ABEI Journal —The Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies, v.23, n.1, 2021, 13-24.

Good and Evil Church: The Two Faces of Catholicism in Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer

A igreja boa e má: As duas faces do catolicismo em Melmoth, o Andarilho *de Charles Maturin*

Charlie Jorge

Abstract: *The Eighteenth Century saw the emergence of Gothic literature, for which the Catholic Church came to represent all the fears English society at large felt towards European continental 'invasion', an enemy at the gates. However, some of these novels, full of evil priests and nuns, also include the other side of the coin: religious characters who exert themselves in a Catholic life to find opportunities for exercising benevolence and charity to those in need.*

Keywords: *Gothic; Catholicism; Ireland; Maturin;* Melmoth the Wanderer.

Resumo: *O século XVIII viu o surgimento da literatura gótica, para a qual a Igreja Católica passou a representar os medos que a sociedade inglesa em geral sentia em relação à "invasão" continental europeia, um inimigo às portas. No entanto, alguns desses romances, repletos de padres e freiras malvados, incluem também o outro lado da moeda: personagens religiosos que se esforçam na vida católica para encontrar oportunidades de exercer a benevolência e a caridade para com os necessitados.*

Palavras-chave: *Gótico; Catolicismo; Irlanda; Maturin;* Melmoth, o Andarilho.

Charles Robert Maturin, an Anglican curate in Catholic Ireland, followed the steps of other Gothic contemporaries when he wrote his masterpiece, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). His attacks on the Inquisition, his Catholic characters, and his "good" priests have divided the academia into two. For some, Maturin's works are full of an anti-Catholicism few others represent; while for others, they are more influenced by Irish nationalism and the historical events that took place in Eighteenth-century Ireland than by a Catholic aversion.

The aim of this paper is to examine the way in which both good and evil religious characters are portrayed in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*. All along it, we will have a deep insight into the manoeuvres of inquisitors, faith directors and monastery Superiors, and

ISSN1518-0581 | eISSN2595-8127 | DOI 10.37389/abei.v23i1.192580
Received: 01/10/2019 | Accepted: 19/10/2020

compare them to the acts of goodwill carried out by common parish priests and missionaries, themselves outcasts in a highly politicised religion. The final purpose would be to see how Maturin's Gothic masterpiece is more an attack on power wielded through faith than on the Catholic Church.

As Mary Fitzgerald states, "Gothic fiction is concerned with power" (15). Its bracketing of everydayness conjures a shadow world where power is simultaneously veiled and unveiled, where terrible things happen: bodies are found drained of blood, men are "strappadoed", women forced into marriages to demonic villains. Yet, in spite of being a day-to-day – or rather a page-to-page – occurrence, much of the "horror" of these events derives precisely from their inscrutability: power is felt and present, over-controlling, but not seen.

The Irish experience of this ghostly power in the nineteenth century was notoriously problematic. As a colony with a recent history of insurrection – Ireland had recently gone through two traumatic risings in 1798 and 1803 –, the marks of military and political force were visible (Morin and Gillespie 7), yet the institutions that moved the threads of such powers were external and almost unattainable for the common Irishman, who could not fathom the extent of the patronage and bribery present in Irish politics at the time (Foster 140-141). Apart from these forces, the country was subject to intense economic exploitation whose effect upon the Irish was to be brutal, the consequences of which would be evident at the start of the century.

The nineteenth century opened with an Act of Union that placed the decision-making process of Irish affairs outside Ireland and to which writers such as Charles Maturin and Maria Edgeworth were fiercely opposed, as they could sense from the very beginning the devastating results it would have for their beloved land (Hansen 5; Kelly 24). As the Parliament voted itself out of existence, the Act left a power vacuum in the country, a sense of power being elsewhere, in some way ghostly, and particularly inaccessible. This sense of power as being essentially alien and elsewhere, as belonging to an institution, or institutions, unreachable and whose machinery and machinations did not belong to Irish life and understanding any longer, pervaded life in Ireland.[1] As Maturin tells in a devastating description of Dublin after the Act of Union in *Women; or, Pour et Contre* (1818), this power was a political, a social and an economic reality:

> [Dublin's] beauty continues . . . but it's the frightful lifeless beauty of a corpse; and the magnificent architecture of its buildings seems like the skeleton of some gigantic frame, which the inhabiting spirit has deserted; like the vast structure of the bones of the Behemoth, which has ceased to live for ages, and around whose remains modern gazers creep and stare. We can bear the ruins of a city long deserted by human

> inhabitants, but it is awful to observe the inhabitants stealing from a city whose grandeur they can no longer support. . . .
> Opposite to [Trinity College] I behold a building which would have embellished Athens in the purest days of its architectural pride – it was called the Senate-house of Ireland – it is now the bank; and along those steps, worthy of a temple of Minerva or of Jupiter, the inhabitants of this impoverished city, without trade and without wealth, are crawling to pay bills; . . . The mansion of the Powerscourt family has become the station of the stamp office; . . . and the splendid modern house of Lord Aldborough (built within twenty years) is become the seat of the seminary of Professor Feinagle. Woe to the land where the mansions of the nobility have become the recepticles [sic] of office, or the palaces of pedagogues. (295-297)

In this dark and pessimistic description Maturin, quite appropriately, uses the figure of the Behemoth, a beast mentioned in the Bible and used as a metaphor for any extremely large or powerful entity (Cirlot 283). In *Women; or, Pour et Contre*, Maturin portrays this colossal figure as being dead in the middle of Dublin ("the vast structure of the bones of the Behemoth"), as if Dublin itself was already dead, and its carcass rotting under the sun. Yet, this terrible beast is alive somewhere else.

Moreover, Maturin's personal life was to be affected by this ghostly, incorporeal power beyond his understanding of law and justice. Maturin was born into a well-off family, as his father was a civil servant with a relatively good position in the post office and "had raised his children to expect a life of comfort and prosperity" (Lougy 30). However, in 1809, and for reasons still unknown, the government brought forth a charge of malversation against Charles Maturin's father. Maturin and his whole family were at this time residing at his parents' house to ease the financial strain already imposed on him by his position, as they were living on the modest income of a Dublin curate. In a letter addressed to his friend, and fellow novelist, Sir Walter Scott, he explains his family's situation and the unusual procedure his father faced, together with the horrible consequences it had, not only in the family's economy, but also in their honour and reputation:

> In November 1809, my father was dismissed from his situation, at the age of *64* left with my Mother to the horrors of utter indigence, aggravated by the infirmities of age, the impossibility of applying to any other Means of subsistence at such a period of life, and above all by the bitter recollection of former affluence and honour ... he has made numberless applications for Redress, but while the Country is struggling for Existence, she has little leisure to attend to private complaints – in the Battle for life and death we are now fighting, the Cries of the wounded can neither be heard or pitied.
> My father had lived up to his income, and therefore I who was dependent on him, was of course a Sufferer in his Ruin – his interest too was lost with his situation, and their Graces and Lordships the Archbishops and Bishops who had so often feasted at his table, would not now spare him the offals of theirs – in this my extremity, I Betook

> myself to a source of subsistence which unbeneficed Clergymen often Resort to in Dublin. I offered to take as boarders and pupils, the sons of those of fortune, who are students in the College of Dublin.
> . . . it is impossible to describe the "Variety of wretchedness" attendant on this line of life. (Scott and Maturin 9)

Interestingly, Maturin compares his family's situation with the current affairs of his country; the state of wretchedness in which both are, struggling for existence, and the injustice that both are subjected to.

Almost thirty years old, Maturin found himself and his family in a difficult situation as he "had a wife and family, very little money to support them, and not much hope for advancement" (Scott and Maturin 31). It cannot be forgotten either he did not have much hope in the ranks of the Anglican Church (Kramer 11), since his customs and manners, combined with the fact that he wrote fiction and drama containing less than orthodox Christian views, prevented him from gaining any kind of preferment within the Church (Lougy 13). However, it was not only the nature of his writings that prevented his rise within the Church. Probably, the real causes of Maturin's dissatisfaction are to be found in his temperament, as he entered the Church to gain security and prestige, being "unable to assume the mask of conformity and orthodoxy that might have led to advancement" (Lougy 14).

It is not surprising then that one finds clear connections between Maturin's works and the state of affairs both at home and also in his motherland and beloved city. As already seen above in the description of Dublin in the aftermath of the Act of Union in *Women; or, Pour et Contre*, he was totally opposed to this political manoeuvre by which Ireland's autonomy was being stolen (Kramer 47-48), as Robert Miles points out when he talks about Maturin's disaffection with "the Anglo-Irish elite, who, on the whole, supported the Act of Union of 1801, which he strongly opposed" (90). It is Maturin himself who openly tells the Scottish novelist, and friend, Walter Scott that the horrors of his life permeated into the horrors of his work, and in terrible and desperate words added that he "has borrowed the gloomy colouring of his own pages from the shade of obscurity and Misfortune under his existence has been wasted" (Scott and Maturin 7). Maturin's life, and Ireland's destiny alongside it, is poured forth into his works with such an intensity, as if to show his readers the injustice and suffering both are subjugated to and the wretched condition they have been cast to. In accordance with other Irish authors of the period, Maturin seems to tell his friend that his works are part of that socio-political propaganda that flooded the market at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Morin and Gillespie 7), when Gothic is used as an undercover political weapon to show the atrocities committed against Ireland and the Irish (2).

In Maturin's depictions of Catholic institutions, we come across greedy monks, obscure and gloomy monasteries, where all kinds of barbarities are possible to maintain their prestige and influence, inquisitors craving to obtain confessions at any price or even directors who would use their "priestcraft" in their own benefit. All these represent the evil side of the Catholic Church as an omnipresent, incorporeal institution which is rooted into the governing system of a country to such extent that, as one of the heroes in the novel, Alonzo de Monçada, states the whole country becomes a prison: "what chance of liberation for a monk in Spain?" (Maturin, *Melmoth* 180). Maturin seems to represent the Catholic Church as an omnipotent institution able to destroy anything that opposes its plans. Maturin's Catholic Church, as the institution it represents, is a hermeneutical body where plotting and manoeuvring occurs in the dark corridors of its convents and Inquisitorial prisons. It is the exemplar of an obscure and corrupt system that can destroy a family's, nation's, honour.

Alonzo, the main hero in the long narrative "Tale of the Spaniard", is the son of a grandee of Spain, born before both his parents got married. As a sort of penance for his parents' sins, he is sent to a monastery at an early age, where he studies and is subtly lead towards a future life as a monk in this religious institution. The director uses all his manoeuvres to persuade the young boy to accept his destiny as a monk of the ex-Jesuits, which he utterly rejects. However, Alonzo's unwillingness to enter the institution clashes against the overpowering influence the director has on a whole family of Spanish grandees.

After a walk along the Prado with his father, Alonzo clings to fatherly love in a heart-breaking scene and pleads for his release from what he terms as a prison, because the only thing he wants is to enjoy life as a normal citizen. Despite trying hard, his attempts are fruitless, as his father's intentions are unbending:

> Pleasure is very selfish; and when selfishness pleads to selfishness for relief, it is like a bankrupt asking his fellow-prisoner to go bail for him. This was my conviction at the moment, yet still I reflected, . . . that a taste for pleasure, while it renders a man selfish in one sense, renders him generous in another. The real voluptuary, though he would not part with his slightest indulgence to save the world from destruction, would yet wish all the world to be enjoying itself, (provided it was not at his expence [sic]), because his own would be increased by it. To this I clung, and intreated [sic] my father to indulge me with another view of the brilliant scene before us. He complied, and his feelings, softened by this compliance, and exhilarated by the spectacle . . . became more favourable than ever. I availed myself of this, and, while returning to the convent, threw the whole power of my nature and intellect into one (almost) shrieking appeal to his heart. I compared myself to the unhappy Esau, deprived of his birthright by a younger brother, and I exclaimed in his language, "Hast thou no blessing for me! Bless me, even me also, Oh my father!" My father was affected; he promised my entreaty every consideration; but he hinted some difficulty to be encountered on my mother's

> part, much on that of her Director, who (I afterwards found) governed the whole family, and still more remotely hinted at something insurmountable and inexplicable. (Maturin, *Melmoth* 80)

Interestingly, Maturin hints as well at the existence of a third party in this game, as he makes clear comparing Alonzo's destiny with that of the unhappy Esau, who is also victim to the plot of his brother and stepmother. Like the first-born son of Isaac, Alonzo is victim to a ghostly, invisible power beyond his reach and understanding: an influential entity such as the Director and the congregation he represents. Maturin also hints at the powerlessness of Alonzo's father, despite belonging to one of the most powerful and influential families in Spain, and his being trapped in what seems to be the same prison as his son: "it is like a bankrupt asking his fellow-prisoner to go bail for him" (Maturin, *Melmoth* 80). As seen some lines later, all the boy's entreaties are in vain, for the Director "was to be encountered with different arms" (81), manipulating the family "with all the expertness and fertility of manoeuvre which belong to an ecclesiastical tactician" (84). He also uses all kinds of tricks, so "one must have had the treachery of Judas to suspect him of treachery" (81), until he achieves his goal: making the young Alonzo de Monçada become a monk:

> I fell on my knees, resolved to pray in my heart; but in a short time, the fervour of his language, the eloquence and energy of his prayers, dragged me along with him, and I felt myself compelled to pray against every dictate of my own heart. He had reserved this display for the last, and he had judged well. I never heard any thing [sic] so like inspiration; as I listened, and involuntarily, to effusions that seemed to issue from no mortal lips, I began to doubt my own motives, and search my heart. I had disdained his taunts, I had defied and conquered his passion, but as he prayed, I wept . . . we ask with the desponding and restless scepticism of Pilate, "What is truth?" but the oracle that was so eloquent one moment, is dumb the next, or if it answers, it is with an ambiguity that makes us dread we have to consult again – again – and for ever – in vain.
> "I was now in a state quite fit for the Director's purpose; . . . he left me, to urge my parents, with all his influence, to pursue the most rigorous measures to enforce my adoption of the conventual life." (84-85)

With all his eloquence and influence, not only does the Director manage to persuade Alonzo to become a monk, but also to truly believe himself the offspring of sin and to make him regret ever having thought of not taking the vows.

Later in the novel, and after a long period of apathy and ennui, the young Alonzo starts corresponding with his younger brother Juan, on which the rights of the Monçada family rest now. He informs our hero of the situation back at home and all the plotting of the scheming Director, which made him see his older brother under a better light:

> In fact, the efforts of the Director's power in the family would alone be sufficient to precipitate my determinations. He has placed you in a convent, but that not enough for the persevering proselytism of the church. The Palace of the Duke de Monçada is, under his influence, turned into a convent itself. My mother is almost a nun, her whole life is exhausted in imploring forgiveness for a crime for which the Director, to secure his own influence, orders her a new penance every hour. My father rushes from libertinism to austerity, – he vacillates between this world and the next; – in the bitterness of exasperated feeling, sometimes reproaches my mother, and then joins her in the severest penance. Must there not be something wrong in the religion which thus substitutes external severities for internal amendment? I feel I am of an enquiring spirit, and if I could obtain a book they call the Bible, (which, though they say contains the words of Jesus Christ, they never permit us to see) I think — but no matter. The very domestics have assumed the in *ordine ad spiritualia* character already. They converse in whispers – they cross themselves when the clock strikes – they dare to talk, even in my hearing, of the glory which will redound to God and the church, by the sacrifice my father may yet be induced to make of his family to its interests. (Maturin, *Melmoth* 129)

From Juan's words Alonzo can see how a house where a certain degree of law and order resided in the past has been turned upside down by the influence of an external power. After reading these lines, which seem to be taken from the annals of a madhouse, we cannot help calling back to mind the images of a decrepit Dublin after the fatal Union, so well portrayed by Maturin in *Women; or, Pour et Contre*, when a city and a whole country were sentenced to death (Kelly 39); or even the hopeless state and misery Maturin himself would have found in his household after the terrible incident (his father's accusation) that destroyed them all, and that permeated to the core of his works.[2] In his distressing letter, Juan clearly states what Alonzo will hint at later, and we have already seen, that the whole house, and by extension country, has been turned into a convent; being under the overreaching power of the institutionalized evil Church. The Director has established in the House of Monçada a Reign of Terror that would have struck a chord amongst contemporary readers, as William Pitt "was carrying out a reign of terror against the Irish" (Gillespie 59). In *Melmoth the Wanderer* the Gothic Irish landscape has turned into the House of Monçada, and both, in turn, into a prison.

However, the misfortunes of Alonzo do not finish here. As he tries to escape the convent with the help of his brother Juan, they are betrayed by a parricide, a lay brother at the convent who, despite assisting them at first, cares more about his own promotion within the religious ecclesiastical world than faith itself, and whose "prayers sounded so like curses, and his curses were so like prayers to the evil one" (Maturin, *Melmoth* 195). As a consequence of this treason, Juan is murdered and in the middle of desperate cries of agony bordering madness

for his beloved brother, Alonzo loses all kind of reasoning and consciousness (215-216), to come round days later "*in the prison of the Inquisition*" (225).

It is there that the reader will learn from Alonzo's experience about the secrecy and mystery that surrounds this loathed and feared institution, which can even make whole families disappear (Baigent and Leigh 70; Rawlings 35). In his own words, as he relates his terrible story to his host in Ireland, nobody who has ever been inside the walls of the Inquisition will tell anything that happened there; that is, if they ever come out of it: "the prisoners are bound by an oath never to disclose what happens within its walls. . . . I am forbidden, by an oath which I shall never break, to disclose the circumstances of my imprisonment or examination" (Maturin, *Melmoth* 226). Young John Melmoth, the descendant of Melmoth the Wanderer, and Alonzo's host in Wicklow, learns about young Monçada's calmness at the beginning, as he believes himself innocent of any heresy against the Catholic Church, his only punishable crime being that of apostasy. In a mirroring image of Maturin's father's ordeal, dishonour and utter poverty, Monçada is sentenced to a destiny worse than death: an *Auto da Fe*. After countless days of psychological and physical torture, abuse, oppression and falsehood (234), knowing that any attempt at claiming one's innocence or defence was useless, Alonzo hears his terrible sentence as the world seems to reel around him:

> "You, Alonzo de Monçada, monk, professed of the order of —, accused of the crimes of heresy, apostacy [sic], fratricide, ("Oh, no, – no!" I shrieked, but no one heeded me), and conspiracy with the enemy of mankind against the peace of the community in which you professed yourself a votary of God, and against the authority of the holy office, with an infernal messenger of the foe of God, man, and your own apostatized soul; condemned on your own confession of the infernal spirit having an access to your cell, – are hereby by delivered to –"
> "I heard no more. I exclaimed, by my voice was drowned in the murmur of the officials. The crucifix suspended behind the chair of the judge, rocked and reeled before my eyes; the lamp that hung from the ceiling, seemed to send forth twenty lights. I held up my hands in abjuration – they were held down by stronger hands. I tried to speak – my mouth was stopped." (238)

Despite all these horrific images, not all is desperation and gloom when surrounded by religious characters in the novel. Scattered amongst its pages and springing from places where they remain "uninstitutionalized" by their circumstances, we find Catholic exemplars of a good Christian life. In the midst of the Wicklow Mountains we found Father Fay, a parish priest in Catholic Ireland, that is described as "a grave and decent priest, well "spoken of by those that were without" the pale of his own communion" (Maturin, *Melmoth* 69). He is a respected member of the community, not for his power (impossible in an Ireland still under the Penal

Laws) but for his Christian values and general goodness. The striking fact, even more when considering the novel as a whole, is that he is called into the house after its inhabitants discover that the man who saved young John Melmoth is a Spaniard and a Catholic. As shown later in the narrative, Alonzo de Monçada would have issues about encountering any member belonging to an ecclesiastical institution, after all the trauma and suffering coming from the hands of Catholic institutions. However, as for Father Fay, it seems the Spaniard feels rather at ease with him, as he "visited the stranger every day" (69).

The case of Father Fay would have passed unnoticed and as incidental if it had not been for another two cases: that of a small Catholic community in India – as we could suppose it to be the Goa area, where a great number of missionaries preached the word of God (Peters 99) – and the confessor in the "Tale of Guzman's Family". In the case of the former, the reader learns about them when Melmoth shows the world to the naïve Immalee using what seems to be a magical telescope of some kind. As she asks him about the concept of religion and the different beliefs there are beyond her little Indian island, Melmoth lectures her on the cruel customs of Hinduism and Islam. However, unexpectedly for Melmoth, and when the young girl thought all hope to find a decent religion had gone, she fixes her attention on a small chapel in the wilderness, noticing "the unobtrusiveness simplicity of its appearance, and the scanty number and peaceable demeanour of the few who were approaching it" (Maturin, *Melmoth* 296). After such a discovery, Melmoth feels obliged to tell his pupil about the customs and rites of Christianity in its pure essence, something that can only be found in a country where no Catholic institutions can wield any power, and where they are reduced to a humbleness worthy of the first martyrs of the Church, turning them into examples of self-sacrifice, love and tolerance:

> However it was, he felt himself compelled to tell her it was a new religion, the religion of Christ, whose rites and worshippers she beheld. "But what are the rites?" asked Immalee. "Do they murder their children, or their parents, to prove their love to God? Do they hang them on baskets to perish, or leave them on the banks of rivers to be devoured by fierce and hideous animals?" – "The religion they profess forbids that," said the stranger, with reluctant truth; "it requires them to honour their parents, and to cherish their children." – "But why do they not spurn from the entrance to their church those who do not think as they do?" – "Because their religion enjoys them to be mild, benevolent, and tolerant; and neither to reject or disdain those who have not attained its purer light." – "But why is there no splendour or magnificence in their worship; nothing grand or attractive?" – "Because they know that God cannot be acceptably worshipped but by pure hearts and crimeless hands; and though their religion gives every hope to the penitent guilty, it flatters none with false promises of external devotion supplying the homage of the heart; or artificial or picturesque religion standing in the place of that single devotion to God, before

> whose throne, though the proudest temples erected to his honour crumble into dust, the heart burns on the altar still, an inextinguishable and acceptable victim." (296-297)

It is precisely these words and genuine description of a missionary community that makes Immalee convert into a Christian, claiming Christ as her God: "Christ shall be my God, I will be a Christian!" (297).

In the case of the "Tale of Guzman's Family", the reader comes across a good confessor who sides by a Protestant family who have been unjustly disinherited by a community of monks driven by greed for Guzman's wealth. In his dying days, Guzman, a rich merchant from Seville, calls his sister back home after years of separation, as she had married Walberg, a German Protestant, against her brother's will. The Walbergs are enjoying happiness once in Seville without the knowledge of the manoeuvres that are taking place around them. The day in which Guzman dies, the priests that surround him in his last hours like vultures forge a testament in which it is stated that everything Guzman had would pass on to the Church, leaving the Walbergs in utter misery, in an example of overpowering "priestcraft". One must bear in mind that, as Lougy says, "this part of *Melmoth* is written with such vividness and force of feeling that Maturin's own life shines forth from every page" (67), as Maturin himself also told his friend Walter Scott. In this story the reader feels all the tension between Walberg/Maturin and his father, both in fiction and the real world, his love towards him surrounded by layers of reproach and marinated with big amounts of despair and poverty. All of it brought forth by an unfair overpowering entity.

However, in the middle of despair there is always hope, and in the case of the Walbergs this is embodied in Guzman's good confessor who, taking the side of the Protestant family and risking his own position within the Church – and his own life in Inquisition-driven Spain –, does his best to restore their rights back to them:

> On hearing the plans of Walberg and his family, he promised, with a faultering [sic] voice, his ready assistance in promoting them; and, as he rose to depart, observing that he had been entrusted by the faithful with a small sum for the relief of the unfortunate, and knew not where it could be better bestowed, he dropped from the sleeve of his habit a well filled purse on the floor, and hurried away.
> "The family . . . were devoted to applications at every door where encouragement might be expected, or employment obtained, the priest in person aiding every application." (Maturin, *Melmoth* 416)

In the end, and after much struggling, the priest appears as the messenger of heaven one night right in time to stop Walberg from killing his whole family, as he had been driven to madness by despair. The good priest brings with him the good news of the discovery Guzman's real will,

where he stated that his sister and her family should be the inheritors of his fortune, thus ending the story in joy and hope.

Putting it all together, it can be seen that Maturin poses a strong critique on Catholic institutions, full of greedy priests and faith directors who crave for power and turn whole families/countries into monasteries they control at will. Alongside these, one can also find unfair inquisitors who would do anything to extract the confession that would suit their evil purposes. Although these characters populate several pages, and chapters, in Melmoth the Wanderer, the omnipotent institutions these figures represent are only present in contexts where their power can be wielded without limits, where the "horror" that emanates from them is a day-to-day issue. Amid all this madness we still find some beacons of goodwill among the ranks of the Church, who are outcasts in a highly politicised religion. These flagships of Christian values in a world full of corruption are parish priests in remote areas in the Wicklow mountains, providing alms and comfort of spirit under the Penal Laws in Ireland, knowing their destiny could be fatal. They are also small missionary communities in the wilderness of India, where they live in frugality and simplicity, as Immalee remarks when she discovers the monastery from her Indian island. Also, these exemplars of good Christian values are portrayed by a decent, good confessor moved by the misfortunes of a family unjustly treated by the members of an overpowering institution, and who risks his reputation and a destiny worse than death itself under the scrutiny of the Spanish Inquisition. Maturin's narrative should not be read as an attack on Catholic beliefs, as the existence of these characters shows he was conscious of there being a good side to it. Instead, he seems to be denouncing corrupt institutions at large – Catholic or otherwise – which commit injustice for their own profit, and whose aim is to obtain self-advancement through manipulation and by means of wielding a power they can exert on a whole country. In Maturin's Ireland, people could feel that ghostly monster, that Behemoth from Biblical times, who dwelt away from their own shores and controlled their destinies; these overpowering institutions Alonzo de Monçada tells about.

Notes

1 With the abolition of the parliament in 1800 and the establishment of the Union, 'the idea of British treachery was also enshrined in the memory of 'independence'' (Foster 154). Henry Grattan and the 'Patriot Party', who had opposed the Union, regarded the Act of Union as if it had ended Ireland's national identity (Ranelagh 93). However, as the 19th century progressed, it became clear that the Act of Union had far-reaching repercussions and a cloud of depression hung all over the country, as lords and the Irish political elite would leave Ireland to establish in Westmister, allowing a number of areas in Dublin to degenerate into slums (Boran 69-70).

2 Maturin's works borrow feelings and even scenes from his own life, as he confessed to Walter Scott in one of his numerous letters:

> When I hinted at the gloom of my writings being borrowed from the shades of my own Mind and feelings, it was not that I might vent the murmurings of a querulous Egotist, or the vanity of a dissapointed Author – No Sir – I really believe my own Romances scarce exhibit vicissitudes more extraordinary than my life has furnished. (Scott and Maturin 8-9)

Works Cited

Baigent, Michael, and Richard Leigh. *The Inquisition*. Penguin Books, 2000.

Boran, Pat. *A Short History of Dublin*. Mercier Press, 2000.

Cirlot, Juan Eduardo. *Diccionario de símbolos*. Barcelona, Ed. Siruela, 2006.

Fitzgerald, Mary. "The Unveiling of Power: 19th Century Gothic Fiction in Ireland, England and America." *Literary Interrelations. Ireland, England and the World. Vol. 2. Comparison and Impact*, edited by Wolfgang Zach and Heinz Kasok, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 1987, pp. 15-25.

Foster, Robert Fitzroy. "Ascendancy and Union." *The Oxford History of Ireland*, edited by Robert Fitzroy Foster, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 134-173.

Gillespie, Niall. "Irish Jacobin Gothic, c. 1796-1825." *Irish Gothics. Genres, Forms, Modes, and Traditions, 1760-1890*, edited by Christina Morin and Niall Gillespie, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 58-73.

Hansen, Jim. *Terror and Irish Modernism: The Gothic Tradition from Burke to Beckett*. State University of New York Press, 2009.

Kelly, Jim. *Charles Maturin: Authorship, Authenticity and the Nation*. Four Courts Press, 2011.

Kramer, Dale. *Charles Robert Maturin*. New York, Twayne Publishers, 1973.

Maturin, Charles Robert. *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Edited by Chris Baldick, Oxford University Press, 1998.

---. *Women; or, Pour et Contre*. Philadelphia, Moses Thomas, 1818. 3 vols.

Miles, Robert. "Europhobia: The Catholic Other in Horace Walpole and Charles Maturin." *European Gothic. A Spirited Exchange, 1760–1960*, edited by Avril Horner, Manchester University Press, 2002, pp. 84-103.

Morin, Christina, and Niall Gillespie. "Introduction: De-Limiting the Irish Gothic." *Irish Gothics. Genres, Forms, Modes, and Traditions, 1760-1890*, edited by Christina Morin and Niall Gillespie, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 1-12.

Lougy, Robert E. *Charles Robert Maturin*. Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 1975.

Peters, Edward. *Inquisition*. University of California Press, 1989.

Ranelagh, John O'Beirne. *A Short History of Ireland*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Rawlings, Helen. *The Spanish Inquisition*. Blackwell, 2006.

Scott, Walter, and Charles Robert Maturin. *The Correspondence*. Edited by Fanny Elizabeth Ratchford, New York, Garland, 1980.