter Ghost of Banquo" (III.4.45), which suggest the actor that plays Banquo comes on stage looking as if he is a ghost. What is scary and frightening about ghosts is that they "disturb our sense of the separation of the living from the dead" (Bennett and Royle 182). The fear the ghost incites is double, it reminds Macbeth of his own mortality as Bennett and Royle argue, but it also frightens because "what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others" (Abrahams qtd. In Bennett and Royle 184). The secret Banquo took to the grave is of his murder, which has come to haunt Macbeth as he was the one who requested the murder. This is exemplified when Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth "augures and understood relations have/By maggot pies and choughs and rooks brought forth/The secret'st man of blood" (III.4.147-8), suggesting Macbeth fears he will be exposed for the murders. The different aspects of Banquo's ghost make him an important supernatural element in the play, as he is both scary to Macbeth and the audience, and his arrival signals the start of Macbeth's downfall. The fit of terror Macbeth displays in front of all the lords is a crack in his public mask that starts to reveal his inner corruption.

While Macbeth is plagued by ghosts, Lady Macbeth is plagued by her own guilt. At night she is caught sleepwalking by her doctor and nurse, obsessively trying to wash her

hands. The "spot" (IV.1.28) she is attempting to wash off of her hands is a manifestation of her guilty conscience. She has kept the murder a secret, and the betrayal of Duncan has come back to haunt her. In his essay "The 'Uncanny'" Freud argues that "every emotional affect, whatever its quality, is transformed by repression into morbid anxiety" (13). This morbid anxiety is unconsciously exposed in Lady Macbeth sleepwalking. Bennett and Royle suggest that sleepwalking is uncanny because "what is human is perceived as merely mechanical" (38). Lady Macbeth's mechanical washing of her hands suggest a similar form of uncanniness. The display of insanity through her "automatism" (Bennett and Royle 38) make her sleepwalking an important supernatural element. The ghost Macbeth sees, and the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth displays both have the same consequence: a display of their inner corruption which leads to their eventual downfall.

Moreover, the guilt and fear Lady Macbeth feels towards the murder of Duncan is also Gothic. It is what Hogle suggests "the terror or possible horror that the ruination of older powers will haunt us all" (5). This is a theme present in many Gothic works, including *The Castle of Otranto.* The murder of Duncan is most definitely "the ruination of older powers" as the royal lineage is disturbed through foul-play. The guilt that is driving Lady Macbeth insane can be read as a Gothic theme and consequently, together with the other Gothic and supernatural elements, aids in teaching the text as a Gothic text.

3.2 *Macbeth* in the classroom

Macbeth is not only steeped with characters, themes and tropes that would also be the basis for the horror and supernatural literature of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century now known as Gothic fiction. Moreover, the crucial elements of Jacobean theatre that are present in the play offer a genre on its own to dive into as teachers and students of English literature.

However, for the purpose of this thesis the focus will be on how a Gothic reading of this play will aid in accomplishing the learning objectives set for high-school students.

It is often the case that plays like this will be read in class, and the students might not get the chance to see the play performed as it is supposed to be. As Miriam Gilbert argues, in her article "Teaching Dramatic Literature": "Plays are extremely complex artefacts since one needs to consider not just words, but the contribution of actors, directors, designers, technicians, and, of course, the audience, to the entity we call a 'play'" (85). Susan McCloskey, argues that "what [students] *see* or imagine is as vital in interpreting a play as what they *hear* or read" (385, italics McCloskey). Both McCloskey and Gilbert suggest that not simply reading the text but also performing it (with or without practice or elaborate props) enhances students' understanding of the play. However, McCloskey adds, "[t]o be really useful in the context of a literature course, scene work must pertain directly to the students' experience as readers and affect the way they read" (390). Literature courses are of course not theatrical courses and should not be aimed at improving the students' acting skills, but at improving their skills as readers, and improve their ability to critically analyse texts. Therefore, the classwork should be a combination of performed scenes as well as read scenes to ensure the students grasp the story, as well as its importance completely.

As stated by Sharon Hamilton, in her book *Essential Literary Terms*, *Macbeth* is a typically Jacobean tragedy as it can be defined as a "revenge tragedy" which involve "sensationalist elements as ghosts, grisly murders, nefarious schemes, and ruthless villains" (4). The elements that are closely related to Jacobean tragedy, can also be seen as a connection to the Gothic genre, which demonstrates again that a Gothic reading of this text is possible, and even useful, to understanding this text. Using the supernatural elements in the play allows the teacher to explain the prevailing superstitions and religious beliefs of the society from which the play was written. Henk Pieter Berkman argues in his introduction to

the Blackbird edition of *Macbeth* that everyone believed in supernatural occurrences, the king and the church most of all (4),[4] showing students, again in general terms, how the Jacobean era was a time of superstition and witch hunting. Including this introduction in this edition of *Macbeth* makes students aware of what it meant for people living in Jacobean society to be accused of being a witch, while giving students an insight into the prevailing religious influence on day to day life in early seventeenth-century England.

In her book *Good and Evil in Shakespeare's King Lear and Macbeth*¸ Alina Degünther explains that in contrast to the medieval belief that "good initially originated from God and evil was created by the devil" (3). In Elizabethan times "it was accepted that good and evil was a part of human nature and originally came from human beings" (Degünther 3). This idea is reflected in *Macbeth* because in the beginning of the play Macbeth is painted as a good man; he is a good soldier, loyal to his king but the decision to murder Duncan still comes from within him. Macbeth in the beginning can be characterised as a Gothic hero but as the play progresses he turns into a Gothic villain. The good and evil, moral and immoral, in Macbeth's character become unclear. The goodness he displays as soldier and host slowly begins to crumble, becoming a façade as the forces of ambition and power slowly corrupt him, pushing him further and further down the path of evil. Moreover, it is unclear how far the Witches' hold on Macbeth extends which adds another element to the discussion of Macbeth's character. Degünther argues that in the Renaissance "it was supposed that witches were representatives of evil, because they could control a man´s soul and his fate" (5), which suggests that Macbeth's encounter with these Witches might have caused him to become obsessed by his ambition to be king. His characterisation is open to meaningful discussions on what makes a person good or evil, as in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* discussed in the next chapter. The play informs students not only of Elizabethan values but also makes them

[4] "iedereen geloofde in bovennatuurlijke verschijnselen, de vorst en de protestantse kerk voorop"

reconsider their own perceptions about what is good and what is evil behaviour. Additionally, in his introduction to the Blackbird edition of *Macbeth*, Berkman suggests that because the play was performed a year after the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605, engineered by Guy Fawkes the play's moral lesson is centred around that event. He suggest that the central theme of the play is "de noodlottige gevolgen van rebellie tegen het wettige gezag" (7). This suggested theme narrows the moral lesson the Gothic and supernatural elements portray to a specific event, and therefore to a specific audience. However, as with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Scarlet Letter*, the moral lesson can also be interpreted as a more universal theme: the ethical dilemma's mankind faces every day.

The Gothic and supernatural elements combined with the historical context offer high-school students the tools they need to accomplish the learning objectives related to the timeline of literary history. Moreover, as *Macbeth* is a play, it also helps in accomplishing learning objective eight related to the recognition of different text types. Moreover, the lessons could be expanded to include specific information on Shakespeare's work and the tradition from which he worked to help students better understand the play and how it works.

Chapter 4: The Scarlet Letter as a Moral Compass: Morality and Hypocrisy in *The Scarlet Letter*

As early as 1943, Neal Frank Doubleday persuasively showed that much of Nathaniel Hawthorne's oeuvre, including *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), is steeped in the conventions of the Gothic genre. In the introduction to *The History of the Gothic: American Gothic*, Charles Crow argues that "[a]s a literature of borderlands, the Gothic is naturally suited to a country that has seen the frontier (a shifting geographical, cultural, linguistic and racial boundary) as its defining characteristic" (2). These borderlands, Crow states, are between "waking and dreams, human and machine, the normal and the freakish, and living and dead" (2). This is seen, for example, in Hester Prynne's deviation from what is "normal" through her sin but also in the actual border between the village and the forest on which Hester and Pearl live, such borderlands play a vital role in Hawthorne's narrative. These borders and the crossing of these borders become significant in the action of Hawthorne's novel as important conversations that take place in the forest are denied in the civilised world. Dimmesdale's promise to run away with Hester and Pearl is made in the forest but instead he confesses his sin and dies on the scaffold.

The fact that Dimmesdale hides his sins from the public, points to the theme of a dual identities, also present in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Macbeth*, exemplified in the division of the self into a public and private persona. The thin border between public and private is both protected and crossed at the same time, especially in the relationship between Hester and Dimmesdale, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, and Chillingworth and Hester. Eventually, the supernatural elements in Hawthorne's novel guide the action towards one goal: the destruction of public masks and the uncovering of private corruption.

As in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Macbeth*, in *The Scarlet Letter*, the moral dichotomies of good versus evil, virtue versus sin, innocence versus guilt, are shown to be not

as black and white as one might think. The novel shines a light on how social institutions such as law and religion can cause moral hypocrisy and how a doctrine of rigid dichotomies can overshadow the grey areas which surround notions of good and bad. When reading *The Scarlet Letter* students are forced to consider what makes a person good and what makes them bad. Which sin is worse? Hester Prynne had no way of hiding hers; Arthur Dimmesdale hid it for too long. Which children in the community are the "good" children? Little Pearl was born of sin and plays in the forest; the puritan children were born of supposedly virtuous parents and play at scalping Indians and beating Quakers. The debate that ensues when high-school students discuss the differences and similarities between their understanding and attitude towards these themes, and the way in which the narrator of the story demonstrates the Puritan's moral attitudes can lead to important discoveries about the complexity of early American life in the Puritan colonies. High-school students can discover what the prevailing moral guidelines were in a country that had no guidelines, apart from their devotion to the Bible, to begin with. Considering whether there is a moral lesson to be learned from *The Scarlet Letter* aids in understanding what it was these settlers were trying to accomplish.

In his article "Hawthorne's Use of Three Gothic Patterns," Neal Frank Doubleday argues that in "Hawthorne's work the familiar resources of the Gothic romancer are not used primarily to awaken terror or wonder but to embody a moral" (250). Therefore, a thematic approach to *The Scarlet Letter*, focusing on Hawthorne's use of Gothic tropes to convey a message, guided by the supernatural and Gothic elements of this novel, offers teachers and students many tools with which they can zoom in on the formal and historical aspects of this novel. On top of learning about American fiction and history, a thematic approach to literature serves to guide children's socialization, as they are simultaneously confronted with themes and opinions important to their own social life, such as death, love, and ethics. To understand

how the Gothic tropes in Hawthorne's romance facilitate such an approach, it is important to first establish which Gothic elements are present in the novel.

4.1 The Gothic and Supernatural in *The Scarlet Letter*

That this novel belongs to the Gothic genre becomes clear from the start. The description of the prison in the first chapter of Hawthorne's novel is strongly Gothic: "[A] wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes" is how the narrator describes the building in the first few lines. Moreover, the building is described to look "more antique than any thing else in the new world" because of its "weather-stains and other indications of age" (12). The building, however new it may be, is already similar to the Gothic image of a crumbling castle. Moreover, nature is a prominent feature in the description of the prison. The weeds that grow in front of the prison, the narrator suggests, reflect the nature of the soil. As if the purpose of the building and the crimes committed by the people held in the prison have seeped into the soil to produce such "unsightly vegetation" (12). Furthermore, the narrator offers the rose that grows near the prison door to the reader hoping to "relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow" (13). The description of the prison is therefore not merely and introduction to the genre but also a stylistic reflection on the central theme of the narrative: the outside appearance of an object, and possibly a person, should not guide the reader's judgement of said object. The narrator thus introduces the major theme of this novel, and a recurring theme in Gothic fiction: the clash between public versus private personas.

During the first important scaffold scene, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale says Hester Prynne has to reveal her lover even if he "were to step down from a high-place" (30). The crowd might think Dimmesdale means that even if the person is important in the community Hester must reveal the father of the child anyway, so the man can stand beside her on the scaffold. However, when Dimmesdale gives this speech imploring Hester to reveal her lover,

he is standing on a balcony above her, a high place. The hypocrisy in his speech is again an example of the duality of private and public persona. The Reverend preaches that it is better to stand on the "pedestal of shame" than to "hide a guilty heart through life" (30), yet this is exactly what he is doing. His public persona of well-respected reverend in Boston is more important to him than repenting for his "guilty heart" (30) or standing beside Hester. This becomes evident in a conversation Dimmesdale has with Roger Chillingworth. Discussing the idea of people taking their sins to their grave, Dimmesdale tells Chillingworth that this happens because guilty as they may be, retaining, nevertheless, a zeal for God's glory and man's welfare, they shrink from displaying themselves black and filthy … because, thence forward, no good can be achieved by them" (93). This statement exemplifies how Dimmesdale's work in the church is more important to him than repentance, which stands in stark contrast to what he told Hester Prynne a few years earlier. Dimmesdale is now "add[ing] hypocrisy to sin" (30) through silence.

In the second scaffold scene, featuring Hester and Dimmesdale, the supernatural reveals Dimmesdale's private sins. The scarlet A that shines through the clouds is interpreted by Dimmesdale, and other members of his congregation, as a signal from above. In his article "Swelling Waves: Visuality, Metaphor, and Bodily Reality in *The Scarlet Letter*," David Downing suggests that the scarlet A "converts nature into a supernatural language mediating between man and God" (19). The letter manifested in the cloud becomes supernatural because the puritans of Boston interpret it as such. Dimmesdale sees it as God reminding him of his sins, and the congregation sees it as a signal that their governor has become an angel. Therefore, the supernatural in *The Scarlet Letter* can be seen as aiding in the eventual crack in Dimmesdale's public mask. As in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Macbeth*, the supernatural and Gothic elements are used to reveal the unconscious evil that drives the main characters actions. As Hester, Pearl and Arthur Dimmesdale stand on the scaffold hand in hand, the

clouds part and reveal to Dimmesdale a scarlet letter A in the sky. As with Macbeth, it is, at that point in time, not certain whether it is just a figment of "his guilty imagination" (116) or that the clouds really did part in such a shape. What is more, at this very moment, Roger Chillingworth is standing a short distance away watching the whole scene unfold. He already knows about the scarlet letter on the Reverend's chest but decides not to act on this knowledge yet.

Roger Chillingworth arrives in Boston, coincidentally, on the same day Hester is put up on the scaffold to display her A "dropping down, as it were, out of the sky, or starting from the nether earth" (82). Even though the townspeople admire Chillingworth for his medical skills and see a "providential hand" in his arrival right in time to take care of Dimmesdale, they also doubt his character. They see a change in him: "there was something ugly and evil in his face" (88) since he moved in with Dimmesdale. The people even go as far as to suggest that Chillingworth is "Satan's emissary" (88), influencing Dimmesdale's health. This assumption is made because his skills are drawn both from the study of alchemy and from his Indian captivity. His medicines are made from natural ingredients and this connection with nature closely relates Chillingworth to the image of the wizard. Elizabeth MacAndrew argues that wizards "pursue a forbidden path that cuts them off from their fellow humans and so from virtue" (173-4). Chillingworth's time spent in the savage wilderness surrounded by and learning from native Americans would have been considered such a forbidden path as the Indians and their traditional medicine were considered "illegitimate by the Puritan authorities" (van Leeuwen 263). Moreover, as becomes clear from the titles of two chapters in which Chillingworth is prominently featured, he is a "leech" (chapters 9 and 10), not in the sense that he sucks Dimmesdale's blood, but in the sense that he clamps onto Dimmesdale and will not let go until he has reached his goal: Dimmesdale's demise. MacAndrew suggests Chillingworth is a "mad scientist" as he "follow[s] … investigations and experiments

obsessively … unable to stop" (178). As can be seen in the fact that he dies shortly after the object of his obsession has also died. The mad scientists in Gothic fiction are closely related to the witches in Gothic fiction, MacAndrew argues, through the "distortion of their natural state" (178). As a wizard type, Roger Chillingworth functions as a central Gothic figure in the novel, using his supernatural powers to bring about the demise of Arthur Dimmesdale's public persona of virtue.

In the third and final scaffold scene, Chillingworth's goal is finally reached. Dimmesdale publicly displays the mysterious red A on his own chest, burned into the flesh as it seems. The disease that preceded Dimmesdale's frantic death is, as Roger Chillingworth established, caused by "a sickness, a sore place" (97) in his soul. The repression of his sins is making the Reverend Dimmesdale physically ill, it is "but a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part" (96). The disease has put him on the "verge of lunacy" (126), as the narrator describes Hester's impression of Dimmesdale. Crow argues that "[t]he Gothic exposes the repressed, what is hidden, unspoken, deliberately forgotten, in the lives of individuals and cultures" (2). This is what the final scaffold scene highlights in *The Scarlet Letter*. Dimmesdale's hidden identity is finally revealed and he subsequently dies, having freed his soul of this burden. As with Dorian Gray, and Macbeth, it is the repression of a part of themselves that leads to the insanity and eventual demise of their character.

Hester describes Pearl, her daughter, as "[a]n imp of evil, emblem and product of sin, she had no right among christened infants" (55). Hester sees in Pearl "a shadowy reflection of evil" (56), which she attributes to her being born out of sin. Moreover, like Chillingworth, Pearl is associated with and compared to witches. Hester often refers to Pearl as a witch and to her playing as "witchcraft" (57). Furthermore, Pearl "is in touch with the earth and, whether she is gentle or fierce, this contact makes her stronger" (MacAndrew 179), which connects her to the image of the earth mother, or witch. Like Chillingworth again, Pearl is

also associated with the demonic and for this is almost taken away from Hester. Pearl is often described with a devilish grin, and denies the existence of her heavenly father. In the Puritan society described in the novel "this is awful" (74) and the Puritan authorities also blame the mother for Pearl's lacking in religious insight, and therefore less than sufficient upbringing. When Hester goes to the governor's house to plead for custody of Pearl, she dresses Pearl in the same red as her letter. Hester claims she can teach her daughter to be a better person than herself because she has learned from her mistakes: "lessons whereof [Pearl] may be the wiser and better" (72). Pearl, dressed in scarlet, is the embodiment of the letter, and she thus becomes a symbol of the moral lesson made clear in the beginning of the story; public appearance does not always portray a person's private sins. Pearl is a product of the scarlet letter but she is also the lesson of the scarlet letter.

4.2 *The Scarlet Letter* in the classroom

By analysing Hawthorne's seminal work, its historical background, its Gothic tropes, and narrative technique, students can gain various insights into literature, the development of the Gothic, and Puritan American society. Moreover, the themes that are addressed in this novel, such as the complex relationship between morality and immorality, are concepts high-school students have to deal with in their day to day lives. Therefore, the themes will be familiar enough for them to be able to have intelligent discussions about them. By discussing Doubleday's argument that "[w]hat is Gothic [in Hawthorne's work] is merely a vehicle for the theme" (252), *The Scarlet Letter* becomes more accessible as the high-school students have the familiarity of the Gothic tropes to hold onto when exploring this work. Furthermore, it shows the students that literature is not always about difficult, and elevated subjects, but it has much in common with the books and series they read and watch in their spare time. In her article "Gothic Fiction Tells Us the Truth about Our Divided Nature," Milbank argues that

Gothic fiction is popular because it allows readers to act out their deepest, darkest desires through their imagination. She uses Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as an example when she argues that in modern works of fiction "the power of desires and passions" is merely seen as an inconvenience and that the creation of Mr. Hyde is merely a way to deal with this inconvenience. "It is his desires for forbidden pleasures that lead Jekyll to create Mr. Hyde" (Milbank) and it is the desire for forbidden pleasures that leads to readers picking up Gothic fiction.

Much popular culture consumed by high-school students on a daily basis is steeped in imagery of the good guys fighting the bad guys. However, what is considered good and bad today is judged by different standards than in the seventeenth century, the period in which Hawthorne's story is set. By contrasting the described seventeenth-century views and attitudes towards themes of morality and immorality with today's high-school students' ideas and attitudes on the themes in *The Scarlet Letter* allows high-school students to integrate these concerns into their own life. The moral lesson in *The Scarlet Letter* will not only serve a didactic purpose, in teaching high-school students about the English language and its literatures, it also serves a pedagogical purpose in shaping students perceptions of certain themes, making them more critical thinkers as well as critical readers.

In her book *Hawthorne's Wilderness: Nature and Puritanism in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and "Young Goodman Brown"* Marina Boonyaprasop argues that "[t]hrough his narratives he is able to infuse his didactic message, challenging the reader's minds, beliefs, and opinions, their stereotypes, and behaviour" (41). This challenging is done through the supernatural elements in the novel that all work towards the unveiling of private sins, and moral hypocrisy. In his article "The Novel as Immoral, Anti-social Force," Christopher Lane states that "from the earliest decades of the eighteenth century, novels were written as much to entertain as to inform and instruct" (454). Hawthorne's use of the Gothic in *The Scarlet*

Letter is an example of such a novel, following in Ann Radcliffe's footsteps. In the final chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne's narrator presents the reader with a clear moral that the reader by all intents and purposes should take away from their reading: "Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred" (215). This moral refers back to Dimmesdale who hid his worst and it caused him great suffering, whereas Hester who showed her worst triumphed and lived to old age. With this message "[h]e wanted his readers to re-think their own moral values" (Boonyaprasop 42)

Just as the novel's ethical themes seem to have been designed to cajole contemporary readers into rethinking their own moral values, so does it have the potential to cajole modern high-school students to think about their own moral values and the socio-political frameworks from which they arose. The subversive nature of the Gothic genre is what Hawthorne explores in his novel. Unfortunately, this edition was published without its more openly critical introductory story "The Custom House." This story more specifically suggests that it is religious hypocrisy which he is commenting on in *The Scarlet Letter*. However, the contrast between the description of the "moral" characters in Hawthorne's novel and Hawthorne's fallen characters is suggestive enough to allow high-school students to see in which clever ways Hawthorne incorporated criticism on his seventeenth-century predecessors. For example, even though Pearl's play is described as witchcraft, the children of the Puritans play "at going to church" which at first glance seems indicative of moral virtue, however it is followed by a more gruesome game "at scourging Quakers; or taking scalps in a sham-fight with the Indians" (56). Little Pearl is considered a child begot by the devil because she was born from sin, however she has not learnt about what the Puritans do to people not of the same faith as them. The Puritans are depicted as having the moral high-ground. However, through comments like this, Hawthorne give the readers a glimpse of what is underneath the

façade of public morality. The children do not necessarily know what they are doing except that they have probably seen their parents do it.

Another example of how doctrinaire extremism can lead to moral hypocrisy is shown in the description of the Governor's house. The house is not only big but because of an interesting technique of mixing glass with the exterior walls of the house: "it glittered and sparkled as if diamonds had been flung against it by the double handful" (64). As the narrator expresses as well: "it might have befitted Aladdin's palace, rather than … a Puritan ruler" (65). Puritans should, if they follow their own doctrine, denounce most worldly possessions in order to better practice their faith, yet the governor has a beautiful house, filled with riches. Moreover, he does not see in Hester a fit parent because she has "stumbled and fallen, amid the pitfalls of this world" (72) even though the house demonstrates he has also fallen for the pitfalls of temptation making him just as much unfit to judge on the matter. Hester is again put in an unfavourable light by someone who historically had the moral high-ground but is shown to be just as corrupted as the individual he condemns.

Taking in mind the learning objectives set for literary analysis in high-school, it becomes clear why this novel is a very suitable high-school teaching text. The novel was written and published in America and depicts Puritan American society in its earliest moments. This makes it useful in accomplishing learning goal eight, as it can be placed in a specific historical perspective, and can be argued to belong there. The timeline high-school students discuss is thus not only extended to the late nineteenth century, it is also extended geographically. By adding an American novel to the course teachers can elaborate upon the literary culture of another English speaking country as well as the historical development of the Gothic genre. Moreover, the history of America as a haven for religious refugees can be contrasted to the current policy the United States has on such matters. Again, the thematic approach to this novel seems appropriate as teachers can discuss such subjects on the basis of

this novel. The moral lesson, and the themes attached to it should form the basis of lessons on this novel. A thematic approach best serves this goal, while still accomplishing the learning objectives set for high-school students through the novel's historical and literary implications.

Conclusion: The Educational Gothic

The first chapter of this thesis showed that the direction Dutch high-school literature courses should take remains vague, even with help of a prescriptive document such as the *Handreiking Schoolexamen Moderne Vreemde Talen HAVO/VWO: Duits, Engels, Frans.* The learning objectives remain general guidelines, leaving both teachers and students confused. The methods often used in Dutch high-schools reflect this confusion by discussing many different authors, texts, and periods, with different approaches not only in different methods, but also within individual methods. Literary education in The Netherlands has yet to find a clear objective about what is considered important and what students should take away from literary education.

The suggested approach in this thesis showed that through the analysis of Gothic and supernatural elements as vehicles for a moral that reflects the prevailing views of a certain historical period high-school students can also accomplish the learning objectives. In chapter two the analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* revealed that the novel can demonstrate to students that moral hypocrisy is nothing new and a universal human flaw. The public mask Dorian Gray puts on cannot protect him from his own conscience, and the fear of it being exposed costs him in the end. The identity struggle Dorian portrays in his relationship to his soul-portrait is a struggle high-school students can relate to as they are facing similar struggles in their adolescence. Moreover, Wilde's novel also teaches high-school students that what they, as readers, take away from a novel might not be what the author intended. They learn how the reader's text, and the author's text can be something completely different.

Through *Macbeth* high-school students do not only learn about the Jacobean age and its conventions, but also about the prevailing religious and political concerns of the time. Through recognizable images of witches, ghosts, and murder, the high-school students learn about how identity can be destroyed through an ambition for power, and guilty conscience.

Macbeth's character descends into evil through a temptation that leads him from one murder to another murder, and which sends Lady Macbeth into madness through guilt. Additionally, the play opens up opportunity for teaching this text as a text to be read or to be performed to suit the teachers' and students' needs.

Lastly, in *The Scarlet Letter* high-school students are shown how the public gaze can be very oppressive to some characters but how being publicly shamed can actually free you from this oppression. Again, the public and private identities of the characters are shown to collapse under a guilty conscience. Moreover, the novel demonstrates that the line between moral people and immoral people is sometimes blurred, and asks the students to question their own ideas on morality. The moral message is made very clear in this novel as Hawthorne's narrator tells the readers what it is in the concluding chapter of the novel. Additionally, the criticism Hawthorne displays teaches students about the hypocrisy of religious puritanism, and what it was like to live in early-American society.

A thematic approach to literature, combined with a literary history approach, thus not only teaches students about essential literary terms through canonical texts, it simultaneously teaches students about the ethical framework of different periods in history. Fred Botting suggests "Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times" (3) and this can be seen in how the narratives comment on their respective societies through the their supernatural and Gothic character. This is what makes them good teaching texts, because the texts ask questions about what is right and wrong within their societies ethical framework, the teachers and students can ask questions about what it says about that ethical framework. These text are not moralizing, they do not tell the reader what is wrong or right but they ask readers to rethink their perceptions of what is considered wrong or right not only in the presented ethical framework, but also within their own ethical framework.

Through the Gothic and supernatural themes and tropes in these three texts the learning objectives suggested by the SLO can be partially accomplished. Moreover, because the suggested method teaches three works in full it opens up to different types of learning activities teachers can employ. This is what Witte et. al. aim at in their research on the structure of literary education in the Netherlands. With these three texts teachers can, for example, relate important information to the class as a whole, and then divide the class into groups according to skill level. The more practiced students can take the general information and examine the text on their own, whereas the weaker students might need more help from their teacher, which they can now get. This is also important to the structuring of literary education as Witte et. al. suggest as some students come from a family that reads a lot, whereas others have never read more than a comic book. This set of books proves even more useful there as the relatable themes and the recognisable characters link these canonical works to more popular literature.

Further research might look into other sets published by Noordhoff Uitgeverij BV to examine whether this method can be applied to other literary genres and themes as well. This could help to specify the learning objectives and thus help in structuring literary education. Moreover, further research could be done on the different age levels in Blackbird publishing, as many classic texts – Gothic as well as realistic – are often simplified for younger readers. The appeal might be the same but as the focus for younger students is more likely to be on reading practice and not on literary analysis or what can be taken away from these novels differs. Further research, on the didactical and pedagogical side of similar sets of texts, could aid in creating a structured "doorlopende leerlijn" from start to finish in secondary education, especially considering the simplified versions of a few of the mentioned novels.

This thesis aimed to investigate why Gothic is such a popular genre in publications aimed at high-school students. The results show that the combination of reader enjoyment and

literary historic importance both in genre and theme is advantageous in teaching literature. This thesis demonstrates that the idea of the Gothic tale as educational can now be extended beyond its traditional tendency to preach morality to its audience, to include a broader sense of educational through teaching the reader about literature.

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