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EGO AND ITS FISSURES, NARRATIVE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Melmoth the Wanderer; published in 1820, is Maturin's penultimate work and his best-known. The novel owes its success to Maturin's return to the Gothic convention of his first novel, *Fatal Revenge* (1807) and his hugely popular play *Bertram* (1816), proving that the was correct in writing that his talents lay in

> ... darkening, the gloomy, and of developing the sad: of painting life in extremes, and representing those struggles of passion when the soul trembles on the verge of the unlawful and the unhallowed.[1]

In recognition of this particular source of literary strengh, *Melmoth the Wanderer* emerges as the last great flourish of the Gothic convention in Maturin's work and indeed of Gothic fiction in general combining as it does some of the best features of his previous work, particularly characterisation with a greater emphasis on psychological terror.

The extremely complex structure of the novel – a series of tales within tales – can confuse even the most careful of readers as we are swept along by the stories which shift from Ireland to Spain, to an island in the Indian Ocean, then back to Spain, then to England, finally returning to Ireland and the Melmoth house described at the opening of the novel.

More confusing still is the number of narrators used to tell the tales; we sometimes find that the narrator may change or even be lost within the tale, forcing us to flick back through the chapters to remind ourselves of who is relating the story, and why. This method of passing on tales

[1] "Preface" to: *The Milesian Chief* (New York–London: Garland Publishing, 1979).

from one narrator to another and the time-shifts for both narrator and tale look forward to Brontë's – more successful – manipulation of from and content in *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Maturin's style and choice of material, as well as his habitual religious, lietarary and hictorical interpolations all contribute to make *Melmoth* dense and difficult to follow at times.

This unique structure is indeed one of the most remarkable features of *Melmoth* but it is also what makes it problematic. Julian Moynagham wrote of *Melmoth* that

> The style, sustained throughout the framing narrative and the six framed and nested main tales, the whole shaping an intricate verbal labyrinth that anticipates such works of structural exorbitancy as *Ulysses* and *At Swim-Two-Birds*, is sumptuous yet always conntrolled and functional ...[2]

Moynaghan's assertion of the disorientation and multi-layered effects of such narrative intricacies is correct but his theory on the controlled and functional nature of such a structure is not borne out by the text itself. In fact Maturin constantly loses his way as the narratives seem to take over and the fictional distance between author, narrator and reader become entangled.

We are introduced to the framing story for the five tales in chapter XI through the typical Gothic prop of an old, mouldering manuscript kept by the dying miser ("old Melmoth") in a secret closet. The reader's curiosity is aroused by the instructions left in the old man's will for his nephew, John Melmoth:

> I enjoin my nephew and heir, John Melmoth, to remove, destroy or cause to be destroyed, the portrait inscribed J. Melmoth 1646, hanging in my closet. I also enjoin him to search for a manuscript ... He may read it if he will, – I think he had better not. At all events, I adure him if there be any power in the aduration of a dying man to burn it.[3]

Of course John Melmoth, true to Gothic convention, disregards his uncle's warning and begins to read the manuscript. Contained in its pages is the unifying character and theme of the novel: John Melmoth's ancestor and namesake, that "Wanderer" and the persecution of his victims. The manuscript – "Stanton's Tale" – is a catalogue of Melmoth's persecution and cruelty towards innocents or those already plagued by misfortune. Maturin is successful in sustaining the reader's interest by using the blemished and disintegrated condition of the ancient manuscript as a device to stop the narrative at several climactic points throughout the tale.

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[2] Cf. Julian Moynaghan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 116.

[3] *Melmoth the Wanderer* (London: Penguin, 1977), vol. I, chap. II, p. 21.

The last legible lines of the manuscript show the chilling fascination between persecuted and persecutor. Stanton writes:

> I have sought him everywhere. – The desire of meeting him once more is becoming a burning fire within me, – it is the necessary condition of my existince. I have vainly sought him at last in Ireland, of which I find he is a native. – Perhaps our final meeting will be in*****

The words of this last fragment and the effective use of hiatus leave John Melmoth with "his senses reeling, his mind in a mingled state of stupor and excitement." Yet Maturin does not relax this heightened state for either Melmoth or the reader; there is no relief from this highly-charged atmosphere. Instead he transfers the psychological turbulence of Melmoth's mind to the physical violence of a storm.

During the storm scene a ship is blown onto rocks near the Melmoth house. When young Melmoth and the local people gather at the shore to try and help the victims of the shipwreck Melmoth catches sight of an onlooker standing on one of the rocks, "a figure that she wed neither sympathy or terror." Attempts to save the victims prove futile and when the last part of the ship is dragged under the waves the stranger lets out a blood-curdling laugh. Young Melmoth is immediately reminded of Stanton's account of his first encounter with Melmoth the Wanderer and his description of the stranger's "demonic laugh" when he saw the charred bodies of two young lovers struck by lightning on a Spanish plain. Young Melmoth realises, to his horror, that the callous stranger on the rock is Stanton's persecutor and his own ancestor.

There is only one survivor of the shipwreck, Alonzo Monçada, a Spaniard and another of Melmoth's victims. Monçada displays the same curious blend of horror and attraction towards the Wanderer and feels the same strange compulsion to seek out his tormentor as did Stanton.

As Monçada begins to relate his own experience of Melmoth the Wanderer to young Melmoth ("Tale of the Spaniard") he introduces within it the remaining three tales: "Tale of the Indians," "Tale of Guzman's Familly" and "The Lovers' Tale." There are six different levels of narration in the course of the novel; each story appears to open another door or peel off a new layer resulting in a type of statification of storytelling which reveals the density of Maturin's structural technique.

The first level of narration is the reader's introduction to young Melmoth as he is described making his way down to Wicklow (south of Dublin, on the east coast of Ireland) to be at his uncle's deathbed. At this level the author, Maturin, is narrator. When Melmoth is acquainted with the manuscript and begins to read, the second level of narration begins, for this is "Stanton's Tale," in which we discover the character of the Wanderer.

The third layer of the novel, "Tale of the Spaniard," is still contained ostensibly within the first frame of *Melmoth*, in physical terms the story has not moved from the Melmoth house. In fact we never leave the physical site of the Melmoth house and the conversation between Monçada and young Melmoth, yet we have the impression of moving with each tale. Before this third layer, however, we encounter the Wanderer, through young Melmoth at the storm scene, who (though he must be 150 years old if we take the date on the portrait to be true) now becomes real; a link with the stories in the manuscript. Monçada takes over the narration from the author and his story gives us more information about Melmoth. It also contains the fourth, fifth and sixth layers, as we sink deeper and deeper into the novel.

Also in this third layer is yet another manuscript, this time written by Adonijah, an old Jew in hiding during the period of the Inquisition in Spain. This manuscript is then transcribed by Monçada who, like the Jew, was also forced into hiding as a heretic by the Catholic Church. Monçada's manuscript is another layer, the fourth.

The fifth layer is made up of the different narrators who tell the tales enclosed in the manuscript written by Adonijah and transcribed by Monçada. Finally, the sixth, most complex (and confusing) layer comprises the central voices or narrators underneath (or within) all of these layers. These are the characters or victims who speak within the tales quoted by the narrators and within the manuscripts that have been collected and written by Adonijah, copied by Monçada and now related to young Melmoth by Monçada himself.

Clearly even the best attempt to peel away and analyse the different layers will create confusion. The process is hindered further by the author's own dense narrative in which we, as readers, are forced to untangle ourselves from the knot of narrators in order to recall exactly who is telling the tale; as mentioned above, this often means having to return to the very beginning of a chapter to be completely sure.

The inherent confusion of *Melmoth's* structure does not come simply from the plethora of narrators; after all, the abundance of different voices is a traditional feature of the novel. The confusion and tension of *Melmoth* come instead from Maturin's **failure** to make the structure work, rather than the structure itself.

One example of this failure can be seen in volume IV, chapter XXXVII during "The Lovers' Tale" when Maturin interrupts the story with, "Young Melmoth (whose name perhaps the reader has forgot)." The parenthesis here appears rather out of place and self-conscious compared to Maturin's usual style of writing. He gives the impression here that it is not only the reader who needs reminding of the framing narrative – which is Monçada

relating the tales from Adonijah's manuscript to the young Melmoth. It is as if the tales and their characters are taking over and that the author is no longer in control of his own material. Maturin has created a literary monster of sorts with a mind of its own, in much the same way as Mary Shelley's monster defies its creator, Frankenstein.

Maturin's self-conscious intrusion into the narrative of "Young Melmoth (whose name perhaps the reader has forgot)" forms a crack or fissure in the structure of the novel; Maturin is cutting across the layers of narration and so upsetting the effect of the Chinese box[4] structure he is striving for. This intrusive cutting across narrative layers creates a tension in the structure of the novel which can be seen extensively in Maturin's use of footnotes.

Another example of this narrative confusion may be found in a footnote supplied in volume IV, chapter XXIX ("The Lovers' Tale"). The footnote refers to "Cloghan Castle" mentioned in a passage explaining the family history of the Mortimers: "I have been an inmate of the castle for many months ..." The details given in the footnote[5] (see note 8 below) are obviously meant to authenticate the tale but yet again the reader is confused by Maturin's lack of consistency with his claims of details or events as being based on fact.

The "I" referred to in the footnote is not qualified: who is actually speaking? Is it the "stranger", i.e. Melmoth, who is telling this part of the tale? Is it Adonijah who has included it in his manuscript; Monçada quoting from the manuscript or is it in fact Maturin himself? It would seem most likely that the speaker is indeed Maturin. However, the actual wording of this footnote is also confusing since the words "have been"

[4] A phrase coined by an unknown critic in the *Quarterly Review* XXIV (1821): 303.

[5] *Melmoth...*, p. 447. The whole footnote merits reproduction here, not only because of the confusion regarding narratorship, but also because Maturin shows that the line between his sense of past and present can be blurred. It is obvious that past history is still as immediate or real to him as events of a few weeks ago. Of course this preoccupation with the past is a common feature of Irish writers and their literature. Maturin also includes a reference to a place undersiege or threat mentions Cromwell in Ireland which happens frequently in his novels:

> I have been an inmate in this castle for many months – it is still inhabited by the venerable descendent of that ancient family. His son is now High-Sheriff of the King's county. Half the castle was battered down by Oliver Cromwell's forces, and rebuilt in the reign of Charles the Second. The remains of the castle are a tower of about forty feet square, and five stories high, with a single spacious apartment on each floor, and a narrow staircase communicating with each, and reaching to the bartizan. A beautiful ash-plant, which I have often admired, is now displaing its foliage between the stones of the bartizan, – and how it got or grew there, heaven only knows. There it is, however; and it is better to see it there than to feel the discharge of hot water or molten lead from the apertures.

suggest either that the person giving us this informations is "an inmate" at the time of writing/quoting/relating, or that he was in the castle at one time.

This subjective pronoun "I" is used in countless other footnotes which provide us with more information; (mostly about the social history of the period(s) being mentioned) where it is fairly clear that the "I" is Maturin's voice, but in volume II, chapter XI ("Tale of the Spaniard") we again find confusion in the working of a footnote. At this point of his story Monçada is telling the young Melmoth about his internment in the dungeons of the Inquisition where he was visited constantly by Melmoth. In this passage Monçada is trying to impress on young Melmoth the extraordinary age and experience of the Wanderer:

> He [Melmoth] spoke of the *Restoration* in England ... then he added, to my astonishment, "I was beside her [Henriette of France] carriage*, *it was the only one then in London.*"

The footnote reads:

> *I have read this somewhere, but cannot believe it. Coaches are mentioned by Beaumont and Fletcher, and even glass coaches by [Samuel] Butler, in his 'Remains.'

This note is misleading in the extreme; the "I" of the footnote could be taken as Monçada, to whom the Wanderer was talking but, as the note progresses, it become apparent that the "I" is most probably Maturin himself. The disbelief expressed is not, as the footnote mark would suggest, relating to Melmoth having been alive in the seventeenth century and, therefore, now more than one hundred years old (which would be relevent to the story, as well as interesting!) but rather on the question of there being only one carriage in London at that time. There is even more confusion surrounding the "I" of the footnote; if it is Maturin who "cannot believe" this (irrelevant and fatuous) information concerning the existence of carriages at the time, then why does he make a point of mentioning it in the first place? And if he doesn't believe it then why include it in Monçada's story at all?

It is possible that, in this instance Maturin, by making a point of disagreeing with or disbelieving his fictional creation – Melmoth – is attempting to make the Wanderer appear "real" and credible, a separate entity from Maturin the author. It is not clear, though, whether this motive is conscious or unconscious on the part of the author.

Furthermore, if the purpose of the footnote is not to separate the character from the author and so make Melmoth more believable a character, then there is little purpose in including it at all. The only other possibility is that Maturin is using this fottnote, with its historical and literary

allusions, to show off his own knowledge and wide reading. All things considered this possibility is, unfortunately, the most probable and there are many more examples – within the text itself, as well as in the form of footnotes – of Maturin's vanity in deliberately flaunting his knowledge by using material that is completely irrelevant to the novel's progression.

Maturin includes another footnote on page 335 (volume III, chapter XX) commenting on a Polish saint mentioned in passing in the text:

> I have read the legend of this Polish saint, which is circulated in Dublin, and find recorded among the indisputable proofs of his vocation, that he infallibly swooned if an indecent expression was uttered in his presence – *when in his nurse's arms!*

The purpose of this section is clearly to poke fun at what Maturin regarded as the ridiculous and illogical beliefs of the Catholic Church. It is just one example of the quite savage bigotry that Maturin makes no attempts to hide throughout the novel.

In volume IV, chapter XXXVI, we again find ambiguity in the wording of a footnote. This part of the novel describes Immalee's imprisonment and questioning by the officers of the Inquisition:

> All reports agreed that the Wanderer had never benn known to make a woman the object of his temptation, or to entrust her with the terrible secret of his destiny.*

The footnote reads: "*From this it should seem that they were unacquainted with the story of Elinor Mortimer." Again it is unclear whether this information is provided in Adonijah's manuscript or by Monçada relating it to young Melmoth, or by the author himself.

Yet another example of this ambiguity occurs in volume IV, chapter XXIV, when Immalee is speaking to Melmoth on the subject of religion: "... here she added a name too sacred, and accompanied with terms too awful, to be expressed in pages so light as these.* The footnote follows:

> *Here Monçada expressed his surprise at this passage, (as savouring more of Christianity than Judaism), considering it occurred in the manuscript of a Jew.

Obviously the narrator is Monçada but the ambiguity arises because it is not clear if Monçada "expressed his surprise" when he transcribed the manuscript of Adonijah (the Jew referred to) or now, while relating the story to Melmoth. Far greater ambiguity comes, however, from the text itself and the words "in pages so light as these." Which pages are these? They could either be the pages of Adonijah's manuscript (which would hardly be described as "light" since they describe the persecutions of the agent of the "enemy of mankind") or the pages of *Melmoth* since Maturin himself wrote in the Preface to the novel:

> I cannot again appear before the public in so unseemly a character as that of a writer of romances, without regretting the necessity that compels me to it.

So who actually is the supposed author of the footnote? It is impossible to tell either from the wording of the note itself or from the text.

Perhaps the most interesting and significant footnote of all is contained in volume III, chapter XVII. It refers to a phase of Melmoth's; "These people" (meaning "the people of the world") which is part of an attack on the injustice in the world. Maturin uses the footnote for his own personal attack on his critics.

> *As, by a mode of criticism equally false and unjust, the worst sentiments of my worst characters, (from the ravings of Bertram to the blasphemies of Cardonneau), have been patience of the reader assure him, that the sentiments ascribed to the stranger are diametrically opposite to mine, the enemy of mankind.[6]

Here Maturin is asking the reader not to confuse Melmoth's "sentiments" with those of his own which, he assures us, are "diametrically opposite." Nonetheless, these "sentiments" of Melmoth's, far from being "diametrically opposite" to Maturin's are in fact a displacement of Maturin's own sentiments.

The character of Melmoth is undoubtedly the most powerful and attractive in the novel, he towers over the other characters, dwarfing them by his intensity and his tragic condition, self-inflicted though it may be. The reader is, of course, interested in (and a little fascinated by) the fate of each of Melmoth's chosen victims. It is the experiences of these victims and many other characters (particularly the parricide executioner in the "Tale of the Spaniard") which serve to make the novel compulsive – if chilling – reading. But the triumph of Melmoth's would-be victims when they refuse his terrible offer appears insignificant compared to his own fate. Maturin seems to betray his own strong fascination, whether conscious or unconscious, with the manifestations of evil. Therefore, in spite of the aim of his novel (to show that there is no person who would; "accept all that man could bestow, or earth afford to resign the hope of his salvation"), Maturin instead succeeds in making evil, in the form of Melmoth, attractive, thrilling and enthralling.

We can see from the discussion above that many of the footnotes throughout *Melmoth* are, like the text itself, extremely bewildering; they are inconsistent, mostly because they try to perform too many different functions.

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[6] Cf. S. T. Coleridge's, "Critique in Bertram," *Biographia Literaria* (1817): 193ff, reprinted from his article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in which he attacked the play for being immoral, blasphemous and impious. Maturin's draft Preface to *Women* included an attack on Coleridge in turn, but Scott persuaded Maturin to omit it (see F. E. Ratchford, W. H. Mc Carthy, eds., *The Correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin* (New York–London: Garland Publishing, 1980).

When Maturin writers, "Young Melmoth (whose name perhaps the reader has forgot)..." he is conscious of the confusion created by the layering of narrators. This confusion is then highlighted when Maturin the author steps through these layers, so to speak, with his footnotes. All of this creates an uneasy relationship between author, narrator and reader. The question we must ask at this stage is, what causes this confusion and ambiguity in the author?

Freud divided the human mind into three separate parts. These are the Ego (or the conscious personality), the Id (or the unconscious) and the Super-Ego (the conscience). He believed that dreams as well as neuroses are the result of "drives" that come from the Id and which are repressed by both the Ego and the Super-Ego. These repressed drives find expression in "displaced" forms and one of these displaced forms is literature.

In his essay "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908)[7] Freud argues that the imaginative writer "can be compared to 'dreamer in broad day-light'" i.e. that the unconscious drives of the Id, though repressed in real life by the Ego and Super-Ego, can be written about, explored and given expression in the form of literature. The novel, therefore, can be seen in this way, as an outpouring of the fears, desires and neurotic symptoms of the author. *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764, the first Gothic novel, was based on a dream of its author, Horace Walpole. And Scott commented on the dream-like, or rather nightmarish quality, of *Fatal Revenge* that, "we rose from his strange chaotic romance as from a confused and feverish dream ..."

Freud makes the distinction between writers who, "take over their material ready-made" such as the writers of epics and tragedies, and writers who, "seem to originate their own material." It is significant that the particular group of writers which Freud singles out for discussion would include Maturin. These writers are "not the writers most highly esteemed by the critics, but the less pretentious authors of novels, romances and short stories, who nevertheless have the widest and most eager circle of readers of both sexes."[8] Later in his essay Freud writes:

> The psychological novel in general no doubt owes its special nature to the inclination of the modern writer to split up his ego, by self-observation, into many part-egos, and in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes. Cetrain novels, which might be described as "eccentric," seem to stand in quite special contrast to the types of the day-dream.[9]

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[7] Freud: "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908[1907]), p. 141ff in *Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 9(1906–1908).

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 149.

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 150.

Although Freud specifically highlights the "psychological novel in general," Maturin's *Melmoth*, though classified as a Gothic romance, does possess many of the features of the psychological novel and could be seen as a forerunner to the novels of Kafka in its psychological and emotional intensity. Here Maturin uses the Gothic traditions of horror and terror to create a penetrating study of the psychology of evil. *Melmoth* is an examination of the effects of extreme conditions of torture and persecution on the human mind. It is significant that the most gripping moments of each tale are those which focus on the descriptions of the human psyche under stress, teetering on the very verge of sanity.

In "Stanton's Tale" we find what is most probably one of the most disturbing accounts of mental torture in fiction. The subject is Stanton who has been declared mad by a covetous relative who wants to claim his fortune. This declaration of madness has been aided somewhat by Stanton's own excitable behaviour and constant talk of Melmoth whom he had encountered in Spain. Before being committed to the asylum, Stanton had encountered Melmoth again, this in a packed theatre, and heard the sweet strains of music that accompany the appearance of Melmoth to a prospective victim. The Wanderer assures Stanton that the will meet him again to answer the many questions Stanton wishes to pose:

> The hour shall be mid-day ... and the place shall be the bare walls of a madhouse, where you shall rise rattling in your chains, and rustling from your straw, to greet me, – yet still you shall have *the curse of sanity*, and of memory.[10]

Melmoth's prediction is correct and several years later Stanton finds himself in an asylum. In this tale Maturin maps out the deterioration of the human mind when the victim has to struggle to hold on to reason when all around is chaos:

> His intellects had become affected by the gloom of his miserable habitation; as the wretched immate of a similar mansion, when produced before a medical examiner, was reported to be a complete Albinos (sic.) – "His skin was bleached, his eyes turned white; he could not bear the light; and, when exposed to it, he turned away with a mixture of weakness and restlessness, more like the writhings of a sick infant than the struggle of a man." Such was Stanton's situation; he was enfeebled now, and the power of the enemy seemed without a possibility of opposition from either his intellectual or corporeal powers."[11]

The irony here is that Stanton's "enemy" is not Melmoth but insanity itself, as Melmoth tells him:

> A time will come, and soon, from mere habit, you will echo the scream of every delirious wretch that harbours near you; then you will pause, clap your hands on your throbbing head, and listen with horrible anxiety whether the scream proceeded from *you or them*.

[10] *Melmoth the Wanderer*, vol. I, chap. III, p. 44.
[11] *Melmoth the Wanderer*, vol. I, chap. III, pp. 54–55.

This concept of mind being threatened by insanity can also be seen in "Tale of the Spaniard" in which the young Alonzo Monçada is emotionally blackmailed into becoming a monk. The story that unfolds describes the mental paralysis which affects every man in the sterile and often violent monastic life forced upon Monçada. It is obvious that, to Maturin, the mental torture undergone by Monçada in the monastery is just as real as that of Stanton in the madhouse when the author describes his personal impression of monastic life in the Preface to *Melmoth* as "...that irritating series of petty torments which constitutes the misery of life in general, and which, amid the tideless stagnation of monastic existence, solitude gives its inmates leisure to invent, and power combined with malignity, the full disposition to practise."

When Monçada finally engages a lawyer, with the help of his brother Juan, to prove that his vows were extorted and so release him from such a miserable existence, the religious community are outraged, regarding him as a heretic and criminal, and so begins his daily torture at the hands of his fellow monks. He is thrown into a pit and starved, his few possessions are taken away and he is denied while strange, disembodied voices appear to chant and blaspheme within his cell. While relating the time of his imprisonment in the darkened pit to young Melmoth, Monçada tells him:

> ... the eye which, on its being first immersed into darkness, appears deprived of the power of vision for ever, acquires, imperceptibly, a power of accommodating itself to its darkened sphere ... The mind certainly possesses the same power, otherwise, how could I have had the power to reflect, to summon some resolution, and even to indulge some hope in this frightful abode?[12]

This black pit, or "frightful abode," can be seen as a metaphor for Mançada's existence and his constant torture in the monastery. And the book which Stanton picks up to read in the madhouse is a kind of patients' journal written by the inmates. Stanton becomes engrossed in the journal and this inattention to his actual surroundings makes it easier for him to be incarcerated. It is curious that Stanton's reading of various distortions of reality contributes to his easy admission to a madhouse. Also significant is the way in which Maturin once again collapses the perimeters between the delusions written down in the book. Stanton's reading of them in his new status as inmate and our own fascination with the various accounts of neurosis, as readers.[13] Both Stanton's and Monçada's accounts of extreme mental torture which reveal the deconstruction of ego, the breaking down of intellect, personality and ultimately identity, are representative of

[12] *Melmoth the Wanderer*, vol. II, chap. VI, p. 145.

[13] Cf. Moynaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 12, where he makes the point about the "conversion of agents and patients into writers and readers..."

the structure of *Melmoth* in which all voices' narrators' victims merge into one, authorial voice.

If we apply Freud's theory of creativity to *Melmoth* then certain problems inherent in the novel's content and structure can be explained. The "many part-egos" referred to by Freud could be the many characters in the novel. These in turn could be interpreted as the many narrators or voices that help carry the tales in *Melmoth*. So, if these narrator's voices in the novel are part-egos of the ego of the writer, Maturin, then what is the connection between author and characters? As mentioned above, the dominant theme working through the novel is that of victimisation or persecution; each of the victims in *Melmoth* is a victim of persecution. Their final persecutor may be Melmoth, but it is man and not Melmoth who inflicts most suffering on each victim/narrator even before Melmoth takes the opportunity to tempt them with his offer of escape. Stanton is tricked into the madhouse by a relative and tortured by the guards and those around him. Monçada is placed in a monastery in Madrid against his will and then persecuted by the other novice monks when he rebels against "the tidelless stagnation of monastic existence." Because of his non-conformity combined with his attempted escape he incurs the wrath of the monks and is branded a heretic and thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition. It is only at this stage that Melmoth appears to Monçada.

In "Tale of Guzman's Family" a Spanish woman, Ines Guzman, is disowned by her wealthy brother when she marries a Protestant musician (Walberg) and moves to his native Germany. Many years later, having endured abject poverty, she receives a letter from her estranged brother in which he invites her back to Spain hoping for a reconciliation before his death. Ines, overjoyed, moves her family and parents-in-law to Spain spurred on by the hope of receiving some of her brothers' wealth being given to her and her family. But all efforts on her part to see her brother are repulsed by him under the influence of his Jesuit "confessor" who tampers with the will and secures the dying man's fortune for the Church.

The family are now destitute and penniless in a strange country where they are shunned as heretics because of their religion. The tale describes in detail their poverty, depression and despair in an intolerant society. Melmoth arrives to tempt and persecute his victim, Walburg, only afer his mother has died, his daughter has considered prostitution, his son has sold his blood to a pharmacist and Walberg himself is on the very brink of madness as he and his family face the ever-increasing horror of starvation and death.

This tale is incredibly bleak, its tragedy unrelenting, as we watch the destruction of a once-close family unit and witness the shame, despair and desperation of a man who cannot support his own family or provide them

even with morsels of food from one day to the next. Maturin himself knew these feelings, in part. He struggled with poverty all his life, having to support a large family on a curate's wage. It is this "necessity", the necessity of providing for his family, that kept Maturin writing all of his short life. It is very likely that this and the fate of Walberg are representative of one of the author's worst fears and nightmares and in this sense Walberg is a part-ego of Maturin's own ego. The position of Ines, a stranger in her own country, may also echo Maturin's experience.

In "The Lovers' Tale," the victim, Elinor Mortimer, is abandoned inexplicably by her prospective bridegroom, John Sandal, on their wedding day. Elinor is devastated by his sudden rejection of her and she leaves her home and family to become a recluse. She finally returns to the family castle for the funeral of her aunt and there meets her former fiancé. She is both shocked and hurt by his actions towards her as she experiences the torture of "complacent and fraternal affection from the man she loved."

As the days pass she notices that his affections seem to have been transferred to her friend and cousin, Margaret. The pain of this is excruciating but still she stays on at the castle, torturing herself. The inevitable happens and John and Margaret are married, leaving Elinor in a "fearful state of stupefaction and despair." She returns to the castle one last time to be with Margaret while she gives birth to twins. Both children and their mother die and John Sandal collapses into madness. A few months later Sandal's mother confesses on her deathbed that she was the cause of John Sandal's abandonment of Elinor; she had told him falsely that he was not her own child but the offspring of her husband and Elinor's mother. Obviously John could not marry his own half-sister. The widow Sandal's motive was greed; John could only inherit the Mortimer fortune if married to Margaret.

With both his wife and mother dead, John is willingly looked after by Elinor who has to be satisfied with the physical if not mental company of her former lover. Melmoth joins the tale now as he showers sympathy on Elinor on her painful and difficult life in an attempt to engage her friendship and trust in order to put his offer to her so that she may turn back the clock and change the course of events which have ruined her every happiness. She refuses and the Wanderer continues on his endless journey.

It is an interesting point that the narrator of both "The Tale of Guzman's Family" and "The Lovers' Tale" is Melmoth himself. He recounts the stories to Don Francisco di Aliaga, Immalee's father, when Melmoth joins him on his journey back to Madrid to arrange Immalee's marriage. Therefore, both of these tales are contained in "Tale of the Indians" which Monçada is quoting from Adonijah's manuscript to young

Melmoth. From the study of each tale above, it is quite clear that all narrators in *Melmoth* are victims, Melmoth himself being the greatest victim/narrator as well as the greatest victimiser. If we look at the author's own history we discover that Maturin himself was, or at least believed himself to be, also a victim. Maturin remained a curate all his life, despite his popularity and his oratorical flair.

There are several reasons that could explain his neglect by church authorities: he was an eccentric, and it was also widely known, in spite of the pseudonym he used of Dennis Jasper Murphy, that Maturin was the author of several novels, and his personal religious opinions clashed with those of his superiors. These personal leanings were towards Calvinism, and Douglas Grant wrote that Maturin had, "...offended an Arminian Church by his avowed Calvinism."[14] Maturin himself admitted this "avowed Calvinism" in a letter to Sir Walter Scott. In it he also refers to the Church's disapproval: "viewed with jealousy by ... Arminian Masters."[15] Maturin felt himself an outsider in a highly conventional ecclesiastical atmosphere. He certainly felt wronged in his career and this comes across clearly in his letters to Scott. The following extract is typical of the self-pitying and depressed mood of Maturin's correspondence:

> ...repeated disappointments have destroyed self-confidence – I have been too much neglected by the world to think there is any thing in me worth the world's notice, and I believe it would be hard for any one to think more humbly of me, than I do of myself.[16]

It is obvious from the extracts above that Maturin regarded himself as a victim, persecuted by all, "neglected by the world." Freud's theory can be introduced again at this point; if Maturin himself feels persecuted and victimised, the heroes, i.e. the narrators of his novel, who are all victims themselves, are then manifestations of these feelings of persecution. Put in Freudian terms, Maturin the writer has split up his ego into many part-egos which, "personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life."

Melmoth, therefore, is the representation of the inherent evil in all of us, the "dark side" of human nature is a sublimation of Maturin's own "dark side." The author's unintentional glamorisation of Melmoth might instead be an unconscious projection, a repressed fantasy of Maturin, the clergyman.

The fissures in the ego of the author, are related to the breakdown or "discontents" within the narrative of the novel. These discontents are symptoms of the instability of the novel's structure which can be located

[14] Douglas Grant in Introduction to the 1968 edition of *Melmoth*.
[15] F. E. Ratchford, W. H. Mc Carthy, eds., *The Correspondence...*, 11 January 1813, p. 10.
[16] *Ibidem*, 27 October 1813, p. 24.

in two specific features of the novel: the plethora of narrators, which are frequently lost within the tales and the footnotes, where Maturin intrudes into the main narrative flow by collapsing the layers of narrative and the confusion caused by the ambiguous wording of the footnotes themselves to the extent that the reader is uncertain of the identity of the speaker.

These fissures of the ego can be explained by Freud's theory of creativity; Maturin's anxieties which include religious intolerance and bigotry, fear of poverty and the inherent evil of man are given expression through the many narrators in the novel. These narrators, as victims, are Maturin's part-egos. Therefore, it is not so surprising that the identities are so often lost or forgotten as the tales progress: they are all projections of Maturin's own Id. This may help explain why, despite the confusion with narration and the density of style, the basic flow of the novel is unaffected; Maturin's voice is the dominant voice throughout the novel. Paradoxically, it is this dominance that both unbalances the novel while at the same time it holds it together.