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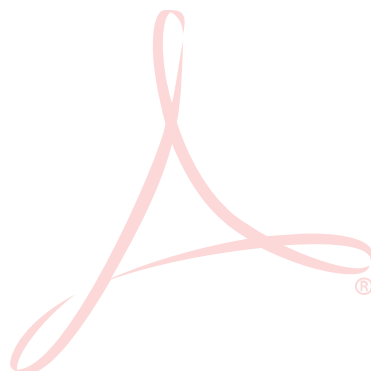
TRABALLO DE FIN DE GRADO EN
INGLÉS: ESTUDOS LINGÜÍSTICOS E LITERARIOS

Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*: a Gothic Labyrinth of
Tales

María Fernández Gómez

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Directora: María Jesús Lorenzo Modia



Abstract

In this dissertation I have conducted the analysis of the Gothic novel *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Irish author Charles Robert Maturin. I intended to demonstrate the competences and abilities acquired in the *Grao en Inglés: Estudios Lingüísticos e Literarios*, as well as, more specifically to the subject matter, the examination of several characteristics of the novel and its context – the Anglo-Irish community, the structure, the duality of the characters, Gothic elements, etc. – along with the recuperation of the figure of the author, slightly marginalised by the scholars. In order to attain said purposes, I have executed a close reading of the novel, as well as collected and read a selection of secondary bibliography – in order to properly comprehend the novel and elaborate correctly the task – to then proceed to conduct the task.

In elaborating this essay, I have approached both contextual and literary aspects. I have delved into the vast body of Gothic literature produced by Anglo-Irish writers, who found in this genre a vehicle of expression that adapted to their conditions. Maturin, an eccentric and marginalised figure, was part of this community; and through his literary production demonstrated a strong attachment to his home country as well as to his Anglican faith, strongly condemning Catholicism. This is poured in his novel *Melmoth the Wanderer*, resulting in an excellent and complex novel, both in format and content. All of which reflect his national sentiments and preoccupations, religious affiliations, knowledge and education, always fitting into the characteristics of the Gothic genre, which he accommodated to his purposes.

Key words

Charles Robert Maturin – Melmoth – Gothic fiction – analysis – Anglo-Irish community

Table of contents

1. Introduction	- 1 -
2. Gothic Literature in Ireland.....	- 3 -
2.1. The Gothic and the Anglo-Irish Community	- 4 -
3. Charles Robert Maturin	- 7 -
3.1. Influences and legacy of <i>Melmoth the Wanderer</i>	- 10 -
4. Structure of the Novel	- 12 -
4.1. The Role of Archibald Constable	- 14 -
4.2. Chinese-Box Structure	- 15 -
5. The Anglo-Irish Influence	- 17 -
5.1. Duality or Double Identity	- 19 -
6. Gothic elements.....	- 22 -
6.1. Found Manuscript	- 22 -
6.2. Setting and Scenery.....	- 24 -
6.3. Paradox	- 26 -
6.4. Existentialism.....	- 28 -
7. Conclusion.....	- 31 -
8. Works Cited.....	- 33 -

1. Introduction

Although of eclectic nature, *Melmoth the Wanderer* inscribes itself in the prolific production of Gothic fiction in Ireland, embodying its most important characteristics. It has not, however, been granted the attention other works of its character have. *Melmoth the Wanderer* has come to be considered, at times, as a late work for the first Gothic wave and an early one considering the “proper” Anglo-Irish Gothic; nonetheless, Maturin’s novels are somewhat contemporaneous to those of Percy Bysshe Shelly or Lord Byron. And, despite its oblivion and lack of approaches from the critic, it is an excellent example of Irish Gothic fiction that should be included in the cannon and literary studies. Thus, *Melmoth the Wanderer* explores the obscure, the supernatural, the horrific, as well as the question of the self and fragmented identity. Furthermore, the Chinese-box structure of tales inside tales, along with the duality in the characters, as an expression of community situation, constitute an interesting work that provokes interest.

The present dissertation, supervised by Professor María Jesús Lorenzo Modia, consists of the analysis of the nineteenth-century novel, just above depicted, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, by Anglo-Irish author Charles Robert Maturin, published in 1820. The purpose of this examination is to demonstrate the knowledge, competencies and tools acquired during the degree of *Grado en Inglés: Estudios Lingüísticos y Literarios*; such as the correct analysis and comprehension of literary works, along with theoretical knowledge on the field of literature from the English speaking countries, and the proper selection and use of bibliography.

The selected object of study allows me to demonstrate said competencies, but further reasons for such election are the interest provoked by the Gothic literary genre due to its transgressive character and the exploration of the subconscious and the supernatural.

Moreover, this particular novel was chosen among the selection the tutor of this dissertation offered for its value within the genre and due to the relative lack of study of interest conceded by the literary scholars.

The aims I have set for this analysis are the following ones:

- The recuperation of an excellent example of Gothic fiction such as *Melmoth the Wanderer*, as well as the recognition of its author.
- The elucidation of a few preliminary questions that aid the proper comprehension of the tale chosen and its context.
- The consequent analysis of the Gothic characteristics of the novel.
- The examination of the structure and the importance of the duality of the characters relating the situation of the Anglo-Irish community.
- To provide a selection of bibliography of interest on the topic.

Intending to attain said objectives, I have consulted secondary bibliography, which has allowed me to submerge on both the most general and particular aspects of the analysis, neither of which cease to be crucial for the interpretation of the work. Along those lines, this essay has been structured into five chapters, preceded by this justificative introduction and followed by a conclusion where the main ideas reached in the analysis will be displayed. The first two chapters are destined to elucidate some preliminary questions regarding the background and author, respectively. The proper approach of the novel is divided into three sections: the intricated tales and the editorial influence in such form; then the duality in the characters, which draws back to the author and his community, and, lastly, the most outstanding gothic elements.

Regarding methodology, the following steps have been followed in the elaboration of the essay: first, choosing the text among the ones my tutor has offered me due to the reasons above explained. Then, I have proceeded to endure a close reading of the text,

making notes of all the important aspects that should be explained in the essay. Following that, I have collected information from various sources that approach the text from different perspectives, selecting those that serve my purposes. And, lastly, I elaborated my own analysis of the novel according to the objectives set and the information gathered.

2. Gothic Literature in Ireland

In composing *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Maturin inscribed it in the extensive body of work that is Irish Gothic fiction. Such proliferation has been, with considerable frequency, conceded quite an importance from the critique and literary scholars in their research – for instance, those listed in the bibliography section below. It should not strike as surprising that curiosity emerged regarding this literary panorama.

Gothic fiction is known to scour matters such as the subconscious, dreams, suffering, the sublime... along important questions of identity and the self. All these characteristics would be very important for the proliferation of the genre in Ireland, as its inhabitants relate to such tales. The following question arises then: why does this correlation occur? Coming from a turbulent century, in the words of Siobhán Kilfeather, “Irish people in the romantic period felt they were living gothic lives” (qtd. in Morin 97) and their reality seemed to be “fractured by repeated intrusive memories of the time of danger, memorised in which visual images of horror predominate” (qtd. in Morin 97). Gothic fiction presented itself, then, as the convenient outlet for the expression of their experiences, concerns, and trauma. This vehicle served the purpose of certain groups more than others since the said genre was mainly produced by a particular community of settlers: the Anglo Irish. It is not to be said that the Catholic Irish did not write Gothic fiction, but, when they did, they imitated their Anglican neighbours. But why did the Anglicans relate more to the horror stories? It was, then, their condition of outlanders to the land they inhabited,

which opened a wound, a question of identity. This question of identity was not strange for the Catholics, either, as it is a central topic on their history – nonetheless, the question of Irishness regarding the Catholics shall not be addressed here. Additionally, the differentiation with the Catholics, viewed as the others, regarding the self, which not only served to further build a separated nature but to marginalised themselves concerning the natives.

Gothic, due to its characteristics, deals with this internal fracture, and, ultimately, with the search of one's true nature and identity, as well as with the idea of otherness opposing to oneself. In this sense, they made use of this outlet, that perfectly fitted their experiences and intentions. As Terry Eagleton argues, the “fact that Anglo-Irish writers... should have exhibited such fascination with madness and the occult, terror and the supernatural” is explicable because the Gothic operated as that community's “political unconscious... the place where its fears and fantasies most definitely emerge” (qtd. in Killeen 34). Irish authors of English Anglican ancestry are, then, those who wrote a considerable amount of Irish Gothic fiction, including those infamous works such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* or Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Sillas*. Their situation deserves a further explanation because their fractured nature was also crucial to the conformation to their national ideology.

2.1. The Gothic and the Anglo-Irish Community

The Anglicans of Ireland were certainly alien to the culture and customs, resulting in social and political confrontation. Away from the motherland, in a country native to the ‘religious enemy’, they were outcasts; marginalised, also, by own choice, with an eagerness to differentiate themselves from the Irish, regarded with great prejudice. Nonetheless, their geographical situation separated them, as well, from the English. The Anglicans conformed, therefore, a liminal community: too English to relate to the Irish,

too Irish to be English, which results in a quest of the self. Thus, when the desire to express such condition through literature emerged, there had an appropriate method:

Gothic literature is a literature of the liminal that obsesses over moments of fracture and dissolution and re-enacts such moments repeatedly in an attempt to come to grips with them. During the liminal stage, the subject has to suffer a period where binaries are dissolved, boundaries are crossed, and dualities are merged. Gothic literature, the literature of hesitation and hyphenation, is a particularly apt form to use to explore dissolutions, crossing and merging (Killeen, 37).

There were, precisely, religious matters which began this tendency. The origins of Anglo-Irish inclination towards Gothic fiction started with a religious text: Sir John Temple's *The Irish Rebellion*, published in 1646, would not only compose the proto-Gothic foundation for the prolific Anglo-Irish tradition, and literary production in general, but almost a historical foundation for their historic tradition and their national identity. *The Irish Rebellion*, is, then, a sort of retelling of the 1641 Irish rebellion of great disturbing and violent nature. Filled with gothic themes and aspects it mixes legend with memory and tradition. Temple places, in such an obscure work, the idea of the Catholic as a monster, a dangerous savage. It can be located here the beginning of a demonisation overlook towards the Catholics, a hatred that would come to be central in the construction of the Anglo-Irish identity. They continue from then on to further marginalise the majoritarian but minoritised community that was the Irish Catholic – due to the power held by the outsiders –, native of their land. Therefore, with *The Irish Rebellion*, the Anglicans inscribed themselves in a Gothic current from their very first historical texts, which characterised their story as Gothic, their nature as purer than that of the Catholics.

The issue of the extreme differentiation between both groups, with such negative connotations given to the others, built a further separation from the Anglican perspective. Living with the religious other, in a context of being outnumbered – despite having the

power – away from the homeland of their ancestors, which, little by little, loses interest in said community, the Anglo Irish felt in a dangerous liminal position, where they could be easily wronged by the Catholic people with whom they coexisted. This sense of the otherness of the Catholic, extremely contrary to the self, served as a tool to ensure unity and strength; along with the differentiation that aided the construction of the highly searched identity. When periods of distress and disagreement struck the Anglican group, it was this idea of the despicable, monstrous other which hold the breakage:

Self-consciously enclosed by this threatening monstrosity, the Irish Anglican community sought numerous ways to protect itself and also sought to provide a coherent narrative of itself that would reassure and protect against invasion and internal upheaval. It found that the imagery of horror and terror was peculiarly equipped to do both, not only warning of the dangers of those outside righteous Anglicanism but also demonstrating vividly what transpired to those who happened to capitulate to the attractiveness of the Other (Killeen, 41).

Gothic, along with Temple's text, appears to be appropriate for their situation once again. Gothic tends to deal with the fragmented self, as mentioned earlier, but, also, it is very important the question of otherness, the others against the I, the Not-I. This last particular issue has continually provided material for literary creation, both within the Gothic genre here concerned and other later currents:

These disputes have been powerfully literalised in two basic Gothic plots. Typically, a small, tightly knit community is attacked by a monstrous invader who must be expelled and destroyed. Classic examples of such invasion narratives are Stoker's *Dracula*, Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1954) and Stephen King's *'Salem's Lot* (1975). In the alternative plot, an individual finds that they are internally fractured because of strange and unwelcome aspects of the interior mind or body. Obvious examples here are Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

(1886), William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971) and Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996) (Killeen, 40).

3. Charles Robert Maturin

Although *Melmoth the Wanderer* was successful and gained notoriety – and even left an important track in following horror genre –, that was not the case for most of Maturin's work, nor his figure after his death; as Kevin Brennan explains on his article "Charles Robert Maturin (1782-1824): Forgotten Irish Novelist" Maturin's works have not been granted the same attention as his contemporaries. Christina Morin also highlights the marginalisation of this figure in her work, stating that: "Yet, in comparison to many of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Irish writers who have also earned this continued memory, including Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) and Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan (1783?-1859), Maturin remains something of a cultural blank" (Morin 1) and that "Maturin has fallen by the cultural wayside" (Morin 2).

Descendant from Huguenot immigrants, Charles Robert Maturin was born in Dublin in 1780 and followed the family tradition of serving in the Church of England. He endured economic distress from an early age, and, unable to properly sustain his family as an adult, he turned to writing. His journey as a writer, nevertheless, started under the pseudonym of Dennis Jasper Murphy; and he produced not only novels, but also poetry, plays, essays, sermons, and even short fiction. Maturin mixed genres and traditions, always reaching gothic, despite the declination of its first wave.

His first publication, under said pen name, was *The Fatal Revenge*, in 1807, followed by *The Wild Irish Boy* in 1808. Although he did not receive quite attention, *The Fatal Revenge* was reviewed by Walter Scott in 1810, who praised his writing skills. In 1812, *The Milesian Chief* was published, and, in 1813, *Bertram, or the Castle of St Aldobrand*. The latter was brought to the stage in London, produced by Walter Scott and

Lord Byron. It signified the disclosure of his identity as an author “with the result that a palpably unimpressed Church of Ireland would never thereafter promote him to higher office” (Power 19). Within the following years, Maturin kept producing works such as *Manuel: a tragedy in five acts* (1817); *Women; or pour et contre* (1818), *Sermons* and *Fredolfo: a tragedy* (1819). Finally, his great success, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, was published in 1820. Some posthumous publications were *The Albigenses* and *Five Sermons on Errors of the Roman Catholic Church* in 1824, ‘Leixlip Castle’ and *Osmyn the Renegade; or, the siege of Salerno* in 1825. The latter was recovered by one of Maturin’s son, who brought the play to the stage in Dublin and London.

The interest in Charles Robert Maturin's life lies in its significance for his literary work, for it does not only reflect his eccentric character but his views and politics, including his internal divisions. Therefore, in his works, there is an exposure of his ideas regarding national issues – an opponent to the Act of Union of 1801 – as well as his eagerness to romanticise family history as a road to self-exploration and dignification. Both *The Milesian Chief* and *The Wild Irish Boy* “his two “national tales” ... encompass the gothic, the novel of high society, the “mirror of real life,” allegory, and the historical romance, veering precipitously from one to the other” (Miles 347).

Religion acquires quite an importance, as well, portraying his approximation to Calvinism and his strong disagreement with Catholicism. He liked to represent the latter “as people only now emerging from the early stages of historical development” (Miles 346). As Miles informs, this harshness earned him the nickname of “the Protestant hammer of the Roman Church” (346). Such views earned him aversion not only from the church but from the British critics, with a view stained by prejudice against the Irish: “Nothing vicious is ever recommended or palliated by its author; but its evil consists in the terrible anatomy of vice – in the exhibition of supernatural depravity – in the introduction of

blasphemous expressions, though they are introduced to be hated” (qtd. in Miles 345).

Given Maturin’s national and religious situation a question arises: did he sympathise with the Irish, the English, or the Anglo-Irish? His life trajectory along with a careful examination of his literary work – since, as I have mentioned earlier, he exposes his ideology and national sentiments in the latter – allow me to affirm that Maturin’s Gothic fiction fits into the Anglo-Irish community of Gothic writers. On the one hand, there is clear defence of the Anglican faith and a firm and harsh attack on Catholicism, represented, in this novel, principally by a handful of horrible characters in the Spanish clergy. Such consideration can be extrapolated to his Catholic neighbours in Ireland, which were the majoritarian religious group. Hence, he does not sympathise with Ireland in traditional religious tendencies; nevertheless, he is met with criticism from his own fellow clergy colleges for his writings – highlighting, once again, his marginalisation –; he was, in a way, rejected from such world, even though his faith remained there. On the other hand, and regarding to national sentiments and identification, Maturin demonstrates a feeling of belonging towards his home country, defining himself as an “obscure Irish man” (qtd. in Morin 2) and externalising deep concerns for the issues of Ireland. Such matters are made relevant through the use of paratext, as will be explained later, in “*Melmoth*”, always moving Ireland closer to the events of the novel. His political ideas and national ideology also show a preoccupation for the future of Ireland, the wellbeing of its inhabitants and, not only sadness for past times of distress, but fear of its repetition:

[...] specific historical conditions and events in Ireland, including the 1798 Rebellion, Anglo-Irish Union, and Robert Emmet's abortive uprising (1803), which continued to shape literature long after they occurred. Whether traumatic episodes such as the 1798 Rebellion are mentioned explicitly or simply gestured towards, the memory of these events subtly underpins and spectrally possesses Irish Romantic fiction. Traumatized by

their witnessing of prolonged historical violence, authors like Maturin, Edgeworth, Owenson, and John Banim make it clear that repetitions of the past are to be feared (Morin 12).

Maturin also pours his national feelings in the two national tales he composes: *The Milesian Chief* and *The Wild Irish Boy*. Ireland is, then, continually present in Maturin's work: "Drawing frequently and fruitfully from the Gothic mode, while also responding to contemporary crisis in Irish social, cultural, and political life, Maturin's novels urge us to consider the Gothic influence in the fiction of contemporaries generally as seen as divorced from the Gothic" (Morin 10).

In short, Maturin's works fit into the Anglo-Irish Gothic, although of later generations, for he does not demonstrate a connection with England, only with the Anglican faith. Therefore, he does not resemble those Anglicans in Ireland who longed for England and were completely outsiders to their new land, but a new generation who, even they agreed with England's predominant religion, they were bred in Ireland and felt the country as their home.

3.1. Influences and legacy of *Melmoth the Wanderer*

Melmoth the Wanderer is considerably symbolic, and it collects a large repertoire of biblical, literary, and mythical imagery and references. Maturin created a novel of great complexity, which draws back from different sources, and, in doing so, Maturin demonstrated his vast culture and outstanding knowledge, as well as excellent writing skills, for he managed to pour it in his work with mastery.

Theology was especially important since the mere conception, since Maturin found inspiration on his own reflections on religion, as Veronica Kennedy informs, the idea emerged from one of his sermons (41). However, religion also underlies both form and contents. On the one hand, "the novel is further unified by a pattern of concrete and

figurative – and usually Biblical – imagery (fire, storm, shipwreck, animals, etc.). This imagery is employed in a remarkable variety of contexts and is carried from narrator to narrator” (Fowler 523). On the other hand, the Book of Job serves as an inspiration to further depict secondary characters, who, “like Job’s friends, surround the sufferers only to accentuate and exacerbate their misery; they never ease or explain it” (Fowler 527). In addition: “Like Job's Satan, Melmoth spends his time "going to and fro in the earth and... walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7, 2:2). Like Job's Satan, he apparently, despite his description as the "agent of the Enemy of Mankind," works under orders and in the service of God. The divine constraints which bind Melmoth are repeatedly hinted at in the novel” (Fowler 527).

In the configuration of the characters converge different conventions. The figure of the Wanderer is quite interesting, for it works as a complex element of unification, that appears and disappears continuously, around whom every tale circle. The elaboration of this character borrows from various legends and traditions, among which, the most relevant could be the following: Faust, the unsatisfied intellectual who trades his soul for knowledge; Mephistopheles, devil-like; Milton’s tragic Satan from *Paradise Lost*, or the continuous meander of the Wandering Jew or Cain. Kennedy deepens into this topic adding facets to the Wanderer such as “Celtic wizards, druids and demons, of the amorous and evil Genii of the Arabian Nights, of Din Huan and the Demon Lovers of Ballad tradition as well as of hero-villains of such “Gothick” writers as Anne Radcliffe and M.G. Lewis” (41).

The is cultural richness in the rest of the characters as well. Starting with young Melmoth, who resembles his ancestor; in this new reality that has been revealed to him, John is interested in forbidden knowledge, there is then “the powerful mythic motif of fatal curiosity – like that of Prometheus, Pandora, Psyche, Bluebeard’s Wife – recurs, even though, for Young Melmoth, the catastrophe is averted” (Kennedy 46). The

character of Immalee encompasses the convergence of several figures such as “the Noble Savage of Rousseau, Eve before the Fall, Goethe's Gretchen, Melmoth's Good Angel, the Great Mother goddess in her bridal aspect, and Ideal Beauty” (Kennedy 41). And, while her mother, Donna Clara loves her daughter, she is the embodiment of the vile stepmother from fairy tales, consumed by her jealousy for the beautiful and young. Following with Juan and Alonso Monçada, who echo Egyptian mythology and the twin brothers Seth and Osiris.

What Maturin collected here, became then an essential source for subsequent works. Nevertheless, I will only address now the most obvious: *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. Not to be left unsaid, Wilde was not only an admirer of Maturin, but his grandnephew. In fact, Wilde assumed the pseudonym Sebastian Melmoth on several occasions. The main borrowings are the following ones:

Firstly, the pact with the devil and the curse are borrowed, taking a different direction in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*; accompanied by the mysterious and horrifying portrait. And, secondly, both the Wanderer and Dorian share eternal youth and, also, Wilde, “follows Maturin by making Dorian suddenly age at the moment of his damnation” (Poteet 242). Along with the above mentioned, seduction and corruption of the innocent nature figure in both novels: in *Melmoth the Wanderer* this is portrayed through Immalee's character, and in Wilde's work, it is Dorian himself. Those two principal similarities are accompanied by the duality of characters, which, in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, will be explained later.

4. Structure of the Novel

Maturin's most famous novel begins with young John Melmoth, a student from Trinity College in Dublin, returning to his dying uncle's house, in order to take care of

all the processes regarding his imminent decease. After the man's death, John hears the story, told by an old crone, a servant, of a man named Santon, who, years earlier, came looking for Melmoth the traveller; a family ancestor, whose portrait from 1646 was found by John. The story of the strange man continues in the manuscript left by his uncle, in which Santon recalls his first meeting with the ancestor, for whom he never stopped searching afterwards. Santon's manuscript, and The Wanderer's story, will continue in the Tale of the Spaniard, Alonzo Monçada, which will then interpolate with the Tale of the Indians, containing the Tale of the Guzman's Family and the Lover's Tale.

The narrative is composed, as listed above, of a series of interrelated tales: the manuscript, the Tale of Spaniard, the Tale of the Indians, the Tale of Guzman's Family and the Lover's Tale. While the first written document seems to be the only one autonomous, the rest are encapsulated, reframed and with distorting narrational lines. In the words of Christina Morin: "Often described as resembling Russian dolls or Chinese boxes, Melmoth takes the form of a frame narrative set in the nineteenth-century Ireland which gives way to a series of interpolated tales tied together by the figure of Melmoth himself, despite the diverse range of characters and settings" (129). Or, as Veronica Kennedy describes: "[a] Chinese Box structure, [that] mirrors the illogicality and shifting emphasis of the dreams" (41). This is an important characteristic often approached by academics, from two polarised tendencies. On the one hand, the attribution of such result to a lack of skill, producing an incoherent or confounding narratological structure. For instance, the first commentary in the *Quarterly Review* described this type of narration as "a clumsy confusion which disgraces the artist and puzzles the observer" (qtd. in Stott 41). On the other hand, others argue that such configuration is intentional, confusing, indeed, but understandable, and "further, those relationships could only be thought to have been clumsy constructed if were supposed that Maturin intended some pattern or effect other than that which he created" (Stott 41). A third consideration is that such outcome

to an expression of the author's personal experiences, as well as the concerns of an Anglo-Irish community threatened by Evangelism and Catholicism. For example, Joseph Lew claims that "Melmoth voices Maturin's concerns not just as a member of a marginalised, minority population but also as a marginalised member of that community" (qtd. in Morin 129). Moreover, Kathleen Fowler points to another direction, arguing that Maturin attempts to replicate the sense of confusion and persecution that his characters suffer. These two testimonies exemplify the variety of speculations formulated by those who have analysed *Melmoth's* structure through appreciation of its value.

The intricated weaving of tales will be examined in depth in the following subchapters, along with the characteristic use of paratext. However, the editorial role in such a format needs to be commented on.

4.1. The Role of Archibald Constable

Despite the seemingly clear intentionality behind Maturin's configuration of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Scottish publisher Constable Archibald was determinant as well. Constable had already worked in the publication of *Women; or, Pour Et Contre; a Tale*, experiencing Maturin's inconsistencies. Such demeanour would intensify in the composition of this novel. Irrespective of the agreement with the initial contract and schedule, the Irish author complicated the process with a series of delays, interruptions of correspondence, and the delivery of short, disconnected fragments that seemed to not serve the purpose of the initial idea of the work. This entailed not only the loss of time for the publishing house, but an economic loss through advances conceded to the author. Maturin's lack of commitment, as considered by Constable, was due to an attempt to encompass a great number of projects at the same time:

The total number of projects planned or actually in progress at this stage was, therefore, no fewer than five since the letter also noted that not one but two new tragedies were now

intended for the coming winter at the Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres. Maturin's ambitions to attack the literary world on all fronts – with religious writings, fiction, poetry and drama all published more or less simultaneously – thus exceeded even Constable's own expansionist plans (Ragaz 363).

The structure was, then, a result of the author-publisher partnership rather than just the author. The work progress of the latter complicated the labour of the publisher, with constant delays and consequently, reworkings.

4.2. Chinese-Box Structure

After addressing Constable's part in the structuration, I will move on to analyse the effects Maturin attains with it. Thus, he “builds the novel around a gradual revelation of his protagonist's identity and nature ... independently of the novel's volumes, chapters, and tales” (Stott 42-43). Melmoth presents himself as a mystery; through the weaving of the different tales, diverse facets of this figure are outlined. Yet, it is not the Traveller's demeanour that evolves through the different tales – excluding his fondness towards Immalee –, but the receptor's view. His motives and his true condition are not revealed until the very end; nevertheless, Maturin plants seeds throughout the whole novel for the reader to, confusingly, attempt a recreation.

The first description is provided to John at the beginning, Biddy Brannigan remarked that his ancestor “never heard to speak, seen to partake of food, or enter any dwelling but that of his family; – and, finally, that she herself believed that his late appearance boded no good either to the living or the dead” (Maturin 27). Thus, the supernatural is introduced, haunting the old uncle Melmoth; much like a mythical creature, the Traveller is portrayed as a character of a folk story –collecting Irish mythical tradition, similarly to the Banshee – who plays with witchcraft and magic. The story moves away from the family haunting with Santon's manuscript, setting their encounters

in Spain. Melmoth's apparitions in Santon's life and his unacceptable offer for freedom moves him closer to a demon.

Afterwards, young Melmoth dreams about his ancestor, startled by a presence that awakes him: "He looked round, - there was no human being in the room but himself. He felt a slight pain in the wrist of his right arm. He looked at it, it was black and blue, as from the recent gripe of a strong hand" (Maturin 60). This presents the Wanderer like a spirit, leaving more or less "the Gothicism and diabolism, the nightmare landscapes and supernatural evil of Santon's tale" (Stott 45). In his tale, Monçada recalls the Traveller's visits in his cell when he states that: "I had never beheld such eyes blazing in a mortal face... I held up my hand to shield myself from their preternatural glare" (Maturin 227). Such description, along with his longevity, knowledge and abilities approaches the legend of the Wandering Jew. The vision breaks once again to continue with, in which Melmoth's visitation to Immalee remind of the garden of Eden; the man, or rather, the creature, has arrived to tempt the young woman and reveal her the real world, baring traits such as "diabolical heartlessness" (Maturin 314) and "satanic smile" (Maturin 290). Furthermore, the reference to Eden itself in: "sensations like his master's when he visited Paradise" (Maturin 285). Melmoth appears like a master, who drives Immalee to move from innocence to knowledge; with an underlying eagerness to corrupt the young lady, much like Satan to Eve. Still, he is not perceived as Satan himself, but a servant of his. Later on, when the couple is to marry, the Traveller, after being scolded by Isadora's father, reflects on the direct relationship of sin and serving Satan; he places every sinner under such condition, confessing his immoralities. He, then, distances himself from the servility hinted in the island, approaching the image of a sinful Christian man. Melmoth would present at the end yet another facet of himself, that in similarity to Faustus when he attends to John and Moçada and reveals his failed task and upcoming passing.

As can be perceived, different characterisations of the same figure are provided in every tale, both complementing and erasing the previous versions as the new ones appear. There is a building of confusion, mystery, like a riddle.

The interpolation of texts, in chronological order, with the succession of multiple narrators – which voices merge through the narration – serve to intensify the appearances of the Wanderer, along with projecting a dark vision of the world. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of stories and situations are placed like mirrors reflection, in which the corruption, violence and misery of the characters reflect on the stories of the others.

Another aspect that needs to be commented on is the use of an outer narrative that works not only to further complement the inner narrative but to bring the contemporary issues of Ireland to the narration. Text and paratext are then, brought together to express Maturin's concerns about the circumstances of his country, and to arouse a similar preoccupation in the reader. In addition, it serves the purpose of mixing fact and fiction through notation. Maturin inserts Ireland in the novel, in the margins, establishing a union with the characters, and never disappearing. Ireland is omnipresent, but not central, is marginal and echoes like a ghost. As Morin states "Maturin asks us to see Ireland as neither continuous nor contiguous with the novel's tales and their settings but, instead, overlapped, fundamentally bleeding into each other" (133).

5. The Anglo-Irish Influence

The internal divisions the Anglo-Irish community and their continuous search of an identity of their own is reflected in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Maturin utilises the devices of the Gothic genre provides to pour in his novel the preoccupations of his community, diving into an exploration of the self through his characters, who encounter important conflicts and fragmentation. Joseph W. Lew elaborates an interesting analysis on the question of identity concerning, as well, the political implications. Lew argues that

“Melmoth explores problems of cultural and personal identity and assimilation problem particularly acute for the English in Ireland during Maturin's lifetime, but also becoming increasingly important in Great Britain's colonial holdings” (174).

Besides from his communal experiences, it is possible to encounter an inclusion of Maturin's personal ordeals of alienation, marginalisation, and displacement from his very own religious community. His characters exhibit his different facets in the following manner, according to Lew:

The young John Melmoth, who quits Trinity College, Dublin (Maturin's alma mater) in order to attend a dying rich uncle; Immalee, who spends most of her life isolated from all humans, and the end of it (as Isidora) misunderstood and persecuted; Solomon and Rebekah, who live in ultra-Catholic post-expulsion Spain as closet Jews; Guzman, condemned helplessly to watch his family starve; and The Wanderer himself, separated from others because of his terrible knowledge (175).

Maturin constructs his characters, then, with a complex turn on their identities. The impact of a new reality invades their lives, sometimes through a discovery of their truth, others through a change of circumstances; either way, these figures reach a point of bifurcation, where they must leave their old lives to embrace a different path. This often entails not only the assumption of a new culture, but a different religion, provoking in the characters a sense of liminality, they cannot seem to quite adapt, nor forget their old identity, never feeling quite comfortable. Such in-betweenness is characteristic, as mentioned in earlier sections, of the Anglicans living in Ireland, who felt neither English nor Irish. These characters are, therefore, unified by “social alienation as well as figurative and/or literal homelessness” (Morin 143), provoking the reflection of each other's similarities like mirrors. They ultimately “fall victim to the demands and restraints of society and social institutions, with the vital importance of organised religion” (Morin 143).

5.1. Duality or Double Identity

Such duality will be examined Antonio Monçada, Immalee, Ines and Elinor. Starting with Antonio Monçada, who is raised as a Catholic, however, such reality is discovered to be a disguise when his father, Don Fernan di Nunez, confesses their condition of Jews; publicly converted to Catholicism due to Spain's antisemitism:

You think me a Catholic—I have brought you up as one for the preservation of our mutual lives, in a country where the confession of the true faith would infallibly cost both. I am one of that unhappy race every where stigmatized and spoken against, yet on whose industry and talent the ungrateful country that anathematizes us, depends for half the sources of its national prosperity. I am a Jew, “an Israelite,” (Maturin 246-247).

Solomon the Jew is Don Fernan's real name; Antonio's is Manasseh-Ben-Solomon. This name entails a metaphor, for it means 'causing to forget', working as a “talisman to make “Antonio” forget his Catholic upbringing” (Lew 189). Such revelation induces a shocking situation of fragmentation, for Antonion, in assuming the name, he both attempts to honour its meaning – he must forget now what and who he had thought to be – and to assume Judaism, which entails important difficulties.

Distancing and alienation are even stronger in the case of Immalee-Isadora. Living as Immalee in solitude she believes herself to be “the daughter of a palm-tree, under whose shade she had been first conscious of existence, but that her poor father had been long withered and dead” (Maturin 283). The change is even more radical; she is then reunited with her family, as well as immersed not only in a distinct culture and religion, but in social life, accompanied, as well, with a change in name – Isadora. In spite of attempting to assume her authentic identity, believing fondly of Catholicism, she longs for her island and her old life: “I cannot be what I was – Oh, let me then no longer remember it! Let me, if possible, see, feel, and think as those around me too!” (Maturin

340). She suffers the 'real subject' of *Melmoth*... explained by Victor Sage as "the distortion caused to the individual psyche by 'systems of belief'" (qtd. in Morin 138).

Antonio and Isadora share a similar experience; both characters live an artificial life for the most part, encompassing not only their beliefs and family history – or the lack of it, in the case of Immalee – but their names, to then be having to transfigure into complete different people. They are confused and loss; as Morin expresses, they are "figuratively homeless" (141) for they are now in possession of their true identity, to which they do not relate, nor can they forget their past, inscribed as them as their true self.

Furthermore, Ines, from the Tale of the Guzman's family, experiences fragmentation as well, as she marries a Protestant German and must assume said culture. In her return to Spain, she worries about her children's adaptation: "She alluded slightly to the possible future change in her brother's favourable feelings towards her and dwelt much on the circumstance of her children being strangers in the country, wholly unacquainted with its language, and averse from its religion;" (Maturin 407). Her preoccupation derives from her knowledge of such confrontation, as well as the ways of the Catholics. Ines lives, then, torn in between the past and the present, one identity and another, thus, she never finds a proper home: "This return home however, remains forever marred by the continued memory of the past, and the family, though living in prosperous felicity' in Germany, are forced to wit Walberg shudder[ing] with horror both at the frequent thought of Melmoth's visitations and the images of his family perishing with want' (Melmoth p. 434)" (Morin 142).

Finally, in the Lover's Tale, Elinor adapts to Puritanism, and she is "compelled to hear the opinions she was attached to decried, and the characters she revered vilified, she sat in reflective silence; and, balancing the opposite extremes which she was destined to witness, she came to the right conclusion, —that there must be good on both sides," (Maturin 457). Experiencing changes and heartbreak, she attempts to return to her past,

which she cannot relate anymore, as Morin explains: “Elinor returned to the residence of her mother's family in the hope of renewing former images, but she found only the words that had conveyed those ideas, and she looked around in vain for the impressions they had once suggested' (Melmoth, pp. 473, 474). In this way, Elinor discovers that ‘all has been illusion' (Melmoth 474)” (142).

The notion of the unhomeliness, as can be perceived, is of vital importance; thus, the fragmentation these figures undergo deprives them from encountering a home, of feeling welcome and comfortable not only in a place but within an identity. They sustain a process of defamiliarisation of the intimate and, ultimately, the known. Maturin, in his scheming, operates with the notion of the unhomely, described by Jerrold Hogle as “the deeply and internally familiar ... as it reappears to us seemingly external, repellent, and unfamiliar forms” (qtd. in Morin 134).

Such distancing is included from the very beginning. When John Melmoth arrives to his uncle's house, he does not recognise his it as home due to his ruin and decadence: “the miry road which had once been approach”, “what had once been a gate”, “signs of increasing desolation”, “grass-grown steps and boarded windows”. (Maturin 9-10). The rencounter with the staff is similar: “recognising some, – disliking more – distrusting all” (Maturin 11). Not only unfamiliar but unpleasant. And, at the end, he would return to it, marked forever by the Wanderer (even when he is gone), even further from being considered ‘home’.

The Traveller himself is neither at home, not once in his extended life. This is due to his wanderings through the earth, in complete isolation from social and cultural experience, and to the disregard demonstrated by his family on his only visit:

Unwelcomed and unloved even by his own family, Melmoth is never at home in Ireland, just as the characters he tempts find themselves fundamentally misunderstood by their closest friends and family members. They therefore experience home as a strange and

unsettling place. Brought into Melmoth Lodge by way of John's reading and Monçada's narration, these characters and their spectral presence convert John's ancestral home into an unhomey haunted house, not simply because their voices begin to echo in its halls but also because their narratives repeat a horrifying tale of living betwixt and between accepted social and cultural norms (Morin 137).

6. Gothic elements

Many are the characteristics that inscribe *Melmoth the Wanderer* in the Gothic genre such as dreams and nightmares, monstrosity, the grotesque, the sublime... Nonetheless, due to the extension of this dissertation, not all of them can be addressed; hence, I have selected four Gothic elements for its significance in inscribing this novel within the genre, but also, because they are utilised and moulded by the author in order to serve his own style and purposes. The four elements are the found manuscript, that collects previous Gothic tradition as well as it serves as a model for the storytelling techniques of the book; the setting and the scenery, all of them contribute to create the claustrophobic atmosphere; and, lastly the inclusion of paradoxes and existentialism, presenting moral and intellectual themes.

6.1. Found Manuscript

One of the ways in which Maturin collected literary tradition on his novel is with the inclusion of the manuscript, used often to introduce the story of a character. Although Melmoth is properly introduced by the old dying uncle and Bidy Brannigan, it is the manuscript which gives the first testimony of his deeds. Santon's manuscript functions as the first tale, the first piece of information to decipher the Wanderer's mystery like the first piece of a puzzle. It is found almost by accident – relating, once again, to the tradition – “among some papers of no value, such as manuscript sermons, and pamphlets on the

improvement of Ireland and such stud” (Maturin 21). The manuscript is not satisfactory or sufficient, though, for it is incomplete with illegible parts. It serves the same purposes as the rest of the tales: confusing the readers rather than properly bringing them to the light. As Fowler writes:

The narratives are not only left without closure; they are internally incomplete as well. This is partly the result of the perishability of the documents in which they are preserved. "The relics of art are for ever decaying ..." says one of Maturin's narrators (30). Stanton's manuscript is mangled, obscured, marred by agitation, incomplete, illegible at points –altogether unsatisfactory. It raises more questions than it can answer– a standard Gothic technique for starting a novel; but, as noted above, Maturin violates the expectations raised from this familiar device by never supplying answers (525).

As this author states, Maturin adapts this device to his own purposes. He intended on creating a maze, displaying confusing pieces of information, as explained earlier; hence, the manuscript advances the forthcoming method of storytelling. Such traces will continue through the rest of the written sources included in the novel, such as Juan’s letters to his brother, Antonio, and Adonijah’s manuscript, in which “there were several pages destroyed” and not even its author could “supply the deficiency” (Maturin 356). This second manuscript, Adonijah’s, performs a similar function. It is inserted to introduce Immalee’s story and perpetuates both the unstable format and the unclear content. This testimony further establishes not only the scheme of this novel’s storytelling, but how it should be resolved by the reader:

Adonijah's manuscript offers a hint of how we are to interpret the novel. Adonijah's narrative, as Leigh Ehlers points out, has been written in Spanish and then transcribed into Greek characters (356). Consequently, it appears to be little better than hieroglyphics—alien and even impenetrable. To force this manuscript to yield up its secrets, the reader must possess both languages. With this key, the surface unintelligibility disintegrates (Fowler 526).

Moreover, Fowler claims doubtful authorship, entailing even further collection of the literary convention. Often, anonymity is characteristic of such testimonies; Santon's manuscript is depicted as unquestionably his, however, Fowler expresses scepticism towards Adonijah's authorship, declaring that "if Adonijah wrote it, why can he not help with the missing pieces? Furthermore, how does he or would he know what occurred on an isolated island where the only two "human" actors are Immalee and Melmoth?" (528-529). And she further elaborates the suspicion alluding to his lack of appearance on the tale or relation to the characters. And while her suspicions seem correctly substantiated, it is merely a curious hypothesis that I consider worth including.

6.2. Setting and Scenery

The locations and milieu in which the events are developed contribute to create a dark atmosphere, a sensation of restlessness and danger; the setting is, then, an element that permits the expression of Gothicism as well as the rest. Along those lines, the actions of the novel alternate, mainly, between three main places: Ireland, the Indian island and Spain. Nonetheless, it is important as well the differentiation between outdoor spaces – which work to reveal geographical location – and indoor spaces – which mainly harbour the atrocities – that will be addressed later.

The selection of these three countries serves certain purposes. Ireland is conceded the status of homeland of the Melmoth lineage. The notion of unhomey is, then, highlighted by the specification of the motherland; Ireland should provide the comfort of home to the characters, but, due to matters above explained, the country loses such sense and consideration. Moreover, the notion of Gothic is not represented by Ireland, Maturin distances his narration from this consideration. Ireland was indeed considered, especially by English authors, inherently Gothic; such consideration derives from the stereotype of the savage Irish and their savage land, as Jarlath Killen argues "Ireland as a whole is

readily identifiable as Gothic space in popular culture”, also, “cultural tradition which figures Ireland as a zone of wilderness, the supernatural and the pathological” (qtd. in Mitchell 95). Such regard was not only held over Ireland, though, as “English identity was configured as normative, those areas which surrounded it – the “Celtic fringes” – were simply constructed as abnormal” (qtd. in Mitchell 95). Clark Mitchell further claims that:

The “dark, desolate and stormy grandeur” of the perception of Ireland which was held by the English reading public in the late eighteenth century was readily adaptable for the use of the island as a kind of pre-Enlightenment wilderness which, when combined with its linguistic, religious and cultural “otherness”, provided a fertile territory for the growth of a literature which favoured the supernatural, the uncanny and the numerous features which unite to make up the genre or mode (95).

Maturin avoids the identification of any specific place with the atrocities of Gothic. And, despite placing most of the horrific events in Catholic Spain, Maturin does not condemn Spain, nor Irish, but Catholicism. He does not place savagery in Spain, but in Catholicism. The horrific usually occurs indoors – that is why his configuration of the indoors is important – in this regard, “Maturin violated the gothic convention of placing horrific fiction in the mystic Orient or in the Catholic realms of the Mediterranean.” (Snodgrass 2005) Spain is not portrayed as Mediterranean, but mainly Catholic, and the island is not properly the orient, but an idyllic place where the author evokes Eden.

This novel’s indoor scenery is quite important, because it further contributes to create an atmosphere of darkness and claustrophobia, along with ruin and decadence. Authors such as Albert Power claim that it is precisely “the chill ichor of mouldering medieval castles, secret tunnels and shadow-swathed crypts” (41) which, among other aspects, inscribes this novel within the genre. An example is the state of old Melmoth’s house in John’s arrival, as “the lodge was in ruins”, there were “mud and gravel stones”

with “an uncemented wall of loose stones” (Matrurin 9), contributing to the ill sensations he experiences on his arrival. The cells and dungeons also play an important part in the creation of the dark, suffocating and claustrophobic atmosphere.

6.3. Paradox

From the beginning of the study of Gothic, it has been said that the main purpose of the genre is causing an emotional response on the reader. And, while this is a true statement, intellectual and moral reflections are often forgotten, for they are intrinsic to the techniques of the genre. Besides from seeking an emotional response, Gothic also uses devices that provoke an intellectual or moral response on the reader, and an important one is paradox. Leven M. Dawson explores such issue in “*Melmoth*”, arguing that it is precisely “in the use of paradox, that Gothic fiction has its greatest philosophical depth and value, and makes contact with what is most valuable in romanticism” (Dawson 621). Such moral and philosophical implications incite existential questionings and thoughts – which will be discussed in the following subchapter. Paradox is used, then, to challenge traditional thinking or to bring reflection on certain matters, because, when the reader is exposed to great disparities between events and words causes, the shock of the contrast induces a crisis of thought. Therefore, paradox serves the ideological purposes, as will be explained in the following paragraphs. Primarily, I will focus on the most important kinds of paradoxes, namely: the nature of the Wanderer, the pleasure of terror, the beauty in horror and religious reflection.

Needless to say, that the mere existence of the Traveller entails a paradox. His figure is presented as a human being who has bend and surpassed the boundaries of nature, of humanity, acquiring supernatural abilities, crossing the line towards the demonic. Melmoth defies nature and logic reasoning: “a ridiculous fright that a man living

150 years ago is alive still”, “facts will confute the most stubborn logician” (Maturin 18,19).

There is, maybe, a contraposition which underlies the whole novel, and it is the pleasure found in witnessing or hearing about the horrific, delight found in being frightened. Such reaction to fear surpasses fiction, reaching reality, for it has its correlation in real life; the commercial success of Gothic fiction illustrates the general excitement found in fear. In the novel, such behaviour is constantly displayed, for instance, when listening to the old crone, young Melmoth finds pleasure, he is captivated by her horrifying tale “varying and increasing emotions of interest, curiosity, and terror, to a tale so wild, so improbable, nay, so actually incredible, that he at last blushed for the folly he could not conquer” (Maturin 24). Another example is the case of the Spaniard, who confesses, when recalling the death of the parricide that:

It is a fact, Sir, that while witnessing this horrible execution, I felt all the effects vulgarly ascribed to fascination. I shuddered at the first movement-the dull and deep whisper among the crowd. I shrieked involuntarily when the first decisive movements began among them: but when at last the human shapeless carrion was dashed against the door, I echoed the wild shouts of the multitude with a kind of savage instinct (Maturin 256).

Gothic achieves not only the captivation of the reader but producing a sort of delight while exposing the horrific, something that seems intrinsic in some human beings in the novel.

Notwithstanding, there is not only captivation and curiosity aroused by the display of horror, but also, beauty. Maturin does not differ from his fellow Gothic writers in creating a paradoxical aesthetic, that aims, primarily, to induce an emotional response by “[a] juxtaposition of symbols which are traditionally considered to be in opposition if not mutually exclusive” (Dawson 630). Along those lines, some characters are described with perturbing traits which incite attraction, such as the description of the Spaniard: “This

man was criminal, and crime gave him a kind of heroic immunity in my eyes. Premature knowledge in life is always to be purchased by guilt. He knew more than I did, -he was my all in this desperate attempt. I dreaded him as a demon, yet I invoked him as a god” (Maturin 196). Or the emotions provoked in Immalee in contemplating the Wanderer:

Such was the picture that presented itself to the strained, incredulous eyes of Immalee, those mingled features of magnificence and horror, -of joy and suffering-of crushed flowers and mangled bodies-of magnificence calling on torture for its triumph,- and the steam of blood and the incense of the rose, inhaled at once by the triumphant nostrils of an incarnate demon, who rode amid the wreck of nature and the spoils of the heart! Immalee gazed on in horrid curiosity (Maturin 293).

And, lastly, the last paradoxical theme I will discuss is the one regarding the condemnation of Catholicism. As explained in earlier paragraphs, Maturin makes an effort to include his political and religious views in his novel, attempting, then, to illustrate the horrors of the Catholic church. Hence, the atrocities committed by the Spanish Catholic characters, especially the clergy in the monasteries. Regarding this, the use of paradox accommodates to such aim, in showing the wickedness of an institution supposed to be the most virtuous. There is, then, the confusion caused on the reader when the good are engaged in evil deeds, or when the good demonstrate to be evil; the apparent unnaturalness is captivating, and, overall, unpredictable. Even a monk “of a temper and manners remarkably mild and attractive,” (Maturin 110) engaged in evil deeds which he justified by saying: “I was a monk and worked for victims of my imposture to gratify my pride! and companions of my misery, to soothe its malignity”; testimony regarded by the Spaniard “something at once derisive, triumphant, and diabolical” (Maturin 113).

6.4. Existentialism

Existential thinking, which is caused by the inclusion of paradoxes, is of great importance in Maturin’s work. The characters are constantly reflecting on existence, life

and its meanings, religion and suffering... Starting from their own vital experiences, which are flooded with pain, loss, isolation, mystery and lack of freedom, and very importantly, on human condition, such matters would be often on their words. It also reflects their internal divisions, because, in being so conscious about existence, they are quite conscious about the self.

Regarding the genre in itself, existentialism is one of the resources that provides Gothic depth, and also, contributes to the highly searched catharsis. Further, Hennelly, who dives into this topic on his article, calls it a great example of its genre: "Indeed, this convoluted series of tales, within tales, within tales, dramatizes all the critically acclaimed ingredients of the Gothic recipe: the aesthetic catharsis of terror and horror from an intimately involved reader, the psychological probing of the divided self, and the philosophical revelation of secret gnostic mysteries" (665). Furthermore, he resumes to state that, in this case, it works as a connecting thread, for existentialism "helps thematically to unify all the varied interpolated tales" (Hennelly 665).

The mere existence of Melmoth raises quite a lot of questions, and introduces many existential thoughts, an important one is the question of his humanity, or rather, his devil-like nature. The Wanderer also embarks on an existential quest for he is "an embodiment of the demonic-quest romance, in which a lonely, self-divided hero embarks on insane pursuit of the absolute" (qtd. in Hennelly 668). Furthermore, G. R. Thompson, the writer of the last quotation, states that Melmoth enacts the Faustian quest, attempting to escape from the limits of humanity, and ultimately, the existential nature of reality (qtd. in Hennelly 668). Melmoth, then, explores humanity and existence through his extreme ambition: "Mine was the great angelic sin -pride and intellectual glorying! It was the first mortal sin- a glorious aspiration after forbidden knowledge!" (Maturin 499). The acquisition of knowledge will become, then, an important part of the human nature.

The rest of the characters also embark on a quest, a quest to knowledge, to the acquirement of the truth about oneself, which is materialised in different manners in the different characters: young Melmoth seeks his ancestor, Monçada and Immalee learn their true identity, etc. Such quest is filled with horror and suffering, but also, with confusion. Immalee experiences a mixture of misery and gratitude for her journey to the truth:

She turned on him [Melmoth] a glance that seemed at once to thank and reproach him for her painful initiation into the mysteries of a new existence. She had, indeed, tasted of the tree of knowledge, and her eyes were opened, but its fruit was bitter to her taste, and her looks conveyed a kind of mild and melancholy gratitude, that would have wrung the heart for giving its first lesson of pain to the heart of a being so beautiful, so gentle, and so innocent (Maturin 308).

Contrarily, Santon's declarations illustrate that the path of the truth is no other than the path of suffering: "Doubtless those wretches have some consolation, but I have none; my sanity is my greatest curse in this abode of horrors. ... I know I can never escape, and the preservation of my faculties is only an aggravation of my sufferings" (Maturin 57).

There is also an appeal to the reader, inviting him or her to reflect on their existence as well, on realities of everyday life; as Monçada, declares "the drama of terror has the irresistible power of converting its audience into its victims" (Maturin 257). For it, Santon's manuscript presents itself with the same difficulties that the reader should endure when reading the novel: "Santon's testimony, for a matter of fact, symbolises a frustration that the reader has to endure when trying to decipher the novel's meaning at the same time escaping identification with such meaning" (Hennelly 666). In this regard, Hennelly states that "reading Melmoth is a kind of nightmare trauma in which the reader discovers several conflict sides to himself, victims and victimizers both" (Hennelly 666). The many acts of reading, writing, narrating create a "doppelgänger relationship between Maturin's own readers and the fictional audiences who are first terrified and then taught, almost as if the emotions must be purified and drained before the mind can be properly

instructed and then provoked or committed to a responsible course of existential action” (Hennelly 666). In reading the novel, the reader encounters several conflicts within himself. There is, then, an implied reader, whose role in the process of reading is reflected by the characters in several aspects – confusion, existential reflections and the enjoyment of fear. Once again, just like commercial success mimics the enjoyment of terror of the characters, readers also endure an existential crisis of thought as they learn about the dreadful tales.

7. Conclusion

After having carefully read both the primary source – *Melmoth the Wanderer* – and the secondary sources – fundamental for the correct comprehension of the novel and its context and the adequate execution of the task proposed, there are a several key aspects that I should outline as a conclusion. In studying the work of an Irish Gothic writer, it was necessary to delve deep into the tight relationship between the Gothic literary genre and the Anglo-Irish community, due to the conditions of liminality and the constant identity exploration that the group experienced living in Ireland as a minority, surrounded by the Catholic – yet majoritised in its political power in being descendants from the English. Such life experienced agreed with the characteristics of the Gothic genre, which deals especially with internal fractures and the question of the self, becoming, then, a perfect vehicle for self-expression, in terms of literature. As a result, the majority of Irish Gothic writers are Anglican, among which is the author whose novel I am discussing: Charles Robert Maturin. He was a marginalised and eccentric figure, who belonged to the Anglican clergy until he was relegated from it for his literary work, which, despite its excellency, it never attained the success and recognition of his contemporary Gothic writers.

Melmoth the Wanderer, the object of study selected for this essay, did reach a higher status than the rest of Maturin’s works, leaving an important legacy on subsequent

Gothic literature, among which is the famous *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. Maturin collects in this novel, not only on the literary convention of the Gothic, but also a great number of biblical and mythical imagery and references, always accompanied by the issues of Ireland, which converge, with mastery, in the themes and configuration of complex and rich characters. And in such characters the author also pours the preoccupations of his community, his country and even himself. The complexity of the characters is accompanied by a labyrinthine format, which consists of a number of interpolated tales, encapsulated like a Chinese Box that purposely obscures the understanding of the novel; a format not only determined by the author, but also as a result of editorial intervention, especially of publisher Archibald Constable. And, finally, focusing on the genre itself, I have examined some of the many Gothic elements of the novel, such as: the found manuscript, which introduces the character of The Wanderer, sets the scheme for the following technique of storytelling and collects previous literary tradition; the setting and the scenery, which are key elements to elaborate a Gothic, dark and suffocating atmosphere; and, existentialism and paradox, which provide the novel with further impact, moral and intellectual, along with the emotional catharsis.

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