The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner

James Hogg

Read by Peter Kenny and Nicholas McArdle
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read by Nicholas McArdle</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It was customary, in those days, for the bride’s-man and maiden...</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>He sprung up and opened the casement: the day-light...</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Lady Dalcastle got plenty of time to read, and pray...</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The minister was struck dumb. He leaned him back on his chair...</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Wringhim heard all this without flinching. He now and then twisted...</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Such were the tenets in which it would appear young Robert was bred...</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>The very next time that George was engaged at tennis...</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>When the game was fairly given up, and the party were washing...</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>The landlord, therefore, had no sooner given them...</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>For a long time the court was completely puzzled.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The next day George and his companions met as usual...</td>
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</table>

Total Time on CD 1: 78:25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CD 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>George found it every day more and more necessary to adhere…</td>
<td>7:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>George was, from infancy, of a stirring active disposition…</td>
<td>7:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>George conceived it to be a spirit. He could conceive it to be…</td>
<td>6:39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>At these words, Wringhim uttered a hollow exulting laugh…</td>
<td>6:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>We cannot enter into the detail of the events that now occurred…</td>
<td>5:42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The day arrived – the party of young noblemen and gentlemen met…</td>
<td>6:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>All the young gentlemen of the party were examined…</td>
<td>6:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Miss Logan had never lost the thought of her late master’s prediction…</td>
<td>5:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>‘I am deeply indebted to you for this timely visit, Mrs Logan,’ said she.</td>
<td>8:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mrs Logan was now greatly confounded, and after proffering in vain…</td>
<td>4:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The maid was first called; and, when she came into the witness box…</td>
<td>7:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Judge: ‘This is the most singular perversion I have ever witnessed…’</td>
<td>6:52</td>
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</tbody>
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**Total Time on CD 2: 79:23**
‘I beckoned him to follow me, which he did without further ceremony…’ 5:06
‘Yet, mark me again; for, of all things I have ever seen, this was…’ 6:26
‘I roused up my drowsy companion, who was leaning on the bed…’ 5:36
Why did the man not pursue the foul murderers? 5:07
Mrs Logan ran to the window, and, behold, there was indeed… 5:47
Mrs Calvert turned the latter gently and civilly out of the apartment… 7:57
They walked a little way out of hearing, but went not out of sight… 5:37
‘I never in my life saw any human being,’ said Mrs Calvert… 7:15
The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Sinner written by himself
Read by Peter Kenny 6:11
About this time, and for a long period afterwards… 5:18
My heart was greatly cheered by this remark; and I sighed very deeply… 8:02
John pulled out the keys, and dashed them on the gravel. 5:17
This boy, whose name was M’Gill, was, at all his leisure hours… 5:41

Total Time on CD 3: 79:28
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>My arm was again enfeebled, and that of my adversary prevailed.</th>
<th>7:15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I wept for joy to be thus assured of my freedom from all sin...</td>
<td>6:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>We moved about from one place to another, until the day...</td>
<td>6:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The next day was with me a day of holy exultation.</td>
<td>7:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I confess that I was greatly flattered by these compliments...</td>
<td>5:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Having been so frequently seen in his company, several people...</td>
<td>7:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I was rather stunned at this; but pretended to smile with disdain...</td>
<td>5:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>But the most singular instance of this wonderful man’s power...</td>
<td>7:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I looked again up into the cloudy veil that covered us...</td>
<td>6:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I had become rigid as a statue, whereas my associate appeared...</td>
<td>5:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>It so happened that my reverend father was called to Edinburgh...</td>
<td>7:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I prayed very much in secret about this time, and that with great...</td>
<td>6:47</td>
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</tbody>
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**Total Time on CD 4: 79:28**
The man apparently thought I was deranged in my intellect.

Who can doubt, from this statement, that I was bewitched...

These were all the words that she uttered, as far as I could ever...

I soon came close upon my brother, sitting on the dizzy pinnacle...

It was some days before he mentioned my brother’s meditated...

His lip curled with a smile of contempt, which I could hardly brook...

He enjoyed our success mightily; and for his sake I enjoyed it...

‘It is a manifest falsehood!’ said I. ‘I have never, since I entered…’

I was again going to disclaim all interest or connection in the matter...

In this state of irritation and misery was I dragging on an existence...

I took a cup of wine and water; put on my black clothes and walked out.

I can in nowise describe the effect this appalling speech had on me.

Total Time on CD 5: 79:20
‘Asseveration will avail you but little,’ answered he, composedly.
So miserable was my life rendered by these continued attacks…
I confess, to my shame, that I was so overcome by this jumble…
The next day the congregation met in the kirk of Auchtermuchty…
The truth is, that the clown’s absurd story, with the still more…
‘I come with sad and tormenting tidings to you, my beloved…’
These were some of the thoughts by which I consoled myself…
I was conducted into the other end of the house, among looms…
The wife released me soon, and carefully whispered to me, at the…
I attended the office some hours every day, but got not much…
For the first time, I remarked that the animals were snorting…
My case was indeed a pitiable one. I was lame, hungry, fatigued…
After crossing the Tweed, I saw no more of my persecutor that day…

Total Time on CD 6: 78:44
CD 7

1. At length he desired me to sit down and take some rest… 7:28
2. August 30. – This day I have been informed that I am to be banished… 6:38
3. The Editor’s Narrative Concluded
   Read by Nicholas McArdle 6:24
4. ‘Early next morning, Mr. Anderson’s servants went reluctantly away…’ 5:40
5. The letter from which the above is an extract, is signed JAMES HOGG… 7:47
6. We soon reached the spot, and I confess I felt a singular sensation… 6:04
7. All his clothes that were sewed with linen yarn were lying in separate portions, the thread having rotten… 7:53

Total Time on CD 7: 47:59
Total Time on CDS 1– 7: 8:42:47
James Hogg
(1770–1835)

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner

Hogg’s Confessions is one of a small group of nineteenth-century supernatural novels which were radical and innovative in their time, and which have survived to become classics. The other books in this group would include Frankenstein, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and Dracula. Clearly related to the fashion for Gothic fiction which had reached its height in the 1790s, these few books have outlived those other works because they each went beyond lurid theatrical horror, and tapped into a genuine sense of psychological fear and mystery within the minds of their creators and their readers. On its first appearance in 1824, Hogg’s book was the least successful of this group, for it is a complex story told in a deliberately complex way. It is partly a historical novel set in the years 1700–1720; it is partly a regional novel, with a strong portrait of Scottish rural life and speech, together with a certain level of humour; it is partly an intellectual novel which explores the corrupting effect of strict Calvinist theories of predestination; but running through all this is a psychological thriller that takes us deep inside a disturbed criminal mind.

James Hogg (1770–1835), always known as ‘The Ettrick Shepherd’, was indeed a shepherd throughout most of his life in the border district of Ettrick, near Selkirk. He was intelligent, self-motivated and self-educated, and turned to literature early in his life, consciously modelling himself on the already famous Robert Burns. He wrote poetry which was published to wide acclaim, and established himself in Edinburgh literary society, wrote for Blackwood’s magazine,
made friends with Walter Scott, and was admired by Wordsworth, who would write an elegy for him when he died. Hogg was to some extent fêted and patronised as a naïve genius, a peasant poet, as Burns had been. He accepted the role of ‘The Ettrick Shepherd’ knowing that it brought him success and status as a writer, but his mind and his work soon began to move in other directions, towards the visionary and the supernatural. He wrote an unforgettable poem called ‘Kilmeny’, about a country girl who vanishes for a time and is presumed dead, but she returns having been in some transcendent realm which she cannot describe, and her beauties are succeeded by an apocalyptic vision. Wordsworth admired the poem, and recognised in it the spirit of Coleridge. Hogg began to write prose stories, some of them touching on supernatural themes, and full-length historical novels not unlike those of Scott. Nevertheless no one could have predicted that Hogg would produce The Confessions, or perhaps predicted that anyone else would produce it either, so singular and unclassifiable it is.

The essential background to the book lies in the stern Calvinist religion of Scotland and its doctrine of election: the belief that the salvation or damnation of every individual soul was predestined by God, and that it was possible to know by spiritual signs who was of the elect and who was not. The corrupting effect of this doctrine was its temptation to antinomianism – the conviction that the saved can do no wrong, that their actions are above all moral law. Hogg’s book tells of the tortuous working-out of this doctrine in the lives of a handful of people. The narrative is divided into two sections, the first purporting to be the story of the troubled and finally tragic Colwan family, as told one hundred years later by an editor. This editor is never named, nor is it clear what his sources are for his intimate knowledge of this family. The story he tells is that of two brothers: George Colwan, easy, high-spirited, gregarious and pleasure-loving, and his younger brother Robert, who is solitary, severe, pious, and vindictive. Robert, it seems, inherits Calvinist arrogance and cruelty from his religious mother and from
Wringhim, her spiritual adviser, and he persecutes George.

In modern terms, Robert is a serial-killer, clearly a psychopath and perhaps a schizophrenic, but Hogg’s great achievement is to show this man not as an irrational monster, but to take us inside the complex processes of his mind, to show how his malice has grown, and to relate that malice to deep cultural forces within his society.

Hogg’s narrative, with its ambiguities and multiple viewpoints, causes objective reality to dissolve, suggesting perhaps that we cannot approach any final truth, especially of mysterious events like these. For this reason the novel has been much studied and admired as anticipating the techniques of modern fiction. The great supernatural classic from the end of the century, *Dracula*, would exploit this multiple-voiced ‘uncertainty-technique’ to an even higher degree.

*The Confessions* has affinities with other Gothic or supernatural fictions, especially those that use the Faust-like theme of a pact with the devil, or those in which a mysterious companion, often a double (the German *Dopplegänger*) appears. Charles Maturin’s sensational *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) comes to mind, and the German works of E.T.A. Hoffmann, especially *The Devil’s Elixir*, which was published by Blackwood of Edinburgh in the very same year as *The Confessions*, and which Hogg may have known about, if not read, before publication. But Hogg’s book, with its Scottish setting, its religious and cultural dimensions, and the way that its fractured narrative mirrors a fractured mind, is unique, a psychological thriller before its time.

*Notes by Peter Whitfield*
Peter Kenny is an actor and musician. He has worked for A&BC Theatre Co., the Royal Shakespeare Company and the BBC Radio Drama Company. He is a member of the early music group Passamezzo. A prolific recorder of audiobooks, he has recorded over thirty titles. Authors include Iain M. Banks and Paul O’Grady. Visit peterkenny.com

Nicholas McArdle was brought up in both Scotland and England and has kept a foot in both camps. As well as appearing in theatre all over the country, he has performed in hundreds of television productions as diverse as Colditz, To the Manor Born, Cloud Howe, Strathblair and Taggart. As well as reading audiobooks, he has also voiced countless commercials and narrated many documentaries.
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