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From Melmoth to Maqroll: The Wanderer in Latin America.

Abstract: From Roberto Jorge Payró's *Violines y toneles* (1908) to Álvaro Mutis's *Maqroll* novellas (1986-1993), Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* repeatedly resurfaces across Latin America's shifting cultural landscapes of the twentieth century. This article argues that the text's influence testifies to the malleability and dynamism of Gothic's transnational transmission from the late eighteenth century to the present day. Drawing on the concept of 'globalgothic', it traces the elaborate nexus of cultural and political channels through which *Melmoth* circulated in Latin America. The mapping of *Melmoth*'s journey across Latin America reveals a world of gothic interchange that traverses and, at times, transcends national, temporal, and generic boundaries. In so doing, this article situates the text and its afterlives within an intricate yet uneven economy of colonial and postcolonial exchange where generic and national hierarchies are often mutually reinforcing but equally unstable. Ultimately, *Melmoth*'s Latin American afterlives evidence a dynamic interplay between nation, genre, and form in the globalgothic.

Keywords: Latin America, Globalgothic, Inter-imperiality, transnational transmission

In an interview with the Venezuelan newspaper *El Nacional* in 1989, the Colombian novelist Álvaro Mutis retraced the origins of his Gothic novel *La mansión de Araucaíma* (1973) to a conversation with the Spanish-Mexican filmmaker, Luis Buñuel:

[La novela] nació de una conversación que tuve con Luis Buñuel [...]. Los dos coincidimos en [...] el interés por la literatura surrealista, [...] por los autores que le interesaron a los surrealistas, pero, sobre todo eso, el Melmoth de Maturin nos unió mucho en una época [...] Una noche le dije a Buñuel: ‘Quiero hacer una novela gótica pero en tierra caliente, en pleno trópico.’ Y Buñuel me contestó que no se podía, que era una contradicción, ya que la novela gótica para él tendría que suceder en un ambiente gótico.

[The novel] was born from a conversation that I had with Luis Buñuel [...]. We both agreed on [...] an interest in Surrealist literature, [...] in the authors who interested the Surrealists, but, above all Maturin’s Melmoth brought us very close for a long time [...]. One night I said to Buñuel: ‘I want to make a gothic novel but in a hot country, in the middle of the tropics.’ Buñuel replied that it was impossible, that it was a contradiction since the gothic novel for him would have to take place in a gothic environment.¹

Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodríguez characterises Mutis’s account as narrating the evolution of ‘a specific form of the Gothic that is Colombian and is Latin American’.² He usefully traces the development of this ‘Tropical Gothic’ from Mutis’s novel to the later fictional and filmic productions of the so-called ‘Caliwood’ movement led by Carlos Mayolo, Luis Ospina, and Andrés Caicedo.³ In this way, Eljaiek-Rodríguez draws attention to the creative and critical ingenuity with which Colombian artists of the mid- to late-twentieth century repurposed the Gothic within their own cultural and geo-political contexts.

And yet, Mutis arguably gestures here to a much longer and largely undocumented history of Latin American engagements with the Gothic. More than just a passing reference to a prototypical nineteenth-century Gothic novel, Mutis's description of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) as the text that 'nos unió mucho' proffers a glimpse into the complex transnational networks through which Latin American Gothic manifests. Indeed, *Melmoth* persistently haunts Latin America as a looming if liminal cultural presence that is more often conjured through structural resonances, elusive modalities, and ancillary allusions than by direct invocation. Nevertheless, from twentieth-century classics such as Roberto Jorge Payró's *Violines y toneles* (1908) and Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963) to more recent yet lesser-known works such as Vicente Quirarte's play *El fantasma del Hotel Alsace* (2002) and the dark surrealism of contemporary Mexican artist Emil Melmoth, Maturin's text repeatedly resurfaces across Latin America's shifting cultural landscapes. This article argues that the novel's subtly pervasive influence testifies to the malleability and dynamism of Gothic's transnational transmission from the late eighteenth century to the present day. More specifically, in mapping *Melmoth's* iterability across Latin America, it reveals a world of gothic interchange that traverses and, at times, transcends national, temporal, and generic boundaries. Drawing on recently revised critical understandings of 'globalgothic', this article begins by outlining the complex colonial contexts from whence *Melmoth* first emerged. Focusing on the text's transnational transmission between Ireland, Britain, France, and the Americas, it then traces the elaborate nexus of cultural and political channels via which *Melmoth* circulated in Latin America. In so doing, we situate the text and its afterlives within an intricate yet uneven economy of colonial and postcolonial exchange where generic and national hierarchies are often mutually reinforcing but equally unstable. In its final section, the article returns to Buñuel and Mutis to consider *Melmoth's* generic transmigrations across

a range of mutually informing and evolving modes. Ultimately, *Melmoth's* Latin American afterlives evince the dynamic interplay between nation, genre, and form in the globalgothic.

***Melmoth* and the Globalgothic**

As outlined in the introduction to this special issue, Rebecca Duncan has recently argued for a 'reconceptualisation of globalgothic' that 'acknowledg[es] the transnational vectors of power and production in the context of which all nations are placed, and by which they are shaped'.⁴ As she further states:

This history begins in the 'long' sixteenth century, when the powers of Western Europe set out to expropriate the resources of the so-called New World, and did so by harnessing the labour first of its Indigenous populations, and then of captive African people transported to the colonies as slaves.⁵

It is by no means a coincidence that the spatio-temporal scope of *Melmoth's* plot shadows this global chronology of colonial exploitation. As Julia M. Wright observes, *Melmoth's* wanderings retrace 'a colonial history that sweeps half of the globe'.⁶ The text pursues its eponymous protagonist as he traverses both Europe and Asia, and, by extension, 'through the imperial history of England and Spain during the Renaissance appropriation of territory and the Romantic-era expansion of trade and industry'.⁷ Christina Morin justifiably cautions against any attempt to correlate the text's eclectic assemblage of fragmented and interpolated tales to a distinct authorial agenda.⁸ Nonetheless, *Melmoth's* disorienting and discordant structure reverberates with the epistemic violence of empire. Laura Doyle therefore regards the text's 'Chinese-box structure' as 'a phenomenology of collectively lived and told history' that 'perspicaciously dramatizes' the 'traumatized geostructure' of the Gothic.⁹

This 'structure of a pained dialectic [...] of seeking witness and giving witness' is particularly pronounced in the inset 'The Tale of the Indians'.¹⁰ Presented as fragments of an

incomplete manuscript, this ‘tale’ introduces the reader to Melmoth’s love interest, the Miranda-esque Immalee, and the remote Indian Ocean island that she inhabits. This setting enables the narrative to move beyond its heavy-handed critique of the religious tyrannies of imperial Spain to interrogate the wider repercussions of European colonialism. From this pelagic vantage point, Melmoth wryly surveys the global scale of imperialism’s horrors:

There came on the European vessels full of the passions and crimes of another world [...] He saw them approach to traffic for ‘gold, and silver, and the souls of men [...] to discharge the load of their crimes, their lust and their avarice, and after ravaging the land, and plundering the natives, depart, leaving behind them famine, despair, and execration....’¹¹

A few pages later, an authorial footnote protests against ‘the worst sentiments of my worst characters [being] represented as *my own*’.¹² In the passage cited above, however, the wanderer clearly serves as a mouthpiece for a searing Swiftian satire – Melmoth as a demonic Gulliver of sorts. According to Duncan, globalgothic ‘refers to a critical gothic poetics, the purpose of which is to chart, from a certain regional perspective, the transregional dynamics and connections that give rise to the moments of social and environmental destabilisation to which gothic responds’.¹³ As Lisa Lampert-Weissig details in her article in this issue, *Melmoth*’s rather shopworn sectarianism and xenophobic caricaturing does not readily align the text with the decolonising aims of contemporary globalgothic. Nonetheless, *Melmoth* shares the globalgothic’s impulse to chart and respond to the ‘destabilisation’ of global imperialism.

Commencing in nineteenth-century Ireland, the frame narrative launches its first incursion into colonial history through its brief exposition of the Melmoth genealogical line. Having first glimpsed the Wanderer while attending his uncle’s deathbed at the dilapidated

family estate, the young John Melmoth seeks further information from the local Catholic peasantry regarding the history of this enigmatic character. Informing John that ‘the first of the Melmoths [...] who settled in Ireland, was an officer in Cromwell’s army, who obtained a grant of lands, the confiscated property of an Irish family’, a ‘withered’ Irish ‘Sybil’ identifies the Wanderer as the elder brother of this Cromwellian invader.¹⁴ Curiously, however, on the Wanderer’s final return to Ireland at the novel’s denouement, he informs his transfixed young descendent: ‘In this apartment ... I first drew breath, in this I must perhaps resign it, – would – would I had never been born!’.¹⁵ This textual contradiction concerning the Wanderer’s birthplace betrays the narrative’s anxiety regarding its own representation of Irish history. Whilst the frame narrative initially seeks to distance its protagonist from the seventeenth-century Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, its final pages suggest that the Wanderer was either borne into or out of this traumatic period in Irish colonial history. Characterising Irish Gothic as informed by a ‘crisis of historical representation’, Wright argues that the ‘novel’s concern with lines of transmission’ establishes an ‘iterative pattern that is itself a challenge to notions of historical progress and the imperial expansion those notions underwrite’.¹⁶ Such textual contradictions only serve to desynchronise and derange this imperial transmission further. John Melmoth may be bewildered by his own aberrant ancestry, yet he too is ‘implicated in the colonial history that the Wanderer and his brother inaugurated’.¹⁷

Indeed, even as Melmoth journeys away from this Irish frame setting, the narrative’s paratext continues to register Irish history in a haunting process that Morin describes as ‘paratextual possession’.¹⁸ Both Wright and Morin point to footnotes that explicitly link one of the text’s most grisly episodes of Lewisian horror to real-life atrocities that occurred during the Irish rebellions of 1798 and 1803. The description of a brutal mob assault conducted during a Spanish religious procession is accompanied by a footnote that relates an

‘eye-witness’ account of a similar episode during the Emmett rebellion. According to Maturin’s note, a Dublin shoemaker who witnessed the disturbance ‘stood at his window as if nailed to it; and when dragged from it, became – an *idiot for life*’.¹⁹ Whilst the Wanderer traverses the globe with preternatural celerity and ease, Irish history interrupts and impedes narrative progress as a repetitive and recurring trauma, thereby rendering recent Irish history as gothic horror.²⁰ And yet, this paratextual possession extends far beyond the Irish context.

Previous scholarship has drawn attention to the muted yet persistent allusions to ‘Spanish’ America within *Melmoth*’s paratexts. Wright notes that Melmoth’s first visit to Immalee occurs in 1680, which is the year of the famous Pueblo uprising of the indigenous population of Santa Fe de Nuevo México against Spanish colonisers.²¹ Similarly, Massimiliano Demata highlights a footnote referring to one of Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix’s many writings on European colonialism in the Americas, *Histoire du Paraguay* (1756). In another episode of Lewisian horror, a married couple are imprisoned in the subterranean dungeon of a Spanish monastery having been discovered *in flagrante* in one of the monastery’s cells. In order to underscore the monastic superior’s revulsion at witnessing their sexual liaison, Maturin alludes to Charlevoix’s description of the ‘loathsome unions between the serpents of South America and their human victims, when they catch them, and twine round them in folds of unnatural and ineffable union’.²² Demata argues that Maturin’s intertextual reference to this internationally-respected historian of empire implies that, ‘just like the snakes of South America [...] the Union of England and Ireland had resulted in the victory of the former but could determine the death of the latter’.²³ Although not mentioned by Demata, it is worth recalling that the Anglo-Irish playwright and parliamentarian Richard Brinsley Sheridan famously described the East India Company’s partnership with its indigenous allies as that of a ‘vulture to a lamb’ during the Warren Hasting Impeachment of 1788–1795.²⁴ Over two decades later, Byron echoed Sheridan when he decried the 1800 Irish

Act of Union as ‘the union of the shark with his prey’.²⁵ Commenting upon Maturin’s ‘remarkable historical sensibility’, Doyle contextualises *Melmoth*’s ‘systemic critique’ of imperialism in relation not only to contemporaneous rebellions in Ireland and Spanish America but also large-scale uprisings in North America, the Caribbean, India, and Africa.²⁶ This does not, however, diminish the pivotal geo-political significance of Spanish America in this period of competing imperial histories. If, as Doyle suggests, *Melmoth* heralds ‘the Gothic’s expression of an emergent global consciousness’, an appreciation of this specific context is vital to understanding globalgothic’s emergence.²⁷ Drawing on Doyle’s account of inter-imperiality, the remainder of this article reveals the importance of Latin American engagement with *Melmoth* to the continued evolution of the globalgothic.

***Melmoth* and Latin America**

According to Rebecca Cole Heinowitz, ‘Robert Southey did not exaggerate when he described the England of his day as “South American mad”’.²⁸ As Heinowitz further delineates, early nineteenth-century Britain was gripped by the Spanish American wars of independence. The long-established Black Legend of Spanish colonial cruelty and domestic tyranny continued to retain currency within British imperial discourse and was readily employed to accentuate Britain’s comparative benevolence and tolerance. As Spanish defeats in the Peninsular War emboldened anti-colonial movements in its American territories, British opinion largely united behind the cause of independence. Such ostensible political harmony was undermined, however, by the complex and contradictory motivations behind this patriotic display of British liberality. In the wake of disastrous colonial losses in North America, political and mercantile interests sought to exploit Britain’s presence in the Caribbean to seize the mineral wealth abandoned in the Spanish retreat. Therefore, although

previous British attempts to establish a formal imperial presence in Central and South America were largely unsuccessful, Britain soon developed ‘a burgeoning “informal empire” in Spanish America’.²⁹ Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland shared Britain’s fascination with Spanish America. Sheridan’s tragedy, *Pizarro* (1799) is perhaps the most famous contemporary response, but, in fact, one of the ‘earliest recorded works of Irish prose fiction in the English language’, namely *Vertue Rewarded; or, The Irish Princess* (1693), alternates its setting between Ireland and Inca Peru.³⁰

In the wake of the Union, however, the political fate of the Spanish colonies had a unique salience within Romantic-era Ireland. Appearing two years prior to the publication of *Melmoth*, Sydney Owenson’s *Florence Macarthy* (1818) articulates a distinctly Irish perspective on Spanish American Independence.³¹ The novel opens with its hero, General Fitzwalter, sailing into Dublin on a ship named ‘Il Librador’. Having served Spanish American independence as a guerrilla leader, Fitzwalter returns to Ireland to reclaim his inheritance as a dispossessed Gaelic aristocrat. Overall, Fitzwalter figures as a romanticised amalgamation of the United Irish rebel, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and the Venezuelan revolutionary, Simón Bolívar. And yet, given Irishmen’s conspicuously prominent role in Spanish-American independence, Owenson’s hero is not so far-fetched. For example, the leader of the Chilean independence movement, Bernardo O’ Higgins, was the son of a Gaelic nobleman whose family were forced from their ancestral seat during Cromwell’s invasion. Moreover, as Gabriel García Márquez dramatizes in his fictional account of Bolívar’s final months, *El general en su laberinto* (1989), one of ‘*El Libertador*’s most trusted confidants, Daniel Florence O’Leary, hailed from Cork. Such revolutionary radicalism flowed in the opposite direction too. As Mario Vargas Llosa details in his fictionalised biography of Sir Roger Casement, *El sueño del celta* (2010), the British ambassador’s encounter with colonial abuses in the Congo and the Amazon kindled his support for Irish nationalism and eventually

led to his execution in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising. This exchange of political influences continues into the twenty-first century, with the 1998 Belfast Agreement informing current peace talks in Colombia.

Given this rich and varied legacy of transnational connections, it is unsurprising that echoes of Maturin's Irish Gothic should resonate within twentieth-century Latin America. Noting that the failed Irish Rebellion and successful Haitian Revolution were 'nearly contemporaneous', Laura Doyle argues that Maturin's novel 'struck an inter-imperial nerve in this age of revolutions'.³² She suggests that *Melmoth's* 'distillation of a long-standing struggle, endemic to imperialized subjectivities' re-emerges in Alejo Carpentier's Afro-Cuban novel of the Haitian Revolution, *El reino de este mundo* (1949).³³ And yet, *Melmoth's* wider influence upon twentieth-century Latin America cannot be understood solely in terms of such cross-colonial affinities. To do so is to obscure the complexities of globalgothic's transnational circulation. *Melmoth* travels Latin America by circuitous and convoluted routes, transgressing both generic and national boundaries on his journey. More often than not, Latin American engagements with *Melmoth* are mediated by the text's reception in France, where its mix of romance, satire, horror, and oneiric fantasy was 'consciously appropriated' by the surrealist movement.³⁴ Indeed, in 1954, André Breton wrote the preface to the text's French reedition, in which he identified *Melmoth* as the original of '*la grande solennité baudelairienne*' ('*the great Baudelairean solemnity*' – emphasis in original).³⁵ Sandra Casanova-Vizcaino and Inés Ordiz query the relevance of international borders in demarcating generic boundaries, refuting a 'binary division between the literary manifestations of *lo real maravilloso* and the Gothic, which associates the former with Latin American "magical" reality and the latter with the shadows of European and North American rationalism'.³⁶ Certainly, the malleability of *Melmoth's* gothicism confutes established generic categories. Its influence across a dizzying range of Latin American texts testifies not

only to the complexities and intricacies, but also the vagaries and idiosyncrasies, of Gothic's transnational transmission.

For example, Melmoth first surfaces in twentieth-century Latin American literature in Roberto Jorge Payró's popular collection of comic short stories, *Violines y toneles* (1908). In 'Reportaje endiablado', the Argentinian writer and journalist does not respond directly to Maturin's text but rather Balzac's parodic rewriting in *Melmoth Réconcilié* (1835). As Catherine Lanone details in her excellent survey of *Melmoth's* French reception, Balzac imitated *Melmoth* in one of his earliest works, *Le Centenaire ou, Les Deux Beringheld* (1822) and pronounced Maturin 'l'auteur moderne le plus original dont la Grande-Bretagne puisse se glorifier' ('the most original modern author of which Britain can boast') in the preface to *La Peau de Chagrin* (1831).³⁷ His later retelling of the Melmoth myth, *Melmoth Réconcilié*, introduces Melmoth to bourgeois Paris, where he easily transfers his Faustian pact to the debauched cashier, Castanier. While Melmoth reconciles himself to his maker, the latter proceeds to sell the pact at the stock exchange in what becomes an increasingly bathetic transaction of souls. Here, the Faustian pact 'has become the coin which shifts from hand to hand, losing its value'.³⁸ In Payró's retelling, however, such bartering of souls is no longer necessary. In 'Reportaje endiablado', an eager reporter interviews Satan regarding the modernising reforms he is implementing. Wishing to retire from the risky and inefficient business of temptation, Satan converts hell into a public limited company. As the main shareholder, Satan delegates the management of his capital yet still receives dividends. When asked how he will ensure the continued delivery of diabolic contracts, Satan responds:

¡Cuántos he tenido que protestar, al divino botón, porque no me han pagado ni por esas! Melmoth se reconcilió. El mismo Fausto [...] me estafó al fin, me hizo el cuento del tío... Ahora no doy, ni prometo nada... Los ricos vienen porque tienen dinero, los pobres porque quieren tenerlo... Y yo paso tranquilamente mi eternidad.

How often have I had to protest in vain, because I haven't even been paid for those! Melmoth was reconciled. Faust too [...] swindled me in the end, spun me a yarn. Now I don't give, don't promise anything... The rich come because they have money, the poor because they want to have it... And I pass my eternity peacefully.³⁹

Whereas Balzac's nineteenth-century Melmoth witnessed the soul's sharp devaluation on the stock exchange, Payró's twentieth-century hell is a globalised marketplace where demonic capital accumulates without the requirement of a contractual exchange.

Excepting brief glimpses in mid-century texts such as Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*, Melmoth does not again appear on the Latin American literary scene until conjured by the 1960's so-called 'Boom' movement. Two of this generation's most internationally celebrated works, Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963) and Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967), bear the imprint of *Melmoth's* 'traumatized geostructure'. In chapter one of *Rayuela*, its youthful protagonist, Horatio, claims that he and his love interest, 'La Maga', do not consider themselves 'Melmoths privilegiadamente errantes' ('privilegedly wandering Melmoths').⁴⁰ The narrative structure nevertheless enables the reader to indulge in such privileged wandering; the preliminary paratext includes a table of instructions informing us that '*este libro es mucho libros, pero sobre todo es dos libros*' ('this book is many books, but above all it is two books' – emphasis in original) and '*el lector queda invitado a elegir una de las dos*' ('the reader is invited to choose one of the two' – emphasis in original).⁴¹ As the first 'book', entitled 'From This Side', is set in Paris and the second, entitled 'From the Other Side', is set in Argentina, the reader's choice of narrative structure also becomes an assertion of geopolitical agency. This agency, however, is complicated by the narrative's fragmented focalisations of its characters' traumas, which disrupt and destabilise readerly collusion. Critics have long acknowledged that Cortázar's rejection of 'narrative normativity' aligns him with the *non-conformisme* first outlined in Breton's *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924).⁴²

Yet *Melmoth*'s haunting narrative presence within *Rayuela* also exposes a Gothic geostructure 'that is very different from that of the surrealists.'⁴³ Marquez, too, is rarely associated with the Gothic. Instead, he is renowned as a leading international purveyor of magic realism, despite the fact that he explicitly rejected this crude Westernization of his style. Unlike Cortázar, Marquez never explicitly alludes to *Melmoth* in his oeuvre. Nevertheless, the structure of his seminal *Cien años de soledad* resonates with Melmothian repetitions, fragmentations, and disruptions. The novel commences in the early nineteenth century as the family patriarch, José Arcadio Buendía, establishes the coastal settlement of Macondo on indigenous lands in the Caribbean region of Colombia. Fascinated by a manuscript shared by the itinerant and (demi-)immortal gypsy, Melquíades, the Buendía patriarch devotes himself to the solipsistic study of its gnomic text. On his death, a revolving and almost interchangeable cast of Buendía male heirs become fixated with the manuscript, even as the family line attenuates and atrophies. As the conclusion ultimately reveals, the fantastical history of the Buendía family that the novel records, is, at the same time, Melquíades' arcane manuscript that has haunted and obsessed them for generations. The young John Melmoth might learn something from the Buendía family's fate.

Buñuel and Mutis: Beyond Tropical Gothic?

As outlined in this article's introduction, *Melmoth* informed the evolution of a Tropical Gothic that, according to Marc Berdet, shares 'la combinación explosiva de una antropología del mal y de una crítica social' ('the explosive combination of an anthropology of evil and social criticism') with its anglophone Romantic predecessors.⁴⁴ Even if we might not discern *explicitly* the influence of *Melmoth* upon Colombia's Caliwood cinema of the 1980s, Mutis and Buñuel's disagreement around the possibilities for new territories of Gothic circulated

around *Melmoth*. In Buñuel and Mutis's shared recognition of the cultural capital of the novel, *Melmoth* becomes an important node in a transnational network between the cinema of continental Europe and Latin America. Indeed, Mutis claimed that Buñuel planned to adapt *Melmoth* into a film,⁴⁵ though he may have misidentified it with the latter's screenplay adaptation of Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), which he collaborated on with Jean-Claude Carrière.⁴⁶ Buñuel's most significant early experience of Gothic filmmaking came as assistant director on Jean Epstein's 1928 production, *La Chute de la Maison Usher* (an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher' [1839]). Yet, like Cortázar, Buñuel's conception of the Gothic was infused by surrealism. He too shared Breton's interest in the dream-like qualities and themes of evil, tyranny, and obsession often foregrounded to the point of excess in *Melmoth*. Buñuel's debut feature *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), a collaboration with Salvador Dalí, inaugurated surrealist cinema as a mode that could evoke horror and draw, too, from gothic iconography to make visual its interest in monomania and unrepressed desire.⁴⁷ Yet it is in his later postwar films that we find Buñuel most inspired by the Gothic.

Buñuel's 'enthusiasm' for *Melmoth* is one important influence upon his sustained interest in outcasts who are consumed or imprisoned by passion.⁴⁸ Buñuel self-fashioned as a director and artist on the side of the outcast. His films are often drawn back to 'singular individuals' who are 'on the margin of history, of daily life, and all because of a fixed idea. I am attracted to people who hold fixed ideas because,' he continues, 'I myself am one of them.'⁴⁹ We see this obsession exemplified in *Abismos de pasión* (1954), Buñuel's melodramatic Mexican adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* (1847), particularly in his transposing of Emily Brontë's Heathcliff into his own Byronic and brutish antihero Alejandro (Jorge Mistral). Depictions of outcasts and their obsessions allow Gothic to cut through geographic borders, finding new iconographies and climates of expression – something the surrealists

recognised that Maturin's novel also achieved in its island setting. As Breton's preface to *Melmoth* makes explicit, the surrealists were drawn to Maturin's island scenes in 'The Tale of the Indians', particularly by Melmoth and Immalee's romance. For Breton, their passion married the infernal with the divine, where Maturin '*n'a eu besoin que de sonder à l'origine les profondeurs du cœur*' ('only needed to probe the depths of the heart at the beginning' – emphasis in original) to find the essence and source of such duality.⁵⁰ Thus, the desolate island is a space associated with the Gothic and with Melmoth. Such imaginings find their clearest manifestation in the script *Immalie et L'Homme en Noir* (1971), written by Buñuel's close friend and biographer Ado Kyrou. Published by Eric Losfield, it was never produced as a film. In his introduction to the screenplay, Kyrou describes the script as '*un film possible, inspiré très librement d'un épisode du roman Melmoth the Wanderer*' ('a possible film, loosely based on an episode in the novel *Melmoth the Wanderer*' – emphasis in original).⁵¹ Kyrou's was a contemporary reimagining of Immalee and 'the man in black' Melmoth – an epithet that mirrors the labelling of the French Gothic novel as the *roman noir*.

Glimpses of a gothic *mise-en-scène* emerge across Buñuel's wider oeuvre. Such influence is visible in the opening scene of *Susana* (1951) in which the titular temptress is forced into a reformatory cell inhabited by bats and spiders;⁵² it is in the mournful setting, too, of the inn of *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie* (1972), where the body of its former proprietor is being kept for the undertaker in a small, chiaroscuro room off the inn's dining area, and in the same film's maternal apparition that reveals to her son that his father has been murdered by a usurper, issuing a Hamlet-esque injunction to take poisonous revenge.⁵³ *Le Charme* is also notable for its uneven, nested narrative structure, which, even if often said to be inspired by Jan Potocki's *The Saragossa Manuscript* (1847),⁵⁴ also recalls Maturin's formal experimentation, especially *Melmoth's* circuitous structure. Reminiscent of *Melmoth's* penultimate sequence 'The Wanderer's Dream', the final half of *Le Charme* moves away from

its initially clean nested frame structure, producing a slowly heightening surreality through a series of dream sequences that have only an end but not an opening frame – that is, we only discover whole scenes are dreams once their narrative action has played out. Ultimately, boundaries between a ‘dream’ and ‘real’ set of events break down without resolution.

Melmoth haunts Mutis’s wider oeuvre as a similarly oneiric presence. Whilst *La mansión de Araucaíma* remains Mutis’s most explicitly Gothic work, *Melmoth* permeates his series of *Maqroll* novellas. Written between 1986 and 1993, these works were collated into two volumes entitled *Empresas y tribulaciones de Maqroll el Gaviero* in 1993. A peculiar mix of poetic prose, realism, and the picaresque, these novellas follow in the footsteps of the adventurous sailor, Maqroll, as he attempts to satiate his ‘incurable wanderlust’.⁵⁵ The character’s unconventional, detached, and cynical observation of life has often been situated within the classic Spanish literary mode of *desengaño*, perhaps most famously explored in Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605). Maqroll even makes this Cervantine connection explicit in *Un Bel Morir* (1987). However, in a 1995 interview with Mutis, Arnould Liedekerke suggests that, in their endless wanderings, Maqroll and his companions ‘*pourraient aussi évoquer Melmoth*’ (‘*could also evoke Melmoth*’ – emphasis in original).⁵⁶ Agreeing that Maqroll, like Melmoth, is condemned to wander, Mutis responds:

Quant à Melmoth, sans doute Maqroll est-il, lui aussi, marqué par un signe, le destin.

[...] Peut-être une sorte d’initié. A quels mystères? On ne sait pas très bien.

L’essentiel n’est pas là: l’important dans une caravane, ce n’est pas son but, mais son déplacement. Pour Maqroll, l’aventure, même la plus folle, la plus risquée, est un moyen de survie.

Regarding Melmoth, without doubt Maqroll is also marked by a sign, by fate. [...] Maybe some sort of initiate. Into what mysteries? We don't really know. That's not the point: the important thing about a caravan is not its purpose, but its movement. For Maqroll, adventure, even the craziest, the riskiest, is a means of survival.⁵⁷

Maqroll is Melmoth's progeny through this inherited fate of wandering and witnessing. Like his nineteenth-century predecessor, Mutis relies too heavily upon gendered and racialised stereotypes to embrace globalgothic's radical critique of power. Yet, in Maqroll too, we encounter an impulse to register and record the trauma of a fractured and destabilised worldsystem.

The first of Mutis' novellas, *La nieve del almirante* (1986), commences with the discovery of yet another mysterious manuscript, found in a bookshop in the Gothic Quarter of Barcelona. This manuscript recounts Maqroll's adventures as he sails up the Xurandó river – an imaginary Amazonian tribute – on a mercenary quest to a legendary sawmill, where he intends to buy cheap wood to sell downriver. Reflecting that 'there is no cure for my reckless wandering, forever misguided and destructive', Maqroll experiences the jungle as a place of 'damnation and ruin' and becomes troubled by the mystery that seems to surround the sawmill.⁵⁸ Later in the voyage, he becomes gravely ill and the narrative fragments into a series of hallucinatory reflections and prophetic dreams that make him sick of his 'wandering and miscalculation'. Once recovered, Maqroll avers that 'even though I'm going to die one day, for as long as I live I'm immortal'.⁵⁹ On eventually reaching the sawmill, however, he is overwhelmed by 'this floating Gothic marvel of aluminum and glass' and its 'impression of unreality, of an unbearable nightmarish presence in the equatorial night.'⁶⁰ As it turns out, the mystery of the sawmill is merely a base political intrigue. Immediately succeeding this anticlimactic revelation, however, is a fragment of a seemingly unrelated narrative, in which

Maqroll describes his later sojourn in a mine. Once again the machinery used to exploit the earth's resources is rendered an 'unspeakable structure'. This 'ineluctable mechanism in the service of eternity' haunts Maqroll's dreams, confirming that supernatural terror no longer requires a theological dimension.⁶¹

In *Ilona llega con la lluvia* (1987), in contrast, nineteenth-century European Gothic sails into Panama City on a boat called the *Lepanto*. This novella initially revels in the picaresque, with Maqroll and his friend, Ilona, becoming involved in a series of salacious escapades when they decide to establish a brothel where sex workers are presented to clients as flight attendants on a layover. In its final section, however, the narrative tone dramatically shifts with the arrival of a new employee, Larissa, who lives on a shipwreck on Panama Bay. Larissa eventually confesses to Maqroll and Ilona that, ever since she boarded the *Levanto* in Palermo, she has been haunted by two ghosts from the Napoleonic era. One is an officer of the French cavalry and the other a secretary of the Venetian Great Council; both experience their journey in a different temporality to Larissa. As Larissa becomes entangled in a *ménage à trois* with her spectral visitors, she increasingly struggles to distinguish between their historical present and her own. Moreover, because these European ghosts do not 'have the capacity to survive in this [tropical] climate', Larissa loses all contact with them once the ship ends up wrecked on the Panama coast.⁶² Unable to either return to her ghostly lovers or move on from them, Larissa oscillates between conflicting spatio-temporal realities. In a final desperate act, she triggers an explosion on the *Levanto*, deliberately killing herself and Ilona. In this novella it is not Maqroll but Larissa who assumes the Melmothian fate of perpetual wandering. Yet she is also, simultaneously, a modern version of the Wanderer's forlorn and forsaken lover, Immalee, subsisting on the threshold of the Gothic but unable to transcend it. In a sense, Larissa embodies the 'traumatised geostructure' of *Melmoth's* globalgothic sensibility as witnessed throughout its myriad Latin American afterlives.

From early satirical squibs to contemporary poetic prose, *Melmoth* repeatedly traverses the national, temporal, and generic boundaries of twentieth-century Latin America. Not only a wanderer and witness, however, Maturin's protagonist also carries a legacy of nineteenth-century colonial and gender politics that is as often limiting as it is liberating. Whilst *Melmoth*'s invocation in Latin American culture frequently inspires formal and generic experimentation, it rarely stimulates a radical response to the geo-political trauma that his haunting presence so often manifests. In the figure of *Maqroll*'s Larissa, we perhaps glimpse the potential for *Melmoth*'s Latin American afterlives to challenge and interrogate this legacy further, as Sarah Perry's *Melmoth* (2018) so dexterously attempts within the European context. Certainly, if *Melmoth*'s influence is to survive and evolve into twenty-first century Latin America, it will be in further, more radical, explorations of gender, genre, and geopolitics. Blending surrealist fantasy with the horrors of inter-imperial and gendered trauma, recent works such as Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020) and Fernanda Melchor's *Páradais* (2021) gesture towards such exciting possibilities.

¹ Álvaro Mutis, interview by Ramón Cote Baraibar, 'La irresponsabilidad del viajero', December 24, 1989, *El Papel Literario de El Nacional*. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are our own.

² Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodriguez, *Colombian Gothic in Cinema and Literature* (London: Anthem Press, 2021), 42.

³ These productions include Mayolo's adaptation of Mutis's novel in 1984. *Ibid.*

⁴ Rebecca Duncan, 'Introduction: Globalgothic beyond Globalisation', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Globalgothic*, ed. Rebecca Duncan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 3, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

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- ⁶ Julia M. Wright, *Ireland, India and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 159.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Christina Morin, *Charles Robert Maturin and the Haunting of Irish Romantic Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2011), 129.
- ⁹ Laura Doyle, 'At World's Edge: Post/Coloniality, Charles Maturin, and the Gothic Wanderer', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 65, no. 4 (2011): 515, 530.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 530.
- ¹¹ Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, ed. Douglas Grant (Oxford: Oxford UP, [1820] 2008), 300.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 303.
- ¹³ Duncan, 'Globalgothic', 13.
- ¹⁴ Maturin, *Melmoth*, 26.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 540.
- ¹⁶ Wright, *Ireland, India and Nationalism*, 148, 161.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.
- ¹⁸ Morin, *Maturin*, 129.
- ¹⁹ Maturin, *Melmoth*, 257.
- ²⁰ For an extended discussion of the text's Irish Gothic contexts, see Madeline Potter's 'Melmoth and the Irish Gothic Tradition' in this issue.
- ²¹ Wright, *Ireland, India and Nationalism*, 168.
- ²² Maturin, *Melmoth*, 207.
- ²³ Massimiliano Demata, 'Discovering Eastern Horrors: Beckford, Maturin and the Discourse of Travel Literature', in *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre*, eds. Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 30.

²⁴ *Speeches of the Late Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, vol. 2 (London: Patrick Martin, 1816), 112.

²⁵ Byron, 'Roman Catholic Claims Speech', in *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 41.

²⁶ Laura Doyle, 'World's Edge', 530.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 514.

²⁸ Rebecca Cole Heinowitz, *Spanish America and British Romanticism, 1777-1826: Rewriting Conquest* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010), 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁰ Ian Campbell Ross and Anne Markey, 'From Clonmel to Peru: Barbarism and Civility in *Vertue Rewarded; Or, the Irish Princess*', *Irish University Review* 38, no. 2 (2008): 179.

³¹ For a nuanced account of Owenson's influence upon Maturin's oeuvre, see Jim Kelly, *Charles Maturin: Authorship, Authenticity, and the Nation* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011).

³² Doyle, 'At World's Edge', 520; Laura Doyle, *Inter-imperiality: Vying Empires, Gendered Labor, and the Literary Arts of Alliance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 30.

³³ Doyle, *Inter-imperiality*, 195.

³⁴ Avril Horner, 'Gothic and Surrealism: Subculture, Counterculture and Cultural Assimilation', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Gothic and the Arts*, ed. David Punter, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2019) 152. As Muireann Maguire notes in her article in this issue, 'A Melmoth? a cosmopolitan? a patriot?': *Melmoth the Wanderer's* Russian Epigones', Russian literary engagements with *Melmoth* were also mediated through French.

³⁵ André Breton, 'Préface: Situation de Melmoth', in *Melmoth ou, L'Homme Errant*, Charles Robert Maturin (Paris: Pauvert, 1954), x.

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- ³⁶ Sandra Casanova-Vizcaino and Inés Ordiz, ‘Introduction: Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Persistence of the Gothic’, in *Latin American Gothic in Literature and Culture*, ed. Sandra Casanova-Vizcaino and Inés Ordiz (New York: Routledge, 2017), 15.
- ³⁷ Balzac, *La Peau de Chagrin* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1831), 9.
- ³⁸ Catherine Lanone, ‘Verging on the Gothic: Melmoth’s Journey to France’, in *European Gothic: A Spirited Exchange*, ed. Avril Horner (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), 78.
- ³⁹ Roberto Jorge Payró, ‘Reportaje endiablado’ in *Violines y toneles* (Buenos Aires: Rodriguez Giles, 1968), 167.
- ⁴⁰ Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela*, eds. Julio Ortega and Saúl Yurkievich (Madrid: ALLCA XX, 1996 [1963]), 14.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.
- ⁴² Gavin Parkinson, ‘A Note Concerning Causality: Julio Cortázar and Surrealism’, in *Surrealism in Latin America: Vivísimo Muerto*, eds. Dawn Ades, Rita Edler, and Graciela Speranza (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012), 168.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Marc Berdet, ‘Gótico tropical y surrealismo. La novela negra de Caliwood’, *Acta Poética* 37, no. 2 (2016): 37.
- ⁴⁵ Mutis, ‘La irresponsabilidad del viajero’, n.p.
- ⁴⁶ Augusto M. Torres, *Buñuel y sus discípulos* (Madrid: Huerga & Fierro, 2005), 35. Buñuel never filmed nor wrote a screenplay for a *Melmoth* adaptation. Entitled *Le Moine*, the adaptation of Lewis’s novel was eventually filmed by Ado Kyrou and released in 1972.
- ⁴⁷ *Un Chien Andalou*, dir. Luis Buñuel, written by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. France: Les Grands Films Classiques, 1929.
- ⁴⁸ Paul Lenti, ed. *Objects of Desire: Conversations with Luis Buñuel*, trans. Paul Lenti (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1992), 106.

⁴⁹ Luis Buñuel, cited by Fernando González de Leon, 'Buñuel, Poe and Gothic Cinema', *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 8, no. 2 (2007): 52.

⁵⁰ Breton, 'Préface', xx.

⁵¹ Ado Kyrou, 'Introduction (ou De l'Absurdité Du Cinéma Écrit),' in *Immalié et L'Homme en Noir* (Paris: Eric Losfield, 1971), 8.

⁵² *Susana*, dir. Luis Buñuel. Mexico: Columbia Films S. A., 1951.

⁵³ *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie*, dir. Luis Buñuel. France: 20th Century Fox, 1972.

⁵⁴ Fernando González de Leon, 'Buñuel, Poe and Gothic', 9.

⁵⁵ Álvaro Mutis, *The Adventures and Misadventures of Maqroll*, trans. Edith Grossman (New York: New York Review, 2002), 53.

⁵⁶ Álvaro Mutis, interview by Arnould Liedekerke, 'Destination Cap de la Bonne Désespérance', June 1, 1995, *Magazine Littéraire* 328-333, 101.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Mutis, *Maqroll*, 37, 59.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 68

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 71, 70

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 180.