ANARCHY AND THE GOTHIC NOVEL: A STUDY OF CHARLES ROBERT MATURIN'S MELMOTH THE WANDERER

by

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Abstract

Many students of English literature mistakenly assume that the novel temporarily ceased to develop after Tristram Shandy and did not commence again until Jane Austen began to publish early in the nineteenth century. During this supposed hiatus, the Gothic novel grew and flourished, achieving tremendous popularity around the turn of the century. The greatest of these novels is Melmoth the Wanderer, written by an Irish clergyman, Charles Robert Maturin. This thesis tries to show not only that Melmoth the Wanderer is a significant artistic achievement, but that the Gothic movement to which it belongs reflects the psychology of individuals caught up in the Industrial Revolution and confused by changes they could not understand and frightened by forces they could not control.

Following the precedent of John Ruskin's "The Nature of Gothic," the first chapter of the thesis analyzes the Gothic nature of Melmoth the Wanderer in terms of "external forms" and "internal elements." It then examines the apparently chaotic structure of the novel and shows how this structure reinforces a basic "element" of Gothic fiction: an "anarchistic impulse" that rejects rigid rules, whether social or artistic, in favour of more spontaneous and "natural" guidelines. Chapter two explores Melmoth the Wanderer's obsession with time and clocks in terms of the "anarchistic impulse." The clock becomes a symbol of routine, mechanized, and institutionalized existence. The clock-man represents those automatons who have lost their will and tied their interest to the power of systems and institutions. Melmoth's struggle against time is, in part, a struggle against the claustrophobia imposed on man by an industrialized society and a materialistic concept of the universe. Chapter three compares the works of Maturin with the works of William Godwin, especially St. Leon, and

exposes fundamental similarities in their world views, in particular their perception of the threat institutions and systems pose to human nature. The last chapter looks more closely at the "anarchistic impulse" and divides it into two component parts: an obsession with power and a nostalgia for a vanishing "Gothic spirit."

Any literary genre that occupies the attention of most of the reading public for half a century should not be ignored by students of literature. Certainly a great many Gothic writers merely exploited the popularity of the genre and produced shoddy and uninspired fiction, but the leaders in the genre, writers such as Walpole, Radcliffe, Godwin, Lewis and Maturin, were innovative and sensitive novelists who struck a responsive chord in the popular audience of their day. This thesis tries not just to draw attention to a neglected genre, and especially to what is perhaps the highest achievement of the genre, Melmoth the Wanderer, but it also attempts to explain some of the reason for the popularity of Gothic novels and to try to show how the genre relates to the environment in which it thrived.

For Nancy

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CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION		page 1.
CHAPTER ONE	The "Moral Elements" of Gothic and The Structure of _Melmoth the Wanderer_.	page 7.
CHAPTER TWO	The Rebellion Against Time and Space in _Melmoth the Wanderer_.	page 28.
CHAPTER THREE	Maturin and Godwin: The Heart of Anarchism.	page 68.
CHAPTER FOUR	The Gothic Spirit and the Obsession with Power.	page 95.
CONCLUSION	Gothic: An "Instinct for Freedom."	page 130.
A LIST OF WORKS CITED		page 140.
A LIST OF OTHER WORKS CONSULTED		page 144.

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

Melmoth the Wanderer, probably the greatest of all Gothic novels, was written by an Anglican clergyman, the curate of St. Peter's Church, Dublin, Charles Robert Maturin. Born in 1780 into a family of prominent clergymen and civil servants, Maturin spent his youth in affluence and later attended Trinity College, Dublin, where he proved himself an intelligent and talented pupil. After graduation, he married and joined the Church in order to be able to support a family. Maturin wrote several novels and plays, but his literary career climaxed early when his play Bertram was performed, through the combined efforts of Scott, Byron and Lamb, at Drury Lane Theatre in 1813. Although Bertram was tremendously popular and brought Maturin as much as one thousand pounds, he was unable to repeat this success and soon fell into financial hardship and literary neglect. The story of the adult life of Maturin is one of increasing alienation and poverty.

In a country where four-fifths of the population were Catholics, Maturin was an Anglican, but he felt separated from his Anglican colleagues because he considered himself a Calvinist. Because he wrote romances, Maturin soon fell out of favour with his church establishment. In his early flush of success, his ostracism from his church did not seem important, but as his literary hope declined he began to recognize his vulnerability and to feel the effects of bigoted oppression.

At the height of his success Maturin was gay and eccentric; he prided himself on his dancing, decorated his house and wife, attended balls and arranged dances.[1] However, beginning with a Post Office scandal, which cost Maturin's father, on whom Maturin depended for financial and social support, his high civil service position and threw the family under the

shadow of disgrace, Maturin was faced with a series of financial hardships. To aid a relative, Maturin went security for a considerable debt and when the relative went bankrupt Maturin found himself responsible for the whole amount. He was forced to sell his house, which he had converted into a boarding school in an attempt to supplement his slender stipend of eighty pounds. He turned to writing as a source of income, but, except for Bertram, his only financially successful work was Melmoth the Wanderer, for which he received five hundred pounds. He was several times forced to borrow money from Scott and Byron. By the time he was writing his last novel, The Albigenses, his environment was considerably altered. A contemporary described his visit to Maturin thus:

> The inside of the house was gloomy and melancholy in the extreme; just the house for the Romanticist who penned "Melmoth." The dull kitchen candle of the servant threw but a faint light; and my feet struck with a lonely sound on the naked flags of the hall, which was barely furnished with two chairs surmounted by his crest, a galloping horse; the stairs were without carpets. On entering the drawing room, it almost appeared to be unfurnished. A simple drugget partly covered the floor, and a small table was occupied by a divan covered with scarlet, which appeared strangely out of character with the general meagerness of the apartment; beside the folding-doors was a square piano; at the fire was placed an old arm chair, in which I afterwards saw him sit for many a weary hour, till three or four o'clock in the morning, while writing the "Albigenses" and on a small working table beneath the windows lay a very ancient writing-desk. Such was my first glimpse of the author's domicile, which had once been a witness of very different scenes.[2]

Towards the end of his decline into poverty and obscurity, Maturin wrote his greatest Gothic romance, Melmoth the Wanderer. Published in 1820, Melmoth the Wanderer earned Maturin a short reprieve from financial distress, but it was not highly valued as a work of art until well after the author's death. Although the book's early reviewers could not deny

that the novel had a spark of genius, they condemned the book for its "unlicensed imagination," its horror and sensationalism, and an unusual structure that could not please "a rigid disciple of the Aristotelian school of criticism."[3] He was condemned as a "rebel against all the constituted authorities of the literary judgement seat."[4]

In life Maturin was less radical than in his novels; nevertheless, he was indiscreet and eccentric and, as a result, he was ostracized and thoroughly punished by his society and church. He was continually under pressure to repress his own eccentricities and flights of imagination in order to ensure his survival and his family's comfort. In his novels, Maturin could burst forth and vent his rage and indignation, attack Inquisitions, and battle against power and authority. Many of his novels' main characters are, like Maturin, alienated, miserable and oppressed, and often they struggle to assert their identities and destroy the powers that oppress them. When the Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine reviewer compared Melmoth the Wanderer to Caleb Williams it was because he was at least subconsciously aware of the total rejection of systems of power and of what Godwin called "positive institutions" that is inherent in the works of Godwin and the later works of Maturin. The reviewer believed that

> Mr. Maturin is, without question, one of the most genuine masters of the dark romance. He can make the most practised reader tremble as effectively as Mrs. Radcliffe, and what is better, he can make him think as deeply as Mr. Godwin.[5]

Not only can Maturin make the reader "think as deeply as Mr. Godwin," but Maturin makes him think in much the same way as Mr. Godwin, for in his "heart" Maturin was as much an anarchist as was Godwin. Godwin, however, was successful because of his ideas, while Maturin's success was threatened by his ideas. For an Anglican clergyman to write Gothic novels

was bad enough, but for him to express anarchistic sentiments was dangerous and entirely unacceptable to the church hierarchy.

The life of Maturin is probably best summed up by Maurice Lévy:

> Or, nous l'avons assez dit, Maturin écrivait pour vivre. En le reléguant au rang indigne d'écrivain pour "librairie circulante," les arbitres du goût l'enfonçaient dans la détresse. Plus tard--trop tard--Balzac et Baudelaire lui feraient en France une réputation autre. On le nommerait de compagnie avec les plus grands et Delacroix illustrerait, dans une toile célèbre, une des scènes les plus émouvantes de Melmoth: Maturin n'en profita pas. Il fut lui-même, jusqu'au dernier jour, le Réprouvé que tous ses personnages avaient, à des degrés divers, incarné. Mis hors-la-loi sur la scène littéraire, il cultiva le goût du malheur. Menacé dans son existence quotidienne, il se fit poète de l'errance et de l'instabilité. En butte aux remontrances et aux avertissements répétés de la hiérarchie anglicane, il chanta les persécutés et les opprimés. La nuit et le désespoir furent son lot. Nul hommage ne l'eût sans doute plus touché que le titre dérisoire dont l'affubla Lautreamont: lui qui affectait d'être gai, lui l'excentrique et le dandy, ne fut, au plus intime de lui-même, que le "Compère des Ténèbres."[6]

Through his intense awareness of his own repression and persecution, and the anxiety and hypocrisy it forced upon him, Maturin developed a sympathy for all oppressed people. In his life this sympathy is best expressed by his undaunted Irish nationalism and his opposition to the Union, but in his literature this sympathy is reflected on a universal plane, unrestricted by the boundaries of time and place.

Maturin explored the causes of human misery and found them to be many, but the worst were the artificial systems of human society. He isolated particularly systems of thought, which engendered bigotry and complacency, and systems of power, which perpetuated the "interest" of a few men by creating an environment of oppression and fear. Against these systems Maturin believed the human heart naturally rebelled. He believed that there was a "universal impulse" that forced men to resist

systems, institutions and arbitrary authority. As long as men maintained their humanity, their "hearts," they would continue to struggle even in the face of omnipotence. This anarchistic impulse is the core of Maturin's masterpiece. Melmoth the Wanderer, the highest expression of the "Gothic mind" and the "Gothic dream," rejects Classical aesthetics and materialistic thought and values, and condemns modern industrial society: the world of systems, mechanisms and clock-like beings. In the novel, Maturin exposes actuality for the nightmare he believes it to be and he places his hope in the human heart's determination to preserve its "nature" and independence.

In 1824, at the age of forty-three, Maturin died after a long illness provoked by overwork, anxiety and frustration. After his death, Maturin's name faded into obscurity, partly because Scott, Maturin's patron, failed in his promise to publish Maturin's collected works, along with a biography, partly because his son burned his papers, which may have included letters from Balzac and Goethe,[7] and partly because the Gothic genre has been relegated to a literary backwater. Maturin hoped that through his literature he could establish "a place and name on earth";[8] this hope was never fully realized. Nevertheless, Maturin's influence surfaces again and again both in French and English literature, and the nature of his thought and art reflects significant developments in modern Western culture.

FOOTNOTES

[1] [Oscar Wilde?], "Memoir of Charles Robert Maturin" in Melmoth the Wanderer by Charles Robert Maturin (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1892), p. xxv.

[2] Dale Kramer, "Introduction" to The Albigenses, A Romance by Charles Robert Maturin, ed. Devendra P. Varma (1824; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1972), pp. xii-xiii.

[3] "Melmoth the Wanderer,&c," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 8, No. 44 (1820), p. 161.

[4] Ibid., p. 161.

[5] Ibid., p. 168.

[6] Maurice Lévy, Le Roman "Gothique" Anglais, 1764-1824 (Toulouse: Association des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Toulouse, 1968), p. 600.

[7] [Wilde?], "Memoir of Charles Robert Maturin," p. xxviii.

[8] Charles Robert Maturin, The Wild Irish Boy (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1808), I, vii.

CHAPTER ONE

The "Moral Elements" of Gothic and The Structure of Melmoth the Wanderer

When Horace Walpole published The Castle of Otranto in 1764, this tale formed a blueprint for a new genre, the Gothic novel. In the sixty or so years after the publication of The Castle of Otranto, "the Gothic novel developed so radically that 'Gothic' becomes the descriptive term applied to both the culminating terrors and horrors of romantic fiction and the revolutionary didacticism of the novel of social purpose: yet both have their beginning in The Castle of Otranto."[1] The seeds sown by Walpole were cultivated separately by Radcliffe, Lewis and Godwin, but were finally harvested by Charles Robert Maturin. Maturin, especially in his masterpiece, Melmoth the Wanderer, stands at the crossroads where the separate paths of the Gothic tradition meet and then again separate along the roads of the modern novel.

The boundaries of the genre are, apparently, not strictly defined; some critics still hesitate to include Caleb Williams, others would exclude Frankenstein because of its use of science. Some of the confusion in defining the Gothic genre stems from a superficial definition of the term. The tendency is to recognize Gothic novels by the presence of haunted castles, dungeons, walking skeletons, demons, living paintings, persecuted virgins, mouldy manuscripts, blood, bones, and banditti. However, these are what John Ruskin would have labeled the "external forms" of the Gothic; there are also "internal elements" of equal importance. In literature, as in architecture, "unless both the elements and the forms are there, we have no right to call the style Gothic."[2] A novel such as Caleb Williams is

Gothic because it uses several of the characteristic forms recognized as Gothic and incorporates many others metaphorically, and because it shares a strong "elemental" relationship to other works in the genre.[3]

The elements isolated by Ruskin as being inherent to Gothic architecture are applicable to the Gothic novel because Ruskin's appreciation of Gothic architecture rests on a movement that began nearly a hundred years before he wrote "The Nature of Gothic," when Walpole found in his appreciation of Gothic antiquity the inspiration for what was to be, until shortly before Ruskin's time, a dominating literary genre. It is difficult to conceive that Ruskin could look at a Gothic castle or cathedral without being influenced by the accumulated impressions and opinions of Walpole, Reeve, Burke, Beckford, Hurd, Drake, Radcliffe, Scott, Maturin and others. When Ruskin begins to talk of "moral elements" of architecture, he is making subjective considerations that cannot be entirely separated from his cultural heritage.

Ruskin isolated six "moral elements" of Gothic architecture: Savageness, Changefulness, Naturalism, Grotesqueness, Rigidity, and Redundance.[4] All of these characteristics are self-explanatory except perhaps "Rigidity," which Ruskin defines as "not merely stable, but <u>active</u> rigidity; the peculiar energy which gives tension to movement, and stiffness to resistance, which makes the fiercest lightning forked rather than curved,"[5] and "Redundance," which is an accumulation of ornament. Perhaps all of these "moral elements" can be found in the Gothic novels. For example, one of the earliest critics of <u>Melmoth the Wanderer</u> observed its "rigid tension."[6] Also, despite all their supernatural and far-fetched aspects, most of the best Gothic novels conform to "Naturalism," the product of artists who "render all

they see in nature unhesitatingly, with a kind of divine grasp and government of the whole, sympathizing with all the good, and yet confessing, permitting, and bringing good out of evil also."[7] This ability to bring good out of evil is most paradoxically expressed in the personalities of "evil" villains (Manfred, Schedoni, Melmoth, etc.) who often reveal compassion, nobility and generosity. Even if a work of art does not possess all of Ruskin's elements, he says that "the withdrawal of any one, or any two, will not at once destroy the Gothic character. . . ."[8]

Beyond Ruskin's six elements, however, there are other more important elements that Ruskin has not defined. The problem is that all of these "moral elements" are only Ruskin's interpretation of material structures and rest on his subjective responses, and therefore tell us more about his state of mind than about architecture. Ruskin's "Gothic" mind seems remarkably similar to the minds of Gothic novelists: their appreciation of Gothic seems to rest on a similar psychological base, and if Ruskin fails to provide a complete picture of the elemental nature of Gothic, it is not so much because there is a "moral" difference between architecture and literature, but because Ruskin has failed to fully understand his own responses. What I am saying then is that an inquiry into the elements of Gothic literature is really an examination of the psychology and values of those who created the new world of the Gothic.

The most fundamental "moral element" of the Gothic novel is an anarchistic impulse: a desire to escape oppressive systems and to achieve a dignified independence from external authority. The Gothic movement rejected classical systems in architecture and gardens; Godwin added a rejection of "positive institutions"; Maturin rejected accepted systems of novel structure,[9] but his anarchism also extends to other systems: religious, legal, political and metaphysical. Maturin felt that systems exercise an unhealthy power

over humanity and eventually destroy its"heart." Angus Wilson claims, "The Gothic novelists truly can be dismissed because they are not serious; they can be dismissed as sensationalists."[10] However, many Gothic novelists were intensely involved in their writing, and dedicated long and careful hours to their creations. The superficial face of the Gothic novel is often so grotesque, exotic and exaggerated that it obscures the nature of the author's mind: often a mind in search of freedom.

The very absurdity of many of the incidents in Gothic novels offers the author protection against political animosity by confusing any possible allegorical interpretations. Most Gothic novelists seemed particularly sensitive about their reputations, and often a shield of absurdity was necessary even to protect the artist's self-esteem. Whether Walpole, for example, was aware of his own anarchisitic impulse is doubtful; according to Varma,

> There was a constant conflict between the "personality" and "character" of Walpole, and if we begin to psychoanalyze Walpole's personality we may suspect that he had suppressed his impulses in the process of building up character. But this repressed self broke loose that fateful night in 1764 when he had a dream that gave birth to The Castle of Otranto.[11]

Walpole began his Gothic novel at the inspiration of a dream, and, as Freud says, in spite of unwished-for contents "a dream is the fulfilment of a wish."[12] However, as dreams are often quite skillful in disguising the represented wishes, authors and readers could enjoy emotional release in relative security; there was no one to explain that"demons in cloaks and hoods are of a phallic character," or that architecture symbolizes the body and genitals, or that walking up and down stairs represents the sexual act.[13] Not all dreams are sexual, and although sexuality obviously plays a significant role in determining Gothic symbolism, the focus of this thesis will be sociological. The important thing is that the Gothic world is a

dream world in which what is forbidden in life can be practised and expressed, even if only symbolically. For most Gothic writers, this disguised rebellion was subconscious, but, as the genre developed, many of its subversive qualities became increasingly recognized and defined; at least one of Maturin's characters has some unsettling suspicions about dreams:

> I have a jealousy, a restlessness, a shame of myself; which is always the symptom of early, unhabituated vice. Yet still I have a recurrence of thoughts such as I ought to banish, at least ought not to suffer to please me as they do: and which, when I resist them, return in my dreams. Oh! I have such dreams --- is there guilt in dreams?[I4]

The Gothic dream may appear harmless, and in the hands of certain novelists it probably is, but the violent attacks on the genre by some critics seem disproportionate to the reasons they give in opposition to it. Maturin discovered a sense of guilt in his dream world, but he continued to write, and as he wrote, he increasingly defined what he felt guilty about. Melmoth the Wanderer is Maturin's highest achievement and his clearest analysis of that impulse that sent him into the Gothic dream world: an anarchistic impulse that lies at the root of the Gothic achievement.

The anarchistic impulse manifests itself not only in the symbolism, but also in the very structures of many of these Gothic novels. Ruskin, discussing "Changefulness," rejects the notion "that love of order is love of art."[I5] He praises Gothic rejection of symmetry and insists that no "noble work of man can be good unless it be imperfect. . . ." This is similar to Bishop Hurd's observation that Gothic is "incompatible" with the classic unity, that the Gothic plan was one of "disorder" and reflected itself in literature as a "unity of design, and not of action."[I6] Maturin, too, allowed arguments for the uninhibited Gothic plan to be expressed by one of his heroes in The Wild Irish Boy:

> Any man who withdraws his eyes from a Gothic ruin

> to fix it on a Grecian palace will find the transition unfavourable. He will find in its very symmetry and grace, and milder majesty, something mean and minute.[17]

What began with Hurd as a defense of Gothic disorder is found in Maturin as a condemnation of "classic unity" and had, even before Ruskin wrote "The Nature of Gothic," established itself as a truth in the minds of such intellectuals as Lord Lytton, one of whose characters declares, "how irregular is ever the symmetry of real genius. The inequalities in its surface make the moon luminous to man."[18] The roots of this rejection of "classic unity" and rules can be traced back to the first Gothic novelist; speaking of his The Castle of Otranto in a letter to Madame du Deffand, Horace Walpole declares:

> . . .I have given reins to my imagination till I became on fire with the visions and feelings which it excited. I have composed it in defiance of rules, of critics, and of philosophers; and it seems to me just so much better for that very reason. I am even persuaded, that sometime hereafter, when taste shall resume the place which philosophy now occupies, my poor Castle will find admirers![19]

The belief that rules should be subservient to an intuitive sense of natural beauty and harmony in art proved to be one of the cornerstones in the development of the Gothic genre. The Castle of Otranto is not without structure and it is based on an artistic theory, but it is a theory that attempts to place imagination before rules in the throne that governs art.

What Gothic writers found in Gothic art was a sense of freedom unencumbered by rules or the limitations of rationalism. The Gothic revival offered to liberate the imagination and open up new territory for the artist in his quest for truth, a truth that Hurd presents ironically as superior to historical or philosophical truth:

> So little account does this wicked poetry make of philosophical or historical truth: all she allows us to look for, is practical truth; very slender thing indeed,

> which the poet's eye, when rolling in a fine frenzy, can but just lay hold of. To speak the language of Mr. HOBBES, it is something much beyond the actual bounds, and only within the conceived possibility of nature.[20]

Throwing off his literary oppression, the Gothic novelist felt obliged to limit himself only to the conceivable.

An examination of the structure of Melmoth the Wanderer shows that the theories presented by Walpole and Bishop Hurd, along with the lessons learned through the experiments of later Gothic writers such as Reeve, Radcliffe and Lewis, paved the way for the production of fruitful new forms. Maturin's rejection of rules and order is apparent in the plan of his novel, where the unities of time, place and action are scrambled, and the separate tales in the "Chinese box" structure seem to be united only in their relation to the curse of Melmoth. One of the novel's earliest critics, writing in the Edinburgh Review of 1821, condemns the structure out of hand: "The construction of his [Maturin's] story, which is singularly clumsy and artificial, we have no intention to analyse. . . ."[21] The failure of critics to analyse Maturin's structure resulted in an unfounded prejudice against the novel.

Maturin was conscious of the development of the novel as an art form and he experimented with a variety of styles and structures during his career.[22] Although the construction of his novel seems disorganized, Maturin was well aware of what he was doing, and if at times his structure gets out of hand, which at places it does, the problem is one of carelessness, or writing too quickly, rather than faulty theory. Perhaps we can compare the structural plan of Maturin's Gothic novel to the plan of Walpole's Gothic mansion, Strawberry Hill. According to Terence Davis, "It is customary to think of Strawberry becoming irregular by accident but at least its creator knew that it was a happy accident," and he claims that

the irregularity of Strawberry Hill was, at least "in part, deliberate."[23] Where Walpole incorporated "Sharawaggi," the Chinese lack of symmetry in gardens, in architecture, Maturin took this principle into the plan of the novel.

The structure of Walpole's novel is possessed of a certain unevenness and this form was developed to a further extreme by Lewis who introduced several separate tales and poems within his main plot. Maturin, no doubt, recognized the value of this procedure in creating atmosphere. When discussing Walpole's novel, Varma observes how structural unevenness may create a dream-like surrealistic quality that can contribute to the atmosphere of terror:

> His manner of "telescoping" different ages, settings and characters, his strong manipulation of "the sense of contrast," his use of dialogue and style, his story as it unfolds swiftly giving a nightmarish sensation: all these are methods of surrealism in particular. The scenes change with a dramatic swiftness, the incidents evoke a nightmarish sensation, and the whole story has a very dream-like insequence [sic]. The tale had its origin in the fantasy of an exhausted and repressed brain, and we do not fail to find the "unearthly impulse" of the original dream lingering in the narrative. The atmosphere of The Castle of Otranto is stamped by unreason and exaggeration of its events, and one does not fail to observe the nightmare juxtaposition of its unrelated objects.[24]

These same techniques of "telescoping" and "contrast" are also used by Maturin, who overwhelms the reason of his readers with swift and dramatic scene changes, but in Melmoth the Wanderer these only contribute to a more extensive and complex plan.

Maturin focusses upon different ages, settings, and characters in order to reinforce his theme. Because Melmoth is cursed with immortality, he is independent of time, and because he has special powers that allow him to pierce the walls of the Inquisition or carry on activities on an island in the Indian Ocean and a madhouse in England almost simultaneously,

he appears independent of place. (The nature of this "freedom" will be explored more fully later in this thesis, but for now it is sufficient to observe that in reality Melmoth is a prisoner of infinite space and eternal life.) Melmoth the Wanderer, therefore, has a "Savageness" of the kind Hurd ascribed to Spenser's The Faerie Queene: its coherent overall "design" conforms "to order of distribution, which is and must be governed by the subject matter itself."[25] In other words, because the subject that unites the novel is Melmoth and the paradox of his supposed independence from time and place, the novel can be free of time and place also, and this freedom, shared by the structure and the subject, creates an "overall design" that becomes the unifying factor of the novel. Like Melmoth, the reader of the novel soon begins to feel independent of time and place: at one moment he is in Restoration England, at another he is in an underground hideaway in Madrid, or on a country estate in contemporary Ireland. But, paradoxically, at the same time as he is experiencing this "freedom," the reader is also feeling the claustrophobia, constraint and near madness of the various characters focussed upon. The reader becomes like Melmoth, a wanderer in space and time, and comes to share Melmoth's misery and alienation.

Another aspect of this unity of design is a rhythm within the novel, or a recurring emotional pattern. This pattern consists of a slow and monotonous psychological journey downwards towards despair, accompanied by constant struggle, with a host of minor victories and greater disappointments. This process continues until finally the struggle culminates in strict confinement (Stanton in his madhouse, Alonzo in his dungeon and Inquisition cell, Immalee on the "desert" side of her island). Confinement is accompanied by an extreme sense of claustrophobia, gloom, darkness, despair and fear of insanity. Then a sudden release, escape or change of scene occurs, accompanied

by a feeling of joy and euphoria. This joy quickly meets some reversal and the pattern begins over again, either for the same, or for a different character. This pattern is so inherent in the structure of the novel and operates so effectively on the tensions of the reader that it is one of the factors that makes us doubt that Melmoth "dies" at the end of the novel: we have felt the false joy of release too many times to trust any longer in an end to the cycle. This rhythm, which Maturin manipulates so effectively, has its own nightmarish quality and adds to the confusion of dream and reality in the novel, a confusion calculated by Maturin to break down the reader's complacency and make him share suffering and misery.

The rhythmic pattern is often reinforced by another recurrent motif of Gothic and Oriental tales: the voyage underground.[26] Alonzo's dungeon confinement and his escape through the underground passage are among his most desperate experiences; the combination creates the most claustrophobic passages of the novel. However, half-way through the novel, Maturin skillfully manipulates an inversion of this motif when Alonzo finally discovers a degree of safety and freedom in the underground cell of Adonijah. Adonijah's cell becomes for Alonzo a retreat safe from the horrors of the world; it is a place suspended in space and time where Alonzo can think and recover. Adonijah makes the irony of the situation explicit:

> Within this apartment I have passed the term of sixty years, and dost thou shudder to visit it for a moment? These be the skeletons of bodies, but in the den thou hast escaped from were the skeletons of perished souls. Here are the relics of the wrecks of the caprices of nature, but thou art come from where the cruelty of man, permanent and persevering, unrelenting and unmitigated, hath never failed to leave the proofs of its power in abortive intellects, crippled frames, distorted creeds, and ossified hearts. Moreover, there are around thee parchments and charts scrawled as it were with the blood of man, but, were it even so, could a thousand such volumes cause such terror to the human eye, as a page of the history of thy prison, written as it is in blood, drawn, not from the frozen veins of the dead, but from the bursting hearts of the living.[27]

Here "the den" and "thy prison" refer to the whole world of man above Adonijah's cave.

The total result of the scene with Adonijah is to serve as a successful pivotal point in which the focus of the novel shifts from the important story of Alonzo to the equally important history of Immalee. The transition is achieved smoothly through the author's skillful use of irony which throws both the reader and Alonzo, the narrator, off balance. Alonzo is confused: he is free, yet underground; he is in Madrid, yet complstely isolated from the world of Spain; he is a Catholic at the mercy of a Jew towards whom he feels an almost bigoted sense of superiority and distrust along with respect and admiration. Another irony becomes increasingly apparent as the novel continues: Adonijah has followed the career of Melmoth and yet has not left his cell for sixty years, yet despite his confinement Adonijah feels free and content while Melmoth, who has the whole world to range, feels miserable and restricted. Alonzo's confusion and uncertainty are passed on to the reader and both are suspended in expectation. This allows the reader to participate in another irony: the joy that should have been experienced at Alonzo's escape into the safe underground domain of Adonijah is suspended and finally released only when the "Tale of the Indians" commences; we feel especially happy to hear the exotic opening description of what turns out to be the most tragic story of the novel.

Ruskin says that "Naturalism" unites "fact with design" and loves "natural objects for their own sake," and makes an effort to represent them frankly, "unconstrained by artistical laws."[28] The cycle of monotonous misery culminating in the depths of despair and then reaching to the heights of joy seems to be Maturin's attempt at capturing within his novel the rhythm of human nature. Maturin tells us of Immalee, who

> rushed for consolation to nature, whose ceaseless agitation

> seems to correspond with the vicissitudes of human destiny and the emotions of the human heart--whose alternation of storms and calms,--of clouds and sun-light,--of terrors and delights--seems to keep a kind of mysterious measure of ineffable harmony with that instrument whose chords are doomed alternately to the thrill of agony and rapture, till the hand of death sweeps over all the strings and silences them for ever.[29]

Maturin juxtaposes terrors and delights in the novel in order to capture in his art that "mysterious measure of ineffable harmony" between Nature and the human heart.

Maturin effectively uses his freedom from the conventions of the novel to improve the total impact of terror and to reinforce his themes. Along with "contrast" and "telescoping," Maturin uses realism to undermine the complacency of his reader and to establish the confusion of dream and reality that seems an essential characteristic of his style. To understand the value of Maturin's Gothic realism one must consider Walpole's theory of what the Gothic novel is all about, as stated in the Preface to the second edition of The Castle of Otranto:

> It [The Castle of Otranto] was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life. But if in the latter species Nature has cramped imagination, she did but take her revenge, having been totally excluded from old romances. The actions, sentiments, conversations, of the heroes and heroines of ancient days were as unnatural as the machines employed to put them in motion.[30]

Walpole sees the Gothic novel as an attempt to achieve a paradoxical combination of the world of myth and wonder with the verisimilitude and conventional realism of the novel, or, in his own terms, to indulge "the boundless realms of invention" according to the "rules of probability." Walpole failed to achieve this union, but he had struck a "new route" and

"was sensible the plan was capable of receiving greater embellishments. . . ."[31] After Walpole, great strides were taken along this route by both Lewis and Radcliffe, but neither achieves a truly satisfying union. Radcliffe, always too much of an Augustan and an advocate of "reason," sacrifices myth to a too finicky regard for rational explanation, while Lewis indulges his imagination to the extent that only occasionally do his characterization and setting become convincing.

Maturin is the first to achieve a satisfying balance of myth and realism and he is able to do this because he enters the realm of myth slowly and cautiously, and because he uses realistic descriptions in such a way as to confuse the worlds of myth and reality. That is, instead of trying to confine his boundless imagination within the rules of probability, he juxtaposes the world of dreams and the world of actuality in such a way as to blur the distinction between them.

Maturin begins his novel by setting it in contemporary Ireland, the environment he best understands, and introduces us to his persona, John Melmoth, a convincing young man from Trinity College, Dublin (Maturin's college and town). Maturin supplies his readers with ample detail of background and setting in order to locate his novel solidly within the actual world of time and space. At the beginning of the novel Maturin marshals all his skill for realistic description and manages to create a number of brilliant and effective images, such as his description of the Lodge gate:

> He alighted, and with a change of linen in a handkerchief, (his only travelling equipment) he approached his uncle's gate. The lodge was in ruins, and a barefooted boy from an adjacent cabin ran to lift on its single hinge what had once been a gate, but was now a few planks so villainously put together, that they clattered like a sign in a high wind. The stubborn post of the gate, yielding at last to the united strength of John and his barefooted assistant, grated heavily through the mud and

> gravel stones, in which it left a deep and sloughy furrow, and the entrance lay open. John, after searching his pocket in vain for a trifle to reward his assistant, pursued his way, while the lad, on his return, cleared the road at a hop, step and jump, plunging through the mud with all the dabbling and amphibious delight of a duck, and scarce less proud of his agility than of his "serving a gentleman."[32]

This picture gives us much of Ireland and the Irish temperament as Maturin saw it: poor and humble, generous and proud. Maturin's success at focussing upon vivid images and his careful attention to detail and motivation establish a convincing reality on which he bases his exploration of the Gothic dream world.

Maturin moves slowly, allowing his reader to unconsciously drift with him away from the shores of actuality. A new narrator is introduced, Alonzo, and the setting changes from present Ireland to past Spain. Maturin relies less on concrete description and indulges more in abstract ideas and emotions. He constantly alludes to mysteries and incidents in oriental tales, and refers to incidents in dreams. All these factors slowly and imperceptibly break down our resistance to the irrational. Eventually, Maturin paints the incidents of dreams as vividly and often more affectingly than incidents of real life, as in Alonzo's dream of the "auto de fe":

> The next moment I was chained to my chair again,--the fires were lit, the bells rang out, the litanies were sung; --my feet were scorched to a cinder,--like shrinking leather,--the bones of my legs hung two black withering and moveless sticks in the ascending blaze;--it ascended, caught my hair,--I was crowned with fire,--my head was a ball of molten metal, my eyes flashed and melted in their sockets;--I opened my mouth, it drank fire,--I closed it, the fire was within,--and still the bells rung on, and the crowd shouted, and the king and queen, and all the nobility and priesthood, looked on, and we burned!--I was a cinder body and soul in my dream.[33]

By this point in the novel dream has the substance of reality; the quality of reality has become uncertain and the reader is susceptible to myth and wonder.

Only after once more removing us from the narrator (to the manuscript of Adonijah), does Maturin, in the middle of the novel, fully plunge into the sea of myth by situating Alonzo in the underground world of Adonijah and introducing the most wonderful and exotic tale of the novel, "Tale of the Indians." By this time, the reader is prepared to sympathize with the state of Immalee's mind:

> Her feverish and dreamy existence, composed of wild and irreconcilable contrasts between the forms of the present and the visions of the past,--the difference between all that she felt within, and all that she saw around her, --between the impassioned life of recollection, and the monotonous one of reality,--was becoming too much for a heart bursting with undirected sensibilities, and a head giddy from vicissitudes that would have deeply tried much firmer faculties.[34]

The entire world of the novel is one of the contrast and confusion of the "Forms of the present, and the visions of the past"; the reader's head is "giddy" from the various "vicissitudes" he has shared, and, like Immalee, the reader should by this time be aware of "the difference between all that she felt within, and all that she saw around her." Maturin's object is to improve our awareness and sensitivity to human suffering and despair, and to expose the conflict between our "hearts" and the artificial world that surrounds us.

Maturin eases his novel back into the world of actuality again, although less successfully than he took it out, by relating more realistic tales: "The Tale of Guzman's Family" seems closely

related to Maturin's personal sufferings, and "The Lover's Tale" is another attempt at historical verisimilitude. In the Preface, Maturin says,

> For the rest of the Romance, there are some parts of it which I have borrowed from real life.
>
> The story of John Sandal and Elinor Mortimer is founded in fact.
>
> The original from which the Wife of Walberg is imperfectly sketched is a living woman, and long may she live.[35]

With these last stories that lead us back into the world of contemporary Ireland, the novel again returns from Romance into Realism.

Thus, a careful and sensitive analysis of what is perhaps the most Gothic of all novel structures, that of Melmoth the Wanderer, shows us that the apparent chaos of structure is actually a careful, sophisticated and complex construction designed both to conform to the novel's subject and to allow the author the greatest amount of freedom of imagination possible while still keeping his work within the tradition of the novel. The structure of Maturin's novel is consistent with the "elemental" nature of the entire Gothic movement. The structure defies order and systems; it is an anarchy, but not a chaos; it is a structure without clear-cut rules, but one that achieves a "naturalness," an intuitive grasp on the strings of the human heart.

As I mentioned earlier, Ruskin believes that "Naturalism" requires freedom from "artistical laws." As the artist dares to throw off the burden of established literary dogma, and as he experiences new freedom, he is likely to become aware that this literary oppression is only one aspect of a more extensive social, political and moral oppression. It seems only natural that the Gothic novel, which in its time was, as Axton says, "avant-garde," should evolve into the novel of socio-political protest. Maturin's novel, Melmoth the Wanderer,

stands at the crossroads, and includes all facets of the anarchistic impulse to be found in the Gothic genre. He is Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, Godwin and Mary Shelley rolled into one, and he shows a close similarity to Ruskin and Morris. As the Edinburgh Review stated in 1821, "He's a knight o' the shire, and represents them all."[36] Perhaps the only critic of Melmoth the Wanderer to have expressed an understanding of the novel's style has been Maurice Lévy:

> En effet, c'est moins par le nombre et la diversité de ses sources, que parce qu'elles se superposent et se renforcent, que Melmoth est le roman "gothique" le plus parfait, le plus complet, le plus horrible qui ait jamais été écrit. Ces "equisses" de prisons, de ruines médiévales et de cloîtres, ces portraits de moines scélérats, ces scènes de persécution et de noire malignité doivent leur éclatant relief à ce qu'on pourrait appeler leur qualité d'images absolues, où s'unifient et se totalisent toutes celles de l'Italien, de Saint-Leon et du Moine: par ses aspects les plus sévères, on pourrait dire que Melmoth est une somme, l'ultime et magistrale expression du genre créé par Walpole.[37]

Equally important as this "Redundancy," however, is the fact that behind these "images absolues" Maturin has captured all the moral elements found in earlier Gothic novels, and so it can be said that in content and structure he has also established "la moralité absolue" of the Gothic genre.

FOOTNOTES

[1] William F. Axton, "Introduction" to Melmoth the Wanderer, a tale, by Charles Robert Maturin (1820; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. viii.

[2] John Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," The Stones of Venice, II, in The Works of John Ruskin, X, ed. by Cook and Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1904), p. 183.

[3] William Godwin, The Adventures of Caleb Williams, or Things as They Are, intro. George Sherburn (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960). Caleb Williams does not have what one ordinarily expects in a "Gothic" setting; there are no castles and no ghosts, and the novel does not occur in the distant past. However, if these were necessary criteria for labelling a novel "Gothic," then we would also have to exclude Melmoth the Wanderer. Nevertheless, Caleb Williams does have "blood" and "banditti," a "persecuted virgin"(Emily), and other "external forms" of the Gothic. The novel also shares the Gothic obsession with persecution, confinement and flight. Furthermore, the novel has many metaphors alluding to the Gothic world; for example, Falkland is variously referred to as "frightful" and "diabolical"(p. 138), and "ghost-like"(p. 326); he is labelled "a demon"(p. 35), "a tyrant"(p. 216), and "a skeleton"(p. 326). Falkland's mansion is seen by Caleb as a "fortress" and a "dungeon"(p. 174). Finally, Caleb Williams shares most of the "moral elements" of the Gothic, especially the most important, the obsession with power and rebellion.

[4] Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," p. 184.

[5] Ibid., p. 239.

[6] Anonymous, "Melmoth the Wanderer," Edinburgh Review, 35 (1821), 354.

[7] Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," p. 222.

[8] Ibid., p. 184.

[9] Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972). Kiely has pointed out that the novel is generally considered "the least restrictive and troublesome of genres"(p. 18). This looseness, he says, is only relative:

> The fact that the novel, conceived of even in the broadest possible terms, does make certain elementary formal demands. For example, in all the controversies over what a novel is, no one questions the need for length. Though no precise number of pages has ever been or can ever be set, everybody knows that one page or ten pages do not make a novel. Inevitably, then, romantic novelists, like any other novelists, are faced with problems of duration. But their preoccupation with the subjective nature of reality and their increasing commitment to imagination created unique and complex difficulties (p. 18).

Kiely goes on later to dicuss how this problem of the "relationship between time as transformed or stopped by the imagination and the world's time of minutes, hours, days, and years"(p. I8) is dealt with by Gothic writers:

> Often there is a difficulty, for both author and reader, in keeping subjective time (which ordinarily means the connection of events as perceived by a particular character) and historical or chronologically measurable time from utterly confusing each other and making a coherent progression of plot impossible. E. M. Forster states the danger concisely: "The time-sequence cannot be destroyed without carrying in its ruin all that should have taken its place; the novel that would express values only becomes unintelligible and therefore valueless." The romantic novelists usually dealt with the problem in one of two ways: by seeing to it that a major character is literally separated from day and night and from society's reckoning of time (in a prison, a lunatic asylum, a monastery cell) or by depending, even more often than did their realistic predecessors, on the inset story, the plot within a plot which interrupts the chronology of the main narrative and creates a new temporal dimension. But even when these technical difficulties are overcome, more serious questions remain: What have the different versions of time to do with one another? Is one more nearly true than another? Can they be combined in some way that will enlarge man's total comprehension of himself and the universe? (p. I9)

Maturin uses all the techniques of separating characters from "day and night and society's reckoning of time," and the technique of the "inset story." Maturin then, as I will discuss in Chapter Two, goes on to further tackle the whole problem "of the different versions of time."

IO Angus Wilson, "Evil in the English Novel: Outside the Central Tradition," The Listener, 69 (I963), 64.

II Devendra P. Varma, The Gothic Flame (I957; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, I966), p. 67.

I2 Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, I965), p. I54.

I3 Ibid., pp. 402, 382, 390.

I4 Charles Robert Maturin, The Wild Irish Boy (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, I808), I, 69.

I5 Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," p. 205.

I6 Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, "Letters on Chivalry and Romance," in The Works of Richard Hurd, D.D., Lord Bishop of Worcester (I8II; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., I967), p. 300.

17 Maturin, The Wild Irish Boy, II, 11.

18 Lord Lytton, Zanoni (London: Saunders and Otley, 1842), I, 87.

19 Quoted in Varma, The Gothic Flame, p. 56.

20 Hurd, "Letters on Chivalry and Romance," pp. 323-324.

21 "Melmoth the Wanderer," Edinburgh Review, p. 354.

22 Charles Robert Maturin, "Harrington and Ormond Tales by Maria Edgeworth. The Novel," The British Review and London Critical Journal, 10 (Feb. 1818), 37-60. In this article, Maturin discusses the evolution of the novel from its beginnings up until his own day. He also discusses the role of myth in the novel.

23 Terence Davis, The Gothick Taste (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1957), p. 82.

24 Varma, The Gothic Flame, p. 69.

25 Hurd, "Letters on Chivalry and Romance," p. 299.

26 Gothic novels and Oriental tales abound with incidents in dungeons, underground passages and catacombs: in The Italian, Ellena tries to escape the convent through an underground passage; in The Monk, much of the action takes place in the catacombs and passages beneath the convent; in Vathek, the story ends with a voyage into the entrails of the earth; and in The Castle of Otranto, several incidents occur in the underground vaults of the castle.

27 Charles Robert Maturin, Melmoth the Wanderer, a tale, ed. W.F. Axton (1820; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 204.

28 Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," p. 215.

29 Maturin, Melmoth, pp. 262-263.

30 Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, a Story, in Three Gothic Novels, ed. Peter Fairclough (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 43.

31 Ibid., p. 44.

32 Maturin, Melmoth, pp. 6-7.

33 Ibid., p. 182.

34 Ibid., p. 260.

35 Ibid., p. 3.

[36] "Melmoth the Wanderer," Edinburgh Review, p. 355.

[37] Maurice Lévy, Le Roman "Gothique" Anglais, 1764-1824 (Toulouse: Association des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Toulouse, 1968), p. 579.

CHAPTER TWO

The Rebellion Against Time and Space in Melmoth the Wanderer

Part of the fascination of Gothic architecture is that, like most ancient architecture, it exhibits the scars of a continuing battle against time. As a result of its refusal to submit to time, Gothic architecture achieves an atmosphere of "timelessness." One of the advantages of the Gothic setting in literature is that it shares this "timelessness," which often appears to absorb characters inhabiting the Gothic environment. After a short while, it makes no difference to the reader that, though Emily, in The Mysteries of Udolpho, appears to be an eighteenth-century English maiden, she is supposed to be living in sixteenth-century Italy. Once we enter the Gothic dream world we become independent of time. Buried within monasteries and abbeys we lose track of whether we are following Melmoth the Wanderer's adventures through the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The confined and internal nature of the environments that dominate large segments of most Gothic novels make them "timeless," even when shaded by the obscurity of antiquity.

Linked with this freedom from time goes an equally remarkable freedom, freedom from space. When, while walking down a dingy street, William Morris spots a Gothic Cathedral, he stands

> transfixed with wonder, and a wave of pleasure and exultation sweeps away the memory of the squalidness of today and the shabby primness of yesterday; such a feeling as takes hold of the city-dweller when, after a night journey, he wakes and sees through his window some range of great and noble mountains.[1]

The very sight of Gothic architecture, therefore, is enough to lift one out of the real world, which, of course, is what it was designed to do, and if

the world modern men are lifted to is not the heavenly one originally intended, it is no fault of the architect, but a sign of a changed intellectual environment.

The ideas of time and space have always attracted the interest of poets and philosophers, but these concepts have a special fascination for many Gothic writers. In part, as Robert Kiely says, their interest grew out of the very nature of the Gothic novel.[2] Also, the inherent mystery in the concepts of time and space appeals to some Gothic novelists. Some Gothic novelists were also interested in exploring how time and space influence human nature, as well as in examining the relationship between time and space, and human power. Because the Gothic novel offers an atmosphere independent of space and time, it offers itself as a suitable medium for exploring the implications of these concepts.

To some extent, the concern for time and space is part of an attempt by Romantic thinkers to expose the paradoxical nature of man. As Werther says in Goethe's Sorrows of Young Werther:

> What is man--that much praised demigod? Do not his powers fail when he most requires their use? And whether he soar in joy or sink in sorrow, is he not inevitably arrested? And whilst he fondly dreams that he is grasping at infinity, is he not at that moment made doubly aware of the dull monotony of his existence?[3]

To a degree, Melmoth is like Werther, who says, "I am a wanderer only, a pilgrim, through the world. But what more are you?"[4] The limitations of human experience within the ordinary sphere of one's life, which is limited by time, and one's body, which is limited by space, weigh heavily on the imagination. Against these limitations the mind can wonder at the ideas of eternity and infinity, which Burke isolates as aspects of the Sublime:

> The ideas of eternity and infinity are among the most affecting we have: and yet perhaps there is nothing of which we really understand so little as of infinity and eternity.[5]

While the mind grapples with infinity and eternity, the imagination can discover ways to escape the burden of space and time. In Caleb Williams, Falkland escapes into the tumult of nature and storm where he is "inattentive to the consideration of either place or time"[6] and, thus, he eases his guilt in chaos. Likewise, the world of the Gothic novel can also lift one out of space and time, and much more safely, and in the Gothic dream world one can find characters, not just "inattentive" to space and time, but, like Melmoth, Zanoni and St. Leon, seemingly "independent" of space and time. Within this environment the author can explore the "unlimited" nature of man and examine the possibilities of extending human power to its utmost. As Maturin points out in Fatal Revenge, "All power is limited by place and time; and the change of those may modify that power."[7] A concern for the nature and scope of power and a desire to escape all restrictions and limitations led Maturin into an investigation of the concepts of time and space.

In his novel, Melmoth the Wanderer, Charles Robert Maturin is obsessed with time. From the point early in the tale when the servant offers his ironic wish that John Melmoth may have "a thousand years, and long life to the back of that"[8] to the Wanderer's exclamation, "My hour is come . . . the clock of eternity is about to strike,"[9] Maturin explores the problems and paradoxes of time and eternity. The very nature of Melmoth's curse, the curse of extended life, provides an excellent vehicle for the exploration of concepts and problems of time. With a flexibility that may often leave the critic confused, Maturin analyzes time from the point of

view of religion, philosophy, mythology, and poetry. The motivation for this exploration becomes increasingly clear: time is a prison. Alonzo, Melmoth, and perhaps Maturin himself suffer from the claustrophobia that comes with the awareness of time. In the words of Maturin's contemporary, Goethe:

> CHOIR OF ANGELS. Christ is Risen!
> Joy to mortality,
> Men whom fatality
> Creeping, inherited,
> Deeply dispirited
> Doomed to a prison.[10]

That man is a prisoner of time, which leads us inevitably and unceasingly to our destruction, is an ancient theme. Maturin may have adapted the theme from any of his favourite biblical books: Ecclesiastes, Revelation, or especially Job, in which Job says "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?"(Job 7:1). The awareness of the limited life of man is not only found in the Bible. Time is also a dominant subject of Renaissance poets, especially Spenser and Shakespeare, and this interest is maintained by writers throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Erwin Panofsky,

> no period has been so obsessed with the depth and width, the horror and sublimity of the concept of time as the Baroque, the period in which man found himself with the infinite as a quality of the universe instead of a prerogative of God.[11]

The possibility that infinity is not a "prerogative of God," and that it is a "quality of the universe," the essence of which may presumably be discovered through the efforts of modern science and eventually controlled by man, opens a whole new potential range of human power.

Before exploring the nature of man freed from the limits of time and

space, Maturin, in the early segments of his novel, examines the limits that time imposes on man. The picture of the crumbling estates of Old Melmoth, the darkness of the decaying mansion, the old man's death, the crumbling manuscript of Stanton, all are calculated to arouse an awareness of the merciless destructive power of time. This awareness is associated directly to the striking of clocks and the tolling of bells, traditional symbols of time that recur throughout the novel. The "awful lesson" of time is discovered in the manuscript of Stanton:

> --the clock struck audibly, there was no voice of mirth or of occupation to drown its sound; time told his awful lesson to silence alone;--the hearths were black with fuel long since consumed;--the family portraits looked as if they were the only tenants of the mansion; they seemed to say, from their mouldering frames, 'there are none to gaze on us'. . . .[12]

The solitary clock, echoing alone over a world of things "consumed" and mouldering, sets the atmosphere for most of the novel.

Man is faced with the inevitability of his own death, and even the monuments his civilizations erect to create an illusion of immortality must inevitably fall victim to time and decay. When Stanton sees a Roman tower shattered by lightning, he finds this moral:

> Singular contrast! The relics of art for ever decaying, --the productions of nature for ever renewed.--(Alas! for what purpose are they renewed, better than to mock at the perishable monuments which men try in vain to rival them by). The pyramids themselves must perish, but the grass that grows between their disjointed stones will be renewed from year to year.[13]

This moral points to the futility of striving after permanency through the vanities of civilization and art. Yet even while it denies the individual immortality of any man or any of his works, it offers mankind, as a part of nature, the comfort of the constant renewal of the species. Man should, therefore, concern himself with the readily available pleasures of

nature and its cycles, rather than strive after the illusion of immortality offered by the monuments of civilization: its wealth, glory and power.

Nevertheless, if the possibility of a real immortality is presented, does it undermine the value of the life led close to nature and its cycles, or is this simple life inherently "good" and preferable to immortality and the apparently parallel possibility of infinite wealth and knowledge? For the ordinary man the natural life may be satisfying, but for the exceptional man, a man like Melmoth, the cycle of birth and death seems unnecessarily restrictive and he begins to feel the claustrophobia of time.

In the first part of his novel, Maturin reveals the problem of man doomed to a prison of time, and this contributes to a sense of claustrophobia that pervades Melmoth the Wanderer. Against the oppressiveness of time, Melmoth rebels, but before fully exploring Melmoth's struggle, Maturin makes a careful investigation of the nature of time, especially in the "Spaniard's Tale" and the "Tale of the Indians." His first step is to discover the nature of the enemy.

For his analysis of time, Maturin chose the most suitable literary genre available to him. The Gothic novel, as Devendra P. Varma explains, lends itself to the opening up of time:

> We discover our larger life in dreams, and the Gothic novel lifts us from the narrow rut and enables us to join the unspaced firmament; it adds eternity to our trivial hours; and gives a sense of infinity to our finite existence. In short, it evokes in us the same feelings that Gothic cathedrals evoked in medieval man.[14]

Within the Gothic romance an author may utilize the conventional realism of the novel, but with the further liberty of including the world of myth and the supernatural. Maturin makes his first investigations within

the bounds of a dark realism.

A novel referred to in Melmoth the Wanderer that has an obvious concern with time is Sterne's Tristram Shandy. Sterne is also in revolt against time.

> What interests Sterne much more than chronological dating . . . is the discrepancy between duration in terms of chronological and psychological time. His main interest lies in the states of mind and the character of the protagonists rather than in their actions, in what they are and think and feel, not so much in what they do. The true duration therefore is subjective, measured by values, not the clock; it consequently varies in length with each individual, having regard to the circumstances and frame of mind in which he happens to be.[15]

Both Sterne and Maturin experiment with the conflict between chronological time and duration, or psychological time, but for Maturin the issue is a bitter one that poses a real threat to the minds of his characters. Maturin, one can easily imagine, would take in deadly earnest Walter Shandy's outburst against the threat of clock time:

> --'Tis owing to this,' replied my father, that in our computations of time, we are so used to minutes, hours, weeks, and months,--and of clocks (I wish there was not a clock in the kingdom) to measure out their portions to us, and to those who belong to us,--that 'twill be well, if in time to come, the succession of our ideas be of any use or service to us at all.[16]

Shandy seems to have mistaken the symptom for the disease, a mistake not characteristic of Maturin; but Maturin understood the threat that lay at the basis of Shandy's fear, the threat that the world of clock-time would eventually destroy our subjective experience of time, and in so doing, it would restrict our perception of reality and oppress our individuality.

In the scenes in which Alonzo attempts to escape the monastery with the parricide monk, Maturin consciously experiments with time. Measured

against chronological time are the various qualities of psychological time. The scene really begins when the parricide monk pulls Alonzo out of his religious agitation to remind him "rise,--we have no time to lose."[17] Yet time quickly passes in explanation of the plans for escape until: "The clock struck three, its sound reminded me that my hour had expired."[18] The two monks separate, but the pressure of the irresistible movement of chronological time remains, a movement that becomes in turn a threat to existence and a burden to endure. In the beginning of this episode, we are constantly reminded of the passage of time by the tolling of the clock, but in the vaults, where there are no clocks and "Day! a name unknown,"[19] Alonzo adopts the role of the clock, and tries to estimate duration according to his emotions and experiences. Against the passage of chronological time is set the psychological experience of time:

> The day that followed I have no more power of describing, than of analysing a dream to its component parts of sanity, delirium, defeated memory, and triumphant imagination. The sultan in the eastern tale, who plunged his head in a bason of water, and, before he raised it again, passed through adventures the most vicissitudinous and incredible --was a monarch, a slave, a husband, a widower, a father, childless,--in five minutes, never underwent the changes of mind that I did during that memorable day. I was a prisoner,--free,--a happy being, surrounded by smiling infants,--a victim of the Inquisition, writhing amid flames and execrations.[20]

The sultan's escape from the bonds of clock-time suggests the possibility of achieving a kind of immortality. This eastern tale was used in an essay by Joseph Addison to illustrate some aspects of Locke's theory of time, and not only is it probable that this essay influenced Sterne's handling of time in Tristram Shandy,[21] but it does much to illuminate the significance of time in Alonzo's attempted escape.

Throughout the escape, the perception of time varies: at one point

the anxiety of waiting makes time seem slow and tedious; at another point, time seems to pass quickly or almost cease to exist. For example, while anxiously waiting for the old monk with the toothache to leave so that he can begin his escape, Alonzo feels that time is a heavy burden: "--my whole interest for time, and perhaps for eternity, hung on a moment. . . ."[22] Maturin, however, is more interested in the possibility of escaping the tyranny of "moments" and extending the range of physical and mental experience in such a way that they transcend the concern with time. When, despite his fears, Alonzo decides to enter the vaults, he consoles himself with the thought, "This is to last but for a short time," [23] but environment and emotion distort time, and within a few lines, when Alonzo is lost and alone in the vaults, a "short time" becomes a very long time.

> Our wanderings in the passage seemed to be endless. My companion turned to right, to left,--advanced, retreated, paused,--(the pause was dreadful)!--Then advanced again, tried another direction, where the passage was so low that I was obliged to crawl on my hands and knees to follow him, and even in this posture my head struck against the ragged roof. When we had proceeded for a considerable time, (at least so it appeared to me, for minutes are hours in the <u>noctuary</u> of terror,--terror has no <u>diary</u>), this passage became so narrow and so low, that I could proceed no farther, and wondered how my companion could have advanced beyond me.[24]

This experience is reminiscent of Addison's quotation from Malebranche: some creatures may "look upon that space of duration which we call a minute, as an hour, a week, a month, or a whole age."[25] Terror (like knowledge) becomes a way of speeding up the flow of ideas and thereby extending time and life; but at what cost?

Addison's problem of "filling up those empty spaces of life which are so tedious and burthensome to idle people,"[26] is also a concern of Alonzo. Discovering that they must wait twenty-four hours before they

can safely leave the vaults, Alonzo is burdened with the question, "But how were those hours to be passed?"[27] He cannot eat; he cannot sleep; he discovers that

> To inflict a suspension of the action on a being conscious of possessing the powers of action, and burning for their employment,--to forbid all interchange of mutual ideas, or aquirement of new ones to an intellectual being,--to do this, is to invent a torture that might make Phalaris blush for his impotence of cruelty.[28]

After waiting in this state of suspended animation for only an hour, "as I counted hours,"[29] Alonzo can bear the torture no longer and asks the monk to relate the story that he does not really want to hear.

Addison pointed out two ways of lengthening time:

> The hours of a wise man are lengthened by his ideas, as those of a fool are by his passions. The time of the one is long, because he does not know what to do with it; so is that of the other, because he distinguishes every moment of it with useful or amusing thoughts; or, in other words, because the one is always wishing it away, and the other always enjoying it.[30]

In the world of the vaults, Alonzo's hours are lengthened, not because of his ideas, but because his situation forbids "all interchange of mutual ideas or acquirement of new ones."[31] He is caught in an intellectual void that stretches hours out into a "barren country." For the parricide monk, as for the fool, time is lengthened by his passions. The monk is burdened by time because the actual world around him is subservient to the world of passion he carries within himself:

> I wondered how I felt so familiar with this door, this arch, at first.--I did not recollect immediately, so many strange thoughts have crossed my mind every day, that events which would make a life-lasting impression on others, pass like shadows before me, while thoughts appear like substance. <u>Emotions are my events</u>--[32]

There are no empty moments for this monk; each second is filled with memories, thoughts, or dreams that take on a grotesque reality. Even

Alonzo finds the monk's dreams so realistic that they terrify him. In the distorted world of the vaults, where even the day "is to be measured by darkness and suffering, instead of light and enjoyment,"[33] the roles of wise man and fool are reversed. The wise man must wish away time because he is deprived of healthy ideas; the fool takes a demonic delight in the perverted world of passion that stretches out his hours. The climactic irony of the scene is that Alonzo must fill his hours with the monk's stories to pass the time.

Alonzo's whole life in the monastery was like living in a vault. In the monastery, "they deprive of the power of thinking,"[34] and of the power of feeling emotion:

> Day followed day for many a month, of which I have no recollections, nor wish to have any. I must have experienced many emotions, but they all subsided like the waves of the sea under the darkness of a midnight sky,--their fluctuation continues, but there is no light to mark their motion, or trace when they rise and fall.[35]

In this situation his life lacks the essence of human existence and becomes purely mechanical:

> No automaton, constructed on the most exquisite principles of mechanism, and obeying those principles with a punctuality almost miraculous, could leave the artist less room for complaint or disappointment, than I did the Superior and community.[36]

The vault is only an extension of the monastery and the monastery is only a microcosm of the total human social condition. In this world of darkness the perception of time may alter, but always for the worse. In the single day spent in the darkness of the vaults, Alonzo lives through the emotions of being suffocated in an Egyptian pyramid, witnessing a parricide, and observing the sufferings, degradation, and murder of two lovers. In a sense, therefore, life can be extended by emotion, but in

this crippled world the only emotions one can ordinarily feel are terror and horror. Any progression of ideas is necessarily linked to these emotions. The alternative of rejecting thought and emotion and trying to shorten one's existence is for a man of intelligence unbearable: each moment stretches out to tedious hours.

Within the corrupted world of monasteries, inquisition cells, and vaults, the only relief is insanity. When first cast into a dungeon, Alonzo is reduced to counting away minutes, and he says, "a doubt always occurred to me, that I <u>was counting them faster than the clock</u>."[37] In other words, his existence is so meaningless and painful that he tries to speed up time to waste away his life. Like Melmoth, Alonzo would like to escape into death, but, that pass being closed to him by religion, he tries to conform to a mechanical existence, mindless but also free of painful emotions.

Duration, the progression of ideas or the psychological perception of time, offers the possibility of at least stretching a man's limited allotment of hours. There are two ways of stretching hours. The first way, Addison attributes to the "fool," whose time is long because it is empty, but for Maturin this empty time is the "intellectual" man's time, drawn out to tedious monotony because his environment prevents the exercise of will and exchange of ideas (even Melmoth suffers such limitations). The second way, Addison attributes to the "wise man," who "distinguishes every moment of it with useful or amusing thoughts," but for Maturin this is the "guilty" man's time, drawn out by an unceasing flow of agonizing memories and passions that haunt him even in sleep. Perhaps in a more hospitable world the psychological perception of time could serve man as a kind of pleasurable link to eternity, but for Maturin the world is full of terror,

oppression, and fear, and duration is only a means to increase and lengthen the anxiety and misery of both fool and wise man.

Another concept of time that served to entertain the speculative curiosity of eighteenth-century thinkers was clock-time. Perhaps the most significant phenomenon that separates Maturin's handling of time from that of writers who wrote before the industrial revolution is the increasing importance of the clock in ordinary daily life. During the industrial revolution, life for most Englishmen became increasingly scheduled and regulated, never before was the clock so much a part of daily life. Judging time by one's experience, or by the sun, had given way to machine time, a time that suited the needs of a world dominated by new machines and machine-like institutions. Clock-time is alienated from nature and the natural needs and cycles of man's life, and it forces those within its influence to conform to its rigid, monotonous, mechanical progression.

There was a period, early in his career, when Maturin could treat the concept of clock-time frivolously. In The Wild Irish Boy he ridicules the Godwinian Miss Percival for her concern at the encroachment of mechanical time into daily domestic life, a fact she interprets as one of the "abuses of the present system." Miss Percival sees clock-time as a political tool by which the system imposes itself upon the private lives of men in order to destroy their independence. Her argument is clearly stated:

> "I don't know to what hours you are accustomed, Ormsby," said Sybilla attempting conversation, "but I conjectured that as a traveller you would not like to be summoned too early." "How often have I told you," said Miss P., "to consider the divisions of time as voluntary and artificial, one of the numerous abuses of the present system. How absurd to conceive an union between the calls of appetite or any other of the animal functions, and the motions of the clock."[38]

This satire on political women was part of Maturin's attack on the new

philosophy when, in 1808, it was still deemed profitable to abuse Godwin and Wollstonecraft. Nevertheless, by the time he came to write Melmoth the Wanderer, he had come to feel many of the barbs of society and had adopted many of the views he ridiculed in Miss Percival twelve years earlier; not the least of these turn-abouts is his acceptance of the significance of clock-time and its relation to "the present system."

Ian Watt points out that Newton and Locke "presented a new analysis of the temporal process; it became a slower, more mechanical sense of duration. . . ."[39] In Melmoth the Wanderer, man is threatened with becoming a slave to mechanical time. In the convent, monks debate bitterly over a matter of "Full five minutes."[40] In the perverted environment of convent life, minutes have more importance than the enjoyment of life. Alonzo admits that during his debate about the need to read the Bible, "the bell ringing, produced its usual effect on us all. My companions assumed a more sanctified air, and I struggled for a more composed one."[41] The bell and the clock check reason and emotion, impose material necessity on the mind, re-assert hypocrisy, and appeal to habit.

The threat of human subservience to mechanical time has another expression in Melmoth the Wanderer. Early in the novel, young John Melmoth is impressed by a clock sounding in deep night:

> He sunk for a few moments into a fit of gloomy abstraction, till the sound of the clock striking twelve made him start, --it was the only sound he had heard for some hours, and the sounds produced by inanimate things, while all living beings around are as dead, have at such an hour an effect indescribably awful.[42]

A machine that parodies animation is awful, but Maturin soon introduces a more terrifying idea: humans reduced to mechanism, the clock-man. Ian Donaldson claims that "To think of a human being in terms of a clock is

to be on the threshold of a comic idea."[43] For Maturin, however, to think of a human being as a clock is a tragic idea, and he explores the tragic potential of this grotesque image.

Alonzo attacks the monastic life, which is "artificial and perverted, [monks'] very hearts are sophisticated beyond the hand even of heaven (which they alienate by hypocrisy) to touch."[44] When Alonzo wishes to conform to monastic conduct, he finds no better way than to become like an automaton.[45] The surprising recurrence of this word "automaton" (to most of us a particularly twentieth-century word) reflects Maturin's precocious fear that society has the ability to dehumanize people. A distinguishing aspect of Melmoth the Wanderer is its claustrophobic fear of systems: ideological, personal, and institutional. Within the novel, the clock becomes a symbol of such systems and the automaton, the clock-man, becomes their product. Maturin isolates at least three tools systems use to reduce humans to machines: fear, habit, and ideology.

"The basis of all ecclesiastical power rests upon fear,"[46] writes Juan to Alonzo, and Alonzo soon finds out for himself that "fear is very debasing."[47] The parricide monk taunts him for dreaming that

> Two boys, one the fool of fear, and the other of temerity, were fit antagonists for that stupendous system, whose roots are in the bowels of the earth, and whose head is among the stars,--you escape from a convent! you defy a power that has defied sovereigns! A power whose influence is unlimited, indefinable, and unknown, even to those who exercise it, as there are mansions so vast, that their inmates, to their last hour, have never visited all the apartments;--a power whose operation is like its motto,--one and indivisible. The soul of the Vatican breathes in the humblest convent in Spain,--and you, an insect perched on a wheel of this vast machine, imagined you were able to arrest its progress, while its rotation was hurrying on to crush you to atoms.[48]

The power of systems, like a huge self-winding clock, forces all within

its sphere (and for this paranoid monk that means everything) to conform to its mechanical motions or be crushed.

Not just Alonzo, but all the monks are victims of this power. An old and dying monk confesses:

> --I am a clock that has struck the same minutes and hours for sixty years. Is it not time for the machine to long for its winding up? The monotony of my existence would make a transition, even to pain desirable. I am weary and would change--that is all. . . . The moment life is put beyond the reach of your will, and placed under the influence of mechanical operations, it becomes, to thinking beings, a torment insupportable.[49]

Alonzo is willing to fight to preserve his will against the threat of this system, but he recognizes that the surrender of one's will to a greater power is often a hard temptation.

> After reading these lines, I appeared to myself like a piece of mechanism wound up to perform certain functions, in which its co-operation was irrestible. The precipitate vigour of Juan's movements seemed to impel mine without my own concurrence; and as the shortness of the time left me no opportunity for deliberation, it left me also none for choice. I was a clock whose hands were pushed forward, and I struck the hours I was impelled to strike. When a powerful agency is thus exercised on us,--when another undertakes to think, feel, and act for us, we are delighted to transfer to him, not only our physical, but our moral responsibility.[50]

Alonzo's temptation to surrender his will, in order to avoid moral and intellectual responsibility, exposes an important part of the appeal of ideological and totalitarian "systems."

Although the main system of power in Melmoth the Wanderer is the Catholic Church, Maturin makes it perfectly clear that all systems deprive men of will. Elinor's puritan aunt, a member of the "system of Calvin,"[51] is as debased as any Catholic monk.

> She rose at a fixed hour,--at a fixed hour she prayed, --at a fixed hour she received the godly friends who

> visited her, and whose existence was as monotonous and apathetic as her own,--at a fixed hour she dined,--and at a fixed hour she prayed again, and then retired,--yet she prayed without unction, and fed without appetite, and retired to rest without the least inclination to sleep. Her life was mere mechanism, but the machine was so well wound up, that it appeared to have some quiet consciousness and sullen satisfaction in its movement.[52]

This description achieves an ironic reversal of those sounds made by inanimate things in the night that so disturbed John Melmoth: here is a woman so much like a clock that "it" only "appeared" to be conscious of "its movements."

The life of a monk or a puritan may be stifling and mechanical, but the life Immalee is expected to lead in civilization is not less restricted. Her mother informs her:

> Your duties as a child are easily understood--they are merely perfect obedience, profound submission, and unbroken silence, except when you are addressed by me, your brother, or Father Jose.[53]

In this broader, equally artificial society, Maturin again isolates the source of perversion: "it is the system, not the individual, we must blame."[54] Despite the apparent benefits of civilized life, Immalee compares herself to her mother's birds:

> would they not rather rest in the mossy trunk of a doddered oak, and drink of whatever stream they met, and be at liberty, at all the risk of a poorer food and fouler drink--would they not rather do anything than break their bills against gilded wires?[55]

Immalee, like the old monk, is weary and would change. The tragic dilemma is that only Melmoth can free her, and at a price he does not really want to receive. Nevertheless, the dramatic tension is maintained because of uncertainty as to which is the greater evil: the submissive life of an automaton, or an eternity of torment.

The sacrifice of the individual will to a greater system is a problem

that expands from monastery, to ideology, to civilized life in Spain. That Maturin felt similar oppression in his own world is apparent from his Preface:

> I cannot appear again before the public in so unseemly a character as that of a writer of romances, without regretting the necessity that compels me to it. Did my profession furnish me with the means of subsistence, I should hold myself culpable indeed in having recourse to any other, but--am I allowed the choice?[56]

Maturin's environment denied him will and forced him to conform to necessities that threatened to restrict his imagination and reduce him to the level of a hack writer, a creature of habit.

The clock, the perfect representative of pure mathematical time, becomes a symbol of the systematic life whose needs it serves. Clock-time helps erode the human will, rob man of his identity, and reduce him to a cog in a giant machine-like system that rolls on, insensitive to the destruction it causes in terms of human hearts and lives. Maturin's disgust at habit and mechanical routine is shared by later social critics, such as John Ruskin:

> You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves.[57]

The clock represents a materialistic civilization that has lost all touch with nature and the natural needs of the human heart. Stanton's initial vision of time, in alliance with nature, destroying the monuments of men is replaced by a new vision: clock-time, in alliance with systems, destroying nature and oppressing humanity. The real antagonist of <u>Melmoth the Wanderer</u>

is the clock, mechanical time in a systematized world, a demon that haunts everyone in the novel, including Melmoth. The importance of escaping time, or perhaps even destroying it and replacing it with some more sympathetic concept, becomes increasingly imperative as Melmoth the Wanderer develops.

For Maturin there are two realms: the realm of time and the realm of eternity.[58] Alonzo's complaints against monasticism include its abuse of both these realms:

> The genius of monasticism seemed to wield a two-edged sword, and to lift it between and against time and eternity. The blade bore a two-fold inscription--on the side next the world was written the word "suffer," --on that opposed to eternity, "despair."[59]

This sword may remind one of Genesis 3:24, "So he drove out man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Maturin is aware that the problem is more than monastic, it is essentially the human condition since the fall, and so with Melmoth he makes the monastic experience of time "universal." Melmoth struggles to transcend the obstacles that prevent time from reuniting itself with eternity. Rebelling against the limitations of time, Melmoth tries to buy eternity with his soul, but finds that what he buys is only endless time. There are two concepts of eternity and they are often confused. Most often eternity is thought of as endless time, but as C.S. Lewis says, "Eternity is the actual and timeless fruition of illimitable life. Time, even endless time, is only an image, almost a parody of that plentitude."[60] Melmoth misunderstood eternity: he supposed extended life would make him equal to gods, but it only lengthened his sentence as a prisoner of time. Despite his claim,

"I am independent of time and place,"[61] he is not. Even his mock death and resurrection are tied to the clock:

> He acknowledged my forbearance by a ghastly smile which I understood too well, and pointed to a clock that stood at the foot of his bed. "Observe," said he, "the hour-hand is on eleven, and I am now sane, clear of speech, and apparently healthful--tarry but an hour, and you yourself will behold me dead!"[62]

At this point, Melmoth believes he is about to become eternal, but his confidence later fades when he discovers himself a slave to time. What seemed an obvious road to eternity, endless life, proves an illusion; the other possible road, death, is barred to him.

To continue the development of his theme, Maturin consciously uses mythology. Maturin had earlier recognized "the magic threshold of Gothic romance"[63] with its ability to incorporate mythology, which as "a medium of excitement or impression . . . was certainly the most powerful that could be used by one human being on another."[64] Feeling the challenge of handling mythology, he approaches it cautiously. The first third of the novel only hints at the mystical and supernatural. The first scenes in Ireland and dealing with Alonzo's monastic experiences are characterized by grotesque realism, without any firm commitment to the world of myth. Even the story of Stanton is so mutilated that no confidence can be put in its mystery. Not until after Alonzo's escape from the vaults, when Maturin has established the burden of time and exhausted his store of Lockean concepts, does the novel take a definite turn into the world of myth. Until this point, even Alonzo's experience has conformed to a more "Radcliffian" handling of the supernatural, which is a rationalistic parody of myth. The mysteries of the dried well and withered tree, and of

the devils glowing on his cell wall are all carefully explained. Even the voice that haunts him in his cell, although not explained, is obviously a monastic ploy, rather than a visitation by a tempter, and it is definitely not in the style of Melmoth.

In the prison of the Inquisition Alonzo finally comes face to face with Melmoth, and the exploration of the world of myth begins. Maturin accomplishes the transition into this new world by suggesting Melmoth as an image of time. In one of the most striking images of the novel, Melmoth is identified amidst the flames of the Inquisition:

> The night was intensely dark, but so strong was the light of the conflagration, that I could see the spire blazing, from the reflected lustre, like a meteor. The hands of the clock were as visible as if a torch was held before them; and this calm and silent progress of time, amid the tumultuous confusion of midnight horrors--this scene of the physical and mental world in an agony of fruitless and incessant motion, might have suggested a profound and singular image, had not my whole attention been rivetted to a human figure placed on a pinnacle of the spire, and surveying the scene in perfect tranquility. It was a figure not to be mistaken--it was the figure of him who had visited me in the cells of the Inquisition.[65]

This description links the clock and Melmoth: standing above the "tumultuous confusion," the "calm and silent progress of time" is matched by Melmoth's "perfect tranquility." Above the Inquisition flames, Melmoth occupies a position that dominates all below him: the clock, the spire, and the "blazing and erratic world."[66] When Alonzo tries to attract the attention of the guards, they "have no time" because time has them.

When Alonzo escapes the flaming Inquisition, he retreats to the underworld domain of Adonijah. Adonijah has purposely tied his life to the destiny of Melmoth and his aged existence has seemed to remove him from the domination of time. Adonijah's underground world is "a place

not of life but of protracted death-in-life. Here the dead seem the proper inhabitants. . . ."[67] The four skeletons are the "real and rightful tenants of the singular apartment."[68] For Alonzo, at least, this seems to be an apartment of Death, and Melmoth has provided the apartment with its human bones, like Time, who is a "procurer for Death whom he provides with victims."[69] Maturin may be trying to suggest the mythical union of Time and Death. The destructive aspects of Melmoth are apparent enough, and when he allows his own daughter to die in the cells of the Inquisition, we may be reminded of the many visions of Cronos eating his children.

Less obvious is the way Melmoth conforms to the idea of time as "a Revealer,"[70] an idea that develops when he meets Immalee in the gardens of her island paradise. Even before the "Tale of the Indians," nature and the garden served as a retreat from the vicissitudes of existence:

> The garden, with its calm moonlight beauty, its innocence of heaven, its theology of the stars, was at once a reproach and a consolation to me. I tried to reflect, to feel,--both efforts failed; and perhaps it is in this silence of the soul, this suspension of all the clamorous voices of the passions, that we are most ready to hear the voice of God.[71]

The garden is a place of calm, at night dominated by the eternal stars that make Alonzo feel close to God. This place of "suspension" removes those senses that serve our awareness of time; Alonzo can neither "reflect" nor "feel." Immalee exists in a similar state of suspension before the arrival of Melmoth on her island: she has not learned to "think" and has no one to "feel" towards. When Melmoth comes to the island he brings an awareness of time to a region hitherto unaware of it:

> He repayed her amply, however, by the rich, varied, and copious stores of a mind, furnished with matter apparently beyond the power of human experience to have collected, confined, as it is, within the limits of threescore years

> and ten. But this never struck Immalee; she took "no note of time;" and the tale of yesterday, or the record of past centuries, were synchronized in a mind to which facts and dates were alike unknown and which was alike unacquainted with the graduating shades of manner, and the linked progress of events.[72]

Although Immalee took "no note of time," she quickly learns to take note of it. Soon the absence of Melmoth makes the passage of time tedious. The knowledge brought by Melmoth introduces her to the inevitable boundaries of time: birth and death. It also exposes the inevitable character of time: suffering. Immalee's conception of her island, her conception of life, is exposed as an illusion by Melmoth. She retreats to the most desolate part of her island and contemplates the ocean, "the incessant recurrence of whose very sound seems intended to remind us of grief and of eternity. The ocean's restless monotony of repetition, corresponds with the beating of a heart which asks its destiny from the phenomena of nature, and feels the answer is--'Misery.'"[73] The movement of the ocean is like the motion of life in time, and Immalee, like Faust, is prepared to plunge "headlong into time's racing surge."[74]

Immalee's fall from Paradise to the world of Experience opens the mythical themes, "Truth rescued by Time, Truth unveiled by Time, and Innocence justified after persecution. . . ."[75] That Immalee is Innocence is self-apparent, and she declares, "I am truth."[76] In the civilized world, Immalee is blinded by falsity and artificiality. Only with the assistance of Melmoth, who brings the awareness of time to Immalee and who in the "Tale of the Spaniard" is associated with time, can she see through the perversions of civilization. The destiny of Melmoth has given him the opportunity to observe and to discover its falsity. He shows Immalee the corruption of organized religion. He guides her out of the decadent

monotony of artificial society, for "The harmony of civilized society, of which she was at once weary and proud, was discord to his ear. He had examined all the strings that formed this curious but ill-constructed instrument, and found them all false."[77] Melmoth lifts the blindfold of falsity from Immalee's eyes, but only she can see the truth. Melmoth can only distinguish what is false.

Maturin toys with Melmoth as an image of time, but he does not attempt to sustain this connection. In the final analysis, Melmoth is not Time. Although we have been led to see Melmoth as an image of time in a number of scenes, he is really only another slave to time. This duality is consistent with his divided character which often allows him to be mistaken for the devil, while at other times he is Satan's victim. Melmoth's boasted independence from time is a lie to us and to himself. As for all men, his hour of judgement is approaching, and this suppressed knowledge may account for much of his suffering. Ironically, Melmoth helps Immalee escape from a similar illusion. On her island she is emotionally and intellectually detached from time, and this leads her to believe that she is physically free from time:

> "Oh yes!" answered Immalee, "he made many things more beautiful. The rose is redder than I am--the palm-tree is taller than I am--and the wave is bluer than I am; --but they all change, and I never change."[78]

Her love for Melmoth teaches her to reject this illusion. Similarly, Alonzo describes Melmoth saying, "I am changed, but he is the same--time seems to have forborne to touch him from terror."[79] Nevertheless, Melmoth is not unchangeable, only temporarily suspended in time. He is never intellectually nor emotionally free of time. As in "The Wanderer's Dream," Melmoth is suspended by the hand of time over the misery of hell, while he waits for the clock of eternity to tick out his 150 years.

Melmoth's experience reveals that even if man can become immortal, he will not necessarily become eternal. Eternity transcends all concern with time and place. Can man, even mortal man, somehow aspire to this state of awareness, or "non-awareness"? Although his initial examination of duration proved futile, Maturin turns again to examine the influence of love on the psychological perception of time; perhaps the poet is right and "Love's not Time's fool."[80]

Forever separated from the naive timelessness of her island, revolted by the monotony of civilized Spain, Immalee, too, struggles with the restrictions of time. In Spain, she is a victim lost in time and space, caught between two worlds:

> Her feverish and dreamy existence, composed of wild and irreconcileable contrasts between the forms of the present, and the visions of the past,--the difference between all that she felt within, and all that she saw around her,--between the impassioned life of recollection, and the monotonous one of reality,--was becoming too much for a heart bursting with undirected sensibilities, and a head giddy from vicissitudes that would have deeply tried much firmer faculties.[81]

She cannot accept her present world, but knows "I cannot be what I was."[82] Immalee has accepted thought as a god, eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and deliberately entered into the world of the fallen. Like Milton's Adam, who ate of the apple because he loved Eve and chose to share her guilt, Immalee chooses sin out of her affection for Melmoth and her love for humanity. In the civilized world, she recognizes that she has the potential for change, either to a better or a worse identity, but she, too late, recognizes that those around her are already dead and lost because they lack awareness and feeling:

> Time, constraint, and dullness, may do much for me,
> but what time could ever operate such a change on them!

> It would be like looking for the pearls at the bottom of the stagnant ponds which art has dug in their gardens.[83]

Immalee grasps at what by intuition she has recognized as her one hope for freedom and life, the unifying and transcending principle of love:

> Mother divine! are not burning hearts, then, worthiest of thee?--and does not the love of nature assimilate itself to the love of God! True, we may love without religion, but can we be religious without love?[84]

Surrounded by a stagnant civilization filled with the living-dead, the automatons, Immalee places her faith in human emotion and sees love as a possible liberating force, at least from the restrictive burden of clock-time and all that it represents.

The idea that love removes people from the conventional restrictions of time was first offered Immalee by Melmoth:

> To love, beautiful Isidora, is to live in a world of the heart's own creation--all whose forms and colours are as brilliant as they are deceptive and unreal. To those who love there is neither day or night, summer or winter, society or solitude. They have but two eras in their delicious but visionary existence,--and those are thus marked in the heart's calendar--presence-absence. These are the substitutes for all the distinctions of nature and society.[85]

The problem, of course, is the new time scheme: presence-absence. Immalee, in true neoplatonic fashion, tries to overcome this problem by not living with Melmoth but rather with his image. She recreates Melmoth in her mind in an attempt to escape the pendulum's swing to absence:

> Alone--that is a word to which those who love annex but one idea,--that of being in society with one who is their all. She wished in this (to her) terrible emergency, to ask counsel of him whose image was ever present to her, and whose voice she heard with the mind's ear distinctly even in absence.[86]

Finally, Immalee's attempt to replace the real Melmoth with her image of him proves unsuccessful. She tells Melmoth that although he takes her to

paradise in her dreams, "the moment the paradise isle appears, you dis-
appear. . . ."[87] Even her image of Melmoth is barred from eternal paradise, and without him it is no longer a paradise for Immalee.

Despite the failure of her "ideal" love, Immalee maintains her confidence in love. In its first state love "is like man before the fall, inhaling the odors of paradise, and enjoying the communion of the Deity. . . ."[88] In the fallen and sterile world of Spain, love is no longer characterized by bliss, but by misery. Like Juliet who predicts, "My grave is like to be my wedding-bed,"[89] Immalee sees her union with Melmoth as inevitably bound up with death: "I will first be the bride of the grave."[90] Rather than succumb to despair, she declares "I have loved once--and for ever!" and she says this with a conviction that denies and perhaps even transcends the corrupting influence of time.[91] Her ability to love reveals another path to eternity: she is "sustained . . . perhaps by that mysterious conviction impressed on the hearts of those who love profoundly--that passion must always be unified with suffering";[92] and she discovers that "grief and pain are very eloquent interpreters between us and eternity. . . ."[93] When her illusion of blissful love with an image of Melmoth on a paradise island fails her, and she is forced to choose between living in an imaginary but lonely paradise, or in the real world with all its misery but with the opportunity to experience the fullness of the joy and misery of her love for Melmoth, Immalee accepts reality and chooses to live defiantly within the corrupted world of time.

Immalee, though bound to a sterile world, out of her love offers this world one remaining defense against time: "breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence."[94] Enough of nature remains in her that she is able to offer the hope of birth and renewal. Even Melmoth finds hope in his new

daughter:

> He said to himself--it is mine--the fruit of affection --the first-born of the heart and of nature--mine-- mine,--and whatever becomes of me, there shall yet be a human being on earth who traces me in its external form, and who will be taught to pray for its father, even when its prayer falls parched and hissing on the fires that burn forever, like a wandering drop of dew on the burning sands of the desert![95]

The Inquisition, the ultimate defender of a dark world of sterile mechanism, extinguishes this one ray of nature and hope in the world, and with it goes Melmoth's last weapon against time.

Although all hope of achieving eternity in life is lost, Immalee remains faithful both in her love for Melmoth and her duty to God. She accepts Melmoth for what he is, still loves him, and yet resists his temptation. She believes her faith assures her a "triumphant grave" and a space in eternal heaven:

> while I live, I must love my destroyer! Alas! in being the enemy of mankind, was not his hostility to me inevitable and fatal? In rejecting his last terrible temptation-- in resigning him to his destiny, and preferring submission to my own, I feel my triumph complete, and my salvation assured.[96]

Immalee has taken the biblical exhortation to love her enemy to its most extreme manifestation. She believes that her love assures her salvation, and that the inspiration of her love may even have opened a possibility for Melmoth's salvation. If Immalee's assumption that "pain and grief are very eloquent interpreters between us and eternity" is valid, then few deserve eternity as much as Melmoth, for his misery is constant and threatens to be endless.

The ultimate obstacle to Melmoth's salvation is his inability to die. Yet in the last pages of the novel, we find him preparing for death. We

never know for certain that he dies, perhaps this is only part of some miserable cycle that never ends, but the Bible says, "Because to every purpose there is a time and judgement, therefore the misery of man is great upon him" (Ecclesiastes 8:6), and nowhere is there written an exception for Melmoth. Much of Melmoth's terrible agony may stem from a suspicion that he has been cheated in his transaction with the devil, as was Lewis' Ambrosio, and has not really escaped judgement. Assuming the possibility that Melmoth will die and be judged, then the possibility of his "eternal" salvation is reopened, and perhaps his love for Immalee may suggest that he is not entirely unworthy. If Melmoth truly loves Immalee, and although we can never be certain of this there is considerable evidence that he does, then we cannot forget Maturin's declaration:

> love is of a very ennobling character,--that, however the stream may be troubled by many things, the source at least is pure,--and that the heart capable of feeling it intensely, proves it possesses an energy that may one day be rewarded by a brighter object, and a holier flame, than earth ever afforded, or nature ever could kindle.[97]

Few could deny that Melmoth has tremendous energy, and, although it is often denied, he is obviously capable of intense feeling, perhaps even love. Strangely enough, within the context of the novel, the reader's acceptance of the possibility of Melmoth's salvation finally rests on his perception of which concept of time rules the universe: natural time, based on life and its cycles, or mechanical time. The triumph of systems of power on earth and of their ally, mechanical time, in the universe suggests an authoritarian, legalistic God in heaven, but Immalee's faith in nature and human emotion, and her denial of mechanical time suggest that, for her, God is understanding, just and merciful.

A strictly, exclusively materialistic concept of time threatens to

reduce the entire universe to a dial-plate. In a careless overgeneralization of eighteenth-century religious attitudes, Varma may have stumbled across one of the central fears of Maturin: "The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have been recognized as, in all essentials, dominated by a strict concept of reason, that banished the emotional aura of religion and reduced the Deity to a clockwork Prime Mover of the Universe."[98] This analogy is reminiscent of the "Wanderer's Dream" towards the end of Melmoth the Wanderer:

> He stood, in his dream, tottering on a crag midway down the precipice--he looked upward, but the upper air (for there was no heaven) showed only blackness unshadowed and impenetrable--but, blacker than that blackness, he could distinguish a gigantic outstretched arm, that held him as in sport on the ridge of that infernal precipice, while another, that seemed in its motions to hold fearful and invisible conjunction with the arm that grasped him, as if both belonged to some being too vast and horrible even for the imagery of a dream to shape, pointed upwards to a dial-plate fixed on the top of that precipice, and which the flashes of that ocean of fire made fearfully conspicuous. He saw the mysterious single hand revolve--he saw it reach the appointed period of 150 years--(for in this mystic plate centuries were marked, not hours)--he shrieked in his dream, and, with that strong impulse often felt in sleep, burst from the arm that held him, to arrest the motion of the hand.[99]

In this vision of Melmoth's punishment, his tormenter is primarily impersonal although there is a slight suggestion of sadism as it "held him as in sport." To whom do these giant arms belong, or to what? There is little to distinguish them as the arms of god or devil; they are only arms. The arms are disembodied like the "hands" of a clock: the one pointing upwards, the other outstretched holding Melmoth. These arms, which at first appear to be the enemy, are really directly dependent on the real monster of the scene, the "clock of eternity." The black arms are patiently

waiting for the single hand of the clock to run its mechanical course. No room remains for justice or mercy; all is dependent on the passage of clock-time. Melmoth's last desperate glance is "fixed on the clock of eternity," which is the closest he can come to seeing the face of God; perhaps for Melmoth it is the face of God, a God who is an automaton whose hollow voice echoes the cryptic doom, "Room for the soul of the Wanderer!"

Against this nightmarish vision of the universe, some hope remains. First, Alonzo still lives; he has at least managed to escape the crushing world of the Inquisition. He appears to maintain enough will to sustain his struggle for a more natural existence where time is measured, as he once nostalgically described it, with "its delicious diary of rising and setting suns,--of the dews of dawn and of twilight,--of the glow of morning and the shades of the evening."[100] His is a vision less ambitious than Melmoth's grasp at eternity, but more natural and plausible. Secondly, though Immalee's death is no triumph over time, neither is it a surrender to mechanical time. By the example of her determination to love, she may also have offered a way, if not to escape time, at least to make time more hopeful and suitable to human nature. Finally, Melmoth is left to face time alone, but he may have achieved a new degree of awareness, for he seems resigned to his fate. Admitting "the hour then is come,"[101] he seems to reaffirm his humanity by accepting the natural cycle of birth and death.

Only in the last chapters of the novel does the reader directly confront Melmoth. Whatever our idea of Melmoth is before these chapters, it is based on information obtained at second hand, often through several narrators, and this may well serve to exaggerate his demonic nature. In these last scenes Melmoth appears much less demonic. There is pathos in his declar-

ation, "Your ancestor has come home . . . his wanderings are over!"[102] He accepts the stories of his past only conditionally, saying, "If I have put forth my hand, and eaten of the fruit of the interdicted tree, am I not driven from the presence of God and the region of paradise, and sent to wander amid worlds of barrenness and curse for ever and ever?"[103] In these lines he identifies his destiny with the fate of man. Melmoth becomes a representative of fallen man doomed to wander in suffering during his time on earth. His cry "would I had never been born!"[104] echoes Job, "Let the day perish wherein I was born. . . (Job 2:3). No longer a demon, Melmoth, who is a "terror" but is "not evil," has the same prospects of divine mercy as any other man. In the end, the possibility of Melmoth's salvation is left to the reader's concept of God: is He a merciful father, or is He a clock of eternity?

In the final analysis, the existence of Melmoth the Wanderer reveals that the restrictions of time and space are part of human nature. Even while his imagination grasps at the concepts of infinity and eternity, man's whole world is restricted by time and space. In order to escape these limitations a man must be prepared to deny his own nature, for as Werther says, "My friend! . . . a man is a man; and whatever be the extent of his reasoning powers, they are of little avail when passion rages within, and he feels himself confined by the narrow limits of human nature."[105] Melmoth's "pride and intellectual glorying!" make him willing to compromise his human nature by accepting "unutterable" conditions:

> The power of the intellectual vessel was too great for the narrow seas where it was coasting--it longed to set out on a voyage of discovery--in other words, Melmoth attached himself to those impostors, or worse, who promised him the knowledge and the power of the future world--on conditions that are unutterable.[106]

Though Melmoth appears to escape the ordinary limitations of his body in space and time, he is, nevertheless, still restricted by his "place of self," because, as Maturin points out, we "carry our own hearts with us wherever we go," and we can be sure that "an innate and eroding ulcer must be our companion " everywhere.[107] Not until it is too late does Melmoth learn the lesson of Milton's Comus:

> He that has light within his own cleer brest
> May sit i'th center, and enjoy bright day,
> But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts
> Benighted walks under the mid-day Sun;
> Himself is his own dungeon.[108]

Melmoth becomes independent of the ordinary limitations of time and space, or at least appears to, but he can never escape the guilt by which he purchased this condition, nor can he accept his separation from the rest of his race. His "human nature" haunts him and instead of really becoming free from his "self," he becomes divided against himself; he becomes both a Prospero and a Caliban, both a Frankenstein and his monster.

Maturin never condemns Melmoth for his "crimes." Certainly he believes that "None but crimeless and unimpassioned minds ever truly enjoyed earth, ocean, and heaven. At our first transgression, nature expels us, as it did our first parents, from her paradise for ever." But this statement includes most of humanity, not just Melmoth. Man may never be able to return to paradise, which is a place before thought, and even Immalee prefers thought to the ignorant bliss of her paradise island. Outside of paradise, however, man must create his own place, and the one he has built, civilization, is unnatural and destructive. Maturin saw human nature as extremely vulnerable to the corruption of artificial society, and it is, perhaps, this vulnerability that initially led Melmoth to misunderstand and to try to escape his own human nature. On one level, the attempt to escape

"space and time" is a rejection and a refusal to accept the misery of "here and now." Melmoth mistook this "here and now" for a place that could be escaped, but it proved to be a condition that he shared with the rest of humanity, and a condition that he could not escape without totally rejecting the rest of humanity and completely denying his own human nature, something that ultimately he proved unable to do. Nevertheless, the extended bounds of Melmoth's existence allow him a special and broad perspective of the human condition, and he discovers that much of the desire to escape time and space is motivated by the conditions man has created for himself, especially his mechanical, clock-like civilization that corrupts all that it can engulf and robs men of their energy and will. As the novel, Melmoth the Wanderer, continues, it becomes increasingly apparent that to a great extent man's desire to escape from time, space, and his own nature is really, in its essence, a desire to escape modern civilization.

FOOTNOTES

[1] William Morris, "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," in Counter Tradition: A Reader in the Literature of Dissent and Alternatives, ed. by Sheila Delany (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), p. 203.

[2] Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972). pp. 18-19. Also see footnote #9 on page 24 for a lengthy quotation from this segment of Kiely's book.

[3] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther, The New Melusina, Novelle, intro. Victor Lange (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1949), p. 95.

[4] Ibid., p. 75.

[5] Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, in Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, ed. Bredvold, McKillop and Whitney (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1973), p. 1104.

[6] William Godwin, The Adventures of Caleb Williams, or Things as They Are, intro. George Sherburn (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 143.

[7] Charles Robert Maturin, Fatal Revenge: or, The Family of Montorio, a Romance (New York: E. Sargeant, 1808), I, 177.

[8] Charles Robert Maturin, Melmoth the Wanderer, a Tale, ed. W. F. Axton (1820; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 8.

[9] Ibid., p. 410.

[10] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust: part one, trans. Phillip Wayne (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 55.

[11] Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (New York: Harper and Row, 1939), p. 92. Panofsky also discusses the concept of time in the visual arts, especially the work of Nicolas Poussin who had considerable influence on the Gothic movement. Panofsky says that Poussin's "calmer, nearly Cartesian mind, was to create the unsurpassable images of time as a Cosmic Power. . ."(p. 92). Furthermore, "Poussin's renderings of time differ from the classical ones: he does not suppress the destructive power of time in favour of his creativeness, but merges the contrasting functions into a unity"(p. 93).

[12] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 24.

[13] Ibid., p. 23.

[14] Devendra P. Varma, The Gothic Flame (1957; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), p. 212.

[15] A.A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), p. 171.

[16] Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ed. Graham Petrie, intro. Christopher Ricks (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 201.

[17] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 142.

[18] Ibid., p. 145.

[19] Ibid., p. 162.

[20] Ibid., p. 145.

[21] Theodore Baird, "The Time-Scheme of Tristram Shandy and a Source," PMLA, 51 (1963), 803-820.

[22] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 147.

[23] Ibid., p. 148.

[24] Ibid., p. 149.

[25] Joseph Addison, "Spectator #94," in The British Essayists, VI, ed. A. Chalmers (London: G. Woodfall, Printer, 1823), p. 152.

[26] Ibid., p. 150.

[27] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 153.

[28] Ibid. p. 158.

[29] Ibid. p. 158.

[30] Addison, "Spectator #94," p. 154.

[31] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 158.

[32] Ibid., p. 158.

[33] Ibid., p. 156.

[34] Ibid., p. 83.

[35] Ibid., p. 76.

[36] Ibid., p. 76.

37 Maturin, Melmoth, p. 114.

38 Charles Robert Maturin, The Wild Irish Boy (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1808), pp. 146-147.

39 Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957), p. 26.

40 Maturin, Melmoth, p. 78.

41 Ibid., p. 58.

42 Ibid., p. 21.

43 Ian Donaldson, "The Clockwork Novel: Three Notes on an Eighteenth-Century Analogy," RES, 21 (1970), 17. Donaldson traces the idea of mechanical life back to Hobbes, but the analogy between life and mechanisms is at least as old as Job: "My days are swifter than the weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope"(Job, 7:6). The analogy is also used by Shakespeare when Richard II says, while a prisoner in Pembroke Castle:

> I wasted time, and now doth Time waste me:
> For now hath Time made me his numbering clock;
> . . . So sighs, and tears, and groans,
> Show minutes, times, and hours; but my time
> Runs posting on in Bolingbrook's proud joy,
> While I stand fooling here, his Jack-of-the-clock.
> (Richard II, V, v, 42-60).

Richard, like several characters in Melmoth the Wanderer, finds that life when placed beyond his own will is the life of a machine.

44 Maturin, Melmoth, p. 75.

45 Ibid., p. 76.

46 Ibid., p. 91.

47 Ibid., p. 110.

48 Ibid., p. 170.

49 Ibid., p. 50.

50 Ibid., p. 141.

51 Ibid., p. 370.

52 Ibid., p. 363.

53 Ibid., p. 253.

[54] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 258.

[55] Ibid., pp. 263-264.

[56] Ibid., p. 3.

[57] John Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," The Stones of Venice, II, in Vol. X of The Works of John Ruskin, ed. Cook and Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1904), p. 192.

[58] Maturin, Melmoth, pp. 74, 87 and 147.

[59] Ibid., p. 87.

[60] C.S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 86.

[61] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 34.

[62] Ibid., p. 380.

[63] Charles Robert Maturin, "Harrington and Ormond Tales. By Maria Edgeworth. The Novel," The British Review, and London Critical Journal, 10 (Feb. 1818), 47.

[64] Ibid., p. 48.

[65] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 187.

[66] The spire, which contains the clock and is dominated by Melmoth, is compared to "a meteor," an image that is later to be controlled by Melmoth: "When a meteor blazes in your atmosphere . . . think of the spirit condemned to guide the blazing and erratic orb"(Melmoth, p. 410). Also, the image of Melmoth in the flaming clock tower is reminiscent of an Apocalyptic painting discussed by Panofsky depicting Time: "In his left hand he holds a clock, and in his right a fire to 'breene the tyme'" (Iconology, p. 91). Time is sometimes represented as a "vigorous" male who is "both the abstract grandeur of a philosophical principle and the magnificent voracity of a destructive demon. . .(Iconology, p. 81). This complexity and variety of significance would suit the paradoxical mind of Maturin.

[67] Temple Maynard, "'The Mind is its own Place': Garden and Prison in Melmoth the Wanderer" (unpublished paper, S.F.U.), p. 12.

[68] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 201.

[69] Panofsky, Iconology, p. 83.

[70] Ibid., p. 82.

[71] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 90.

[72] Maturin, <u>Melmoth</u>, p. 228.

[73] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 239. Here Maturin describes the ocean with adjectives he associates with time: monotony, incessant recurrence, repetition, beating of heart.

[74] Goethe, <u>Faust</u>, p. 89. This is reminiscent of Immalee's admiration for Melmoth as she watched him "plunge fearless amid the surf"(<u>Melmoth</u>, p. 220).

[75] Panofsky, <u>Iconology</u>, p. 84.

[76] Maturin, <u>Melmoth</u>, p. 267.

[77] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 277.

[78] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 216.

[79] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 381.

[80] Shakespeare, "Sonnet 116," in <u>The Riverside Shakespeare</u>, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), p. 1770.

[81] Maturin, <u>Melmoth</u>, p. 260.

[82] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 261.

[83] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 261.

[84] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 261.

[85] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 278.

[86] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 284. There are also similar references to Melmoth's "image" on p. 271 and p. 272.

[87] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 265.

[88] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 370.

[89] Shakespeare, <u>Romeo and Juliet</u>, <u>Riverside</u>, I, v, 135, p. 1067.

[90] Maturin, <u>Melmoth</u>, p. 286.

[91] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 287.

[92] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 281.

[93] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 389.

[94] Shakespeare, "Sonnet 12," <u>Riverside</u>, p. 1751.

[95] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 389. The destruction of this child is Maturin's most bitter condemnation of society. In his The Albigenses, Maturin tells the story of the noble Sir Palador who, when sent by his king to retrieve a precious object from a flaming castle, returns with "the child of a heretic Albigeois, (who had got, Heaven knows how, into the castle), and whom its parent was about to cast into the flames, when the youth, baptizing it in his blood, whose trace the infant still bore, hastened to offer it to his sovereign, as the most precious relic of the ruins." The Albigenses, a Romance (1824; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 65.

[96] Ibid., p. 404

[97] Ibid., p. 358.

[98] Varma, The Gothic Flame, p. 210.

[99] Maturin, Melmoth., pp. 409-410. In regard to this mechanical deity we might also consider the ascetic old monk, who had "accustomed himself to the exclamation, 'God knoweth all things' whenever the clock struck" (p. 127), and the other monks, who "cross themselves when the clock strikes" (P. 100).

[100] Ibid., p. 114.

[101] Ibid., p. 410.

[102] Ibid., p. 408.

[103] Ibid., p. 408.

[104] Ibid., p. 411.

[105] Goethe, Werther, p. 46.

[106] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 379.

[107] Ibid., p. 367.

[108] John Milton, "A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634 (Comus)," in The Poetical Works of John Milton, ed. Helen Darbishire (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), lines 381-385, p. 468.

CHAPTER THREE

Maturin and Godwin:

The Heart of Anarchism

In one of his earliest poems, "Queen Mab," Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote:

> Power, like a desolating pestilence,
> Pollutes what'er it touches: and obedience,
> Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
> Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
> A mechanized automaton.[1]

For readers of Maturin, this quotation might seem very much like a description of the theme of Melmoth the Wanderer, but, of course, it is rather a poetic description of William Godwin's theories. Godwin and Maturin were roughly contemporary and showed remarkable similarities in some of their ideas and beliefs. Maturin, consciously and unconsciously, borrowed many ideas and incidents from other authors, but perhaps the most important influence on the creation of Melmoth the Wanderer is the work of William Godwin, especially St. Leon. Although Maturin could never afford to admit his debt to Godwin, and probably never consciously understood the extent of that debt himself, the parallels between the works and thought of Maturin and Godwin are many and informative.

Montague Summers has pointed to certain passages in The Wild Irish Boy, in which Godwin's name and opinions are slandered in an embarrassing manner, to show that Maturin was not in the least revolutionary and was instead a staunch anti-Godwinist. First, I should point out that before 1808, when he was writing The Wild Irish Boy, Maturin was a far different man than he was when he wrote Melmoth the Wanderer a decade later. It was only later in 1808 that Maturin's father lost his job through a scandal and thereby plunged his family into relative poverty and even disgrace. Maturin, before

this event, was still a hopeful young clergyman early in a promising career as a writer. The years that followed the publication of The Wild Irish Boy became increasingly hard for Maturin. Like Godwin, he was continually caught in a desperate and losing struggle for financial survival, and he began to feel intellectually alientated. Furthermore, although Maturin, at one time, may have thought of himself as an anti-Godwinist, and even gone so far as to slander Godwin's name, this does not mean that Maturin's fundamental sympathies were necessarily opposed to those of Godwin. Godwin was a notorious figure. He himself said that after 1797, when a political backlash to the French Revolution began in England, his very name became so villified

> that not even a petty novel for boarding-school misses now ventures to aspire to favour, unless it contain some expression of dislike and abhorrence to the new philosophy, and its chief (or shall I say its most voluminous?) English adherent.[2]

Also, it is clear from the Dedication and Preface to The Wild Irish Boy that Maturin was not very satisfied or serious about this novel and appears to have considered it as little more than an exercise. Maturin was certainly not above abusing Godwin's name for the sake of promoting his own reputation, but it is equally possible, considering the climate of hysterical abuse that surrounded the very name of Godwin, that Maturin believed he was an anti-Godwinist even without fully understanding what was really at issue in this position. We might compare Maturin to Coleridge, who once admitted to Godwin that

> Ere I had yet read or seen your works, I, at Southey's recommendation, wrote a sonnet in praise of the author. When I had read them, religious bigotry, the but half-understanding of your principles, and the not half-understanding of my own, combined to render me a warm and boisterous anti-Godwinist.[3]

Maturin read at least Caleb Williams and St. Leon; he implies a familiarity with Political Justice; these facts alone suggest more than a negative interest in Godwin's thought. Considering that Maturin was never much of an analytical thinker, it is conceivable that, even if he never came consciously to accept Godwin's ideas, he absorbed and assimilated them, discovering sympathies that surfaced over a decade after the publication of The Wild Irish Boy when he was writing Melmoth the Wanderer.

In their youths, Maturin and Godwin had similar Calvinist beliefs, enthusiasm for literature and justice, and confidence in humanity. Although their opinions on prominent political and religious controversies were often sharply opposed, they were usually motivated by the same concerns. They continued to share a basic libertinarianism, and the difficulties of their lives only served to make their ideals more similar as they matured and developed their self-understanding. Maturin and Godwin were walking in the same direction along the road that led towards the works and thought of John Ruskin, William Morris and George Orwell.

Although Melmoth the Wanderer may have personal characteristics similar to Faust, Milton's Satan, and other such rebels, he is most closely patterned after Godwin's St. Leon. St. Leon is a novel that has lost a great deal of its popularity, but in the early nineteenth-century Hazlitt declared that "Caleb Williams and St. Leon are two of the most splendid works of the imagination that have appeared in our times."[4] Differences in style and point of view obscure but do not lessen the similarities between Godwin's St. Leon and Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer. St. Leon, who by way of the philosopher's stone frees himself from death, believes that "for me the laws of nature are suspended; the eternal wheels of the universe

roll backwards; I am destined to be triumphant over fate and time."[5] Later, and again like Melmoth, St. Leon discovers his triumph over fate and time to be only superficial and his vaunted immortality to be only a type of living death:

> Man was not born to live alone. He is linked to his brethren by a thousand ties; and when those ties are broken, he ceases from all genuine existence. Their complacence is a food more invigorating than ambrosia; their aversion is a torment worse than that of the damned.[6]

Because of his unique situation, St. Leon both discovers for himself the communal nature of man and yet can evaluate human society from a detached perspective; like Melmoth, who had "examined all the strings" of society and found them all "false," St. Leon is a "worn out veteran, battered with the storms of life, having tried everything and rejected everything, and discarded forever hope and joy."[7] A recognition of the similarities in the personalities of St. Leon and Melmoth, similarities that are often only suggested by Maturin, does much to explain Melmoth's conduct and motivation and to clarify some of the basic assumptions behind Melmoth the Wanderer. There is more in common between these two novels than the circumstances of their central characters. An examination of the works of Godwin and Maturin reveals that they shared a world outlook that is fundamentally the same.

The most obvious difference between Godwin and Maturin, and a point on which Maturin might sincerely attack Godwin, is Godwin's atheism. Godwin, once a Calvinist preacher, became a declared atheist early in his career. The real religious views of Maturin are more difficult to discover. Maturin was, of course, an Anglican minister, but he declared to Scott that he was, at heart, a Calvinist, yet he makes numerous attacks

on the "Calvinist system." Maturin became completely disillusioned with the Anglican church, but in Melmoth the Wanderer he ridicules Calvinist, Catholic, Jew and Atheist alike. Although he suggests a preference for Protestantism, it is difficult to distinguish the operation of any coherent system of theology in the novel. In his Calvinist youth, Godwin had written that "God himself has not a right to be a tyrant."[8] Something very much like this sentiment is suggested when Juan, in Melmoth the Wanderer, recommends his brother to God and then makes the distinction, "not the God of monks and directors, but the God of nature and mercy."[9] Of course, Juan "believes" that God is merciful, but the implication is that if He were an oppressive God, Juan, whose character "always struggled against dictation," would oppose Him.[10] The impression left by a reading of the novel is that Maturin is opposed to all religious hierarchy, ritual, and theological systems, and in this he takes a step towards a kind of religious anarchism.

In Melmoth the Wanderer, Maturin's central theme is the struggle of humanity against systems, or what Godwin calls "positive institutions." Systems, all systems, especially the religious system he was caught up in, Maturin condemned as unnatural and as a threat to humanity. As early as The Wild Irish Boy, Maturin writes:

> The great evil to be dreaded in a religious system, is that debility and dejection which a mind, unnaturally divided from the world and its ordinary exercises, is but too apt to resign itself to--that burden and heat of the day, under which even the most vigorous labourer has sunk, when the freshness of novelty has ceased, and the temptation or reward is still distant.[11]

This is a rather mild rebuke against "the system," but the truth of it became increasingly serious for Maturin as his love of the world, his

gaiety, eccentricity, and wild imagination brought him into disfavour with his church hierarchy and made him feel the bitterness of its oppressive force. In Melmoth the Wanderer, when Alonzo's case is rejected by the secular courts, he observes that

> The advocate on the other side had remarked, "If this succeeds, we shall have all the monks in Spain appealing against their vows." Could a stronger argument have been used in favour of my cause? An impulse so universal must surely originate in nature, justice, and truth.[12]

Alonzo loses his case to a collusion between Church and State; they manipulate law in order to promote their common interests, which oppose humanity's inherent desire for liberty. Against this collusion between institutional powers is an "universal impulse" to anarchy, or what Morris called "an instinct for freedom."[13] This impulse inspires Melmoth the Wanderer and aligns it with the cause of "nature, justice, and truth." For Godwin, too, truth, justice and nature were all victims of positive institutions, and both Godwin and Maturin are what Alex Comfort has defined as "responsible" writers who refuse to "abandon the basic conception of humanness for any extraneous object whatsoever--victory, democracy, the nation, the party, the civil list, or the libraries."[14]

Maturin may appear at times to be merely a bigoted anti-Catholic. The fact is that Maturin was fundamentally opposed to all "organized religions," but the Catholic system was the one most safe to attack. Maturin did not hate Catholics. Many sympathetic characters in his novels are Catholics, and when he owned a boarding school he showed concern for the one pupil who showed promise but who was a Catholic and, as Maturin recognized, an automatic victim of prejudice.[15] Maturin published several sermons attacking the Catholic Church, and no doubt he

was sincere in many theological points, but in general he lacked enthusiasm for this type of endeavour and tells Scott, rather half-heartedly, that "I have nothing by me in a finished state, except my sermons--I know they are a drug, but the divinity will please the Calvinist readers, and the novelty of sermons by the author of a Romance will perhaps procure more."[16] In part his sermons are an attempt to bolster his image as an Anglican priest and in part they are a means of supporting his family, and these facts cloud any sincerity that remains. Maturin may be attacked for lack of courage, perhaps even for hypocrisy, but not for religious bigotry.

Maturin's sermons were a means to promote his "interest" in the Church, an occupation that he identifies as the main preoccupation of Church bureaucracy. One of the characters in Melmoth the Wanderer gives an exaggerated and cynical, but essentially true picture of such conduct:

> do you think it was for the sake of listening to sermons that the preachers did not believe,--and prayers that the lips that uttered them yawned at in the listlessness of their infidelity,--and penances that might be hired out to a lay-brother to undergo for a pound of coffee or of snuff,--and the vilest subserviencies to the caprice and passion of a Superior,--and the listening to men with God for ever in their mouths, and the world for ever in their hearts,--men who think of nothing but the aggrandizement of their temporal distinction, and screen under the most revolting affectation of a concern in spiritualities, their ravening cupidity after earthly eminence:--Wretch! do you dream that it was for this?--that this atheism of bigotry,--this creed of all the priests that ever have existed in connection with the state, and in hope of extending their interest by that connexion,--could have any influence over me?[17]

When this character goes on to describe the solemn glittering rituals of his Church that cover a corrupt and selfish worldliness, he assures us that "Such was the scene, but what was behind the scene?--I saw it all";

we may be reminded that Maturin was also in a position to see what went on behind the "scene" of his Church. We can find similar sentiments expressed in Maturin's personal correspondence. In a letter to Scott, Maturin describes how

> 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 offal of theirs--[18]

These are not Catholic Archbishops and Bishops who chase after powerful members of the state bureaucracy in order to promote their own worldly interests; they are Anglicans, Maturin's own colleagures and "Superiors." The picture of the hypocritical collusion between Spanish Church and State that is so fiercely and bitterly exposed in Melmoth the Wanderer is, in part, an allegorical representation of Ireland and this image extends itself to include the universal oppression that systems of power, "positive institutions," exert over the whole of humanity. The world of Melmoth the Wanderer is a microcosm of Maturin's vision of "civilization."

"The basis of all ecclesiastical power rests on fear,"[19] says Alonzo, and he might have extended this observation to include all institutional power, for he soon discovers that he is "staked against a community, a priesthood, a nation,"[20] and that "All Spain is but one great monastery,--I must be a prisoner every step I take."[21] Alonzo's position is reminiscent of Godwin's Caleb Williams. Caleb found himself opposed to the interests of a man, Falkland, who was in a position to utilize all the resources of Britain's institutions in order to persecute his victim. Caleb finds Falkland to be omnipotent, omnipresent and God-like:

> Escape from his pursuit, freedom from his tyranny, were objects upon which my whole soul was bent. Could no human ingenuity and exertion effect them? Did his power reach through all space, and his eye penetrate every concealment? Was he like that mysterious being, to protect us from whose fierce revenge mountains and hills, we are told, might fall on us in vain? No idea is more heart-sickening and tremendous than this.[22]

This is exactly the same imagery Alonzo uses to describe his confrontation with the powers of Spain and the Inquisition:

> Great God! what chance of liberation for a monk in Spain? There is not a cottage where I could rest one night in security--there is not a cavern whose echoes would not resound to the cry of my apostacy. If I was hid in the bowels of the earth, they would discover me, and tear me from its entrails. My beloved Juan, when I consider the omnipotence of the ecclesiastical power in Spain, may I not address it in the language applied to Omnipotence itself: 'If I climb to heaven, thou art <u>there</u>;--if I go down to hell, thou art <u>there</u> also;--if I take the wings of the morning, and flee unto the <u>uttermost parts of the sea, even there</u>. . . .'[23]

Both Maturin and Godwin borrow the same biblical analogy to express their fear of the systems of power that oppress them. Also, they both seem to reject this type of God who pursues his victims even into "the uttermost parts of the sea," and, like Juan, they prefer a God of mercy and are repelled by the "heart-sickening and tremendous" idea of vengeful omnipotence.

Although Maturin and Godwin are enemies of systems of power, they both reveal a sympathy and understanding even for those individuals who perpetuate the crimes of institutions. Alonzo, for example, seldom doubts the sincerity of his Superior; neither does he seem to doubt the "faith" of the parricide monk. Although these two men persecute Alonzo, they too are victims of the fear that engenders and is reinforced by ecclesiastical power. Godwin has a clear attitude towards those individuals caught in the power of institutions:

> And most of all, we shall view with pity, even with sympathy, the men whose frailties we behold, or by whom crimes are perpetrated, satisfied that they are parts of one great machine, and like ourselves, are driven forward by impulses over which they have no real control.[24]

In this regard, Maturin is in complete agreement with Godwin. He even forgives the Catholic clergymen that he spends so much time and paper criticising:

> (They [priests] wish to know the household's secrets and thereafter to be feared.) And this desire is not only natural but necessary, in a being from whose heart his profession has torn every tie of nature and of passion; and if it generates malignity, ambition, and the wish for mischief, it is the system, not the individual we must blame.[25]

"The system, not the individual," is a mark of the fundamental humanism shared by Maturin and Godwin, and it reflects their vision of the world in which they lived, a world in which they saw human hearts and human values crushed by the cogs of a machine-like society. If they are machine breakers, it is not because they are nihilists, nor do they simply aim at destroying society and civilization, but rather, they long for a society that is a natural human community free from artificial and heartless systems.

While still a prisoner in the monastery, Alonzo meets an old monk, hypocritical and bitter, who in his dying hours vents his spleen against the religious system that has devoured his heart and his life. Alonzo finds the monk's words to be distressing but true. The monk tells Alonzo that in the monasteries there are only three types of men: first, those with strong sensibility who struggle and resist; second, those who merely submit and live and die unexcited and unawakened; finally, those who submit but secretly console themselves with malignant visions of chaos and destruction:

> They feed themselves with the poison of delicious, innutritive illusion. They dream that an earthquake will shake the walls to atoms, that a volcano will burst forth in the centre of the garden. They imagine a revolution of government,--an attack of banditti,--any thing, however improbable. Then they take refuge in the possibility of a fire, (if a fire bursts out in a convent, the doors are thrown open, and 'Sauve qui peut,' is the word). At this thought they conceive the most ardent hope,--they could rush out,--they could precipitate themselves into the streets, into the country,--in fact, they would fly any where to escape.[26]

These visions are, on the one hand, objectionable but, on the other hand, they are somehow comforting. Maturin uses the idea of the fire to save Alonzo from the Inquisition, and in Fatal Revenge he uses an earthquake and tidal wave to free his character from a similar confinement; the comfort of such visions is therefore familiar to Maturin and his readers and they may well be among those who "submit" but "secretly" rebel. In this light, much of the Gothic movement can be seen as a secret rebellion and Godwin, one with strong sensibilities who struggles and resists, brought this rebellion out into the open. Nevertheless, chaos, for Maturin, is only a substitute for real and natural human freedom. His admiration appears to be especially directed towards those, like Alonzo, who struggle and resist. The same attitude is apparent in St. Leon where Bethlem Gabor dreams of avenging his suffering by becoming a terror to mankind, an agent of death and destruction, but St. Leon, whose suffering is equally severe, continues to struggle for the benefit of mankind. Godwin admires the peaceful struggle, but, like Maturin, he finds comfort in the vision of chaos when it is the only alternative to institutional tyranny; he once said that "while we should try by peaceful means to bring about our revolution, in the last resort 'anarchy' itself is preferable to an indefinite continuance of despotism."[27]

Here "anarchy" is used in the sense of chaos. Both Maturin and Godwin seem to realize that under the existing order of society the systematic oppression of human nature only leads to a buildup of frustration and anger that, unless conditions are changed, must sooner or later explode; both seem to be willing to accept an explosion rather than no change at all.

The world of institutions is inhabited by beings with "wooden" hearts, hearts of steel and stone; they are cold automatons. As Maturin points out, these beings have dead hearts because they have been torn from "every tie of nature and passion." In turn, the heartless society becomes the irreconcilable enemy of the "natural" society. For those who cling to their humanity, life is uncertain, insecure and often sad. When Immalee learns to love, she also learns to suffer: "she learned to weep and to fear; and perhaps she saw, in the fearful aspects of the heavens, the development of that mysterious terror, which always trembles at the bottom of hearts that dare to love."[28] Of course, love entails sadness and insecurity even in the world of nature where all are subject to death and disease, but in the perverted world of civilization sadness becomes terror as misery is amplified by a variety of artificial means, to the point where maintaining dignity and humanity becomes an almost impossible task. In "The Tale of Guzman's Family" Maturin exposes this perversion.

Maturin's "The Tale of Guzman's Family" is obviously borrowed to a great extent from the experiences of St. Leon's early life, and it is also sprinkled with emotions and occurrence that Maturin himself knew, both in his own life and in the everyday sufferings of his parishioners. Maturin says in his Preface that he sketched the wife of Walberg from a living person (perhaps his own wife), but she also closely resembles St. Leon's

patient Marguerite. St. Leon and Walberg are both victims of vanity, pride and desire for unnatural wealth, but where they are most similar is in the suffering they cause their families and the guilt and misery they incur. St. Leon's situation:

> my family that should have been my comfort gave me my most poignant agony; when I looked upon them, naked, destitute, and exiles, with the tremendous thought, what and who it was that had caused their ruin? Adversity, without consolation,--adversity, when its sting is remorse, self-abhorrence and self-contempt, --hell has no misery by which it can be thrown into shade or exceeded![29]

is almost identical to the experience of Walberg:

> Ines and her children hung round Walberg, and uttered all of consolation that helpless affection could suggest; but perhaps there is not a more barbed arrow can be sent through the heart, than by the thought that the hands that clasp ours so fondly cannot earn for us or themselves the means of another meal,--that the lips that are pressed to ours so warmly, may the next ask us for bread, and--ask in vain![30]

and Walberg, too, must cope with the knowledge that his children's hunger is the product of his weakness. Nevertheless, amid the sufferings of the families of Walberg and St. Leon are numerous acts of heroism and humanity: some go hungry that others might eat; some willingly assume extra misery and shame for the benefit of the others. On the surface of these two stories, men are caught up in a lust for position, wealth, and prestige, the "imaginary" happiness of "civilized" society. Behind these stories, however, lies the important assumption that a domestic life close to nature is the true source of human happiness, the realm of the human heart.
This "natural" life is susceptible to the fatal disease of artificial desires; Ines and Marguerite understand these truths, and Marguerite warns

her husband "not to indulge that jaundice of imagination, which should create to itself a sentiment of melancholy and discontent in the midst of this terrestrial paradise."[31] The domestic and simple rural life contains a potential for recreating a human paradise, but the enemies of this life in nature are law, rank, wealth, and all the corruptions of positive institutions, which always threaten with their malignant influences.

In a way, "The Tale of Guzman's Family" only illustrates the truth of Melmoth's own earlier condemnation of modern civilization, its injustice, inequality, materialism and exploitation. Both the life of St. Leon and "The Tale of Guzman's Family" expose the perverted aspects of civilized society and suggest that this perversion in turn poisons the human heart. St. Leon and Walberg acquire values and desires that undermine human dignity and obscure their ability to recognize real human needs and natural desires. Both men fall victim to their vices and aspirations and see their families ruined by the machinations of law and institutions. The observation St. Leon makes on his own situation is equally descriptive of Walberg's experience and reaffirms the perceptiveness of Melmoth; seeing his family in poverty, St. Leon declares that

> They are moments like these, that harden the human heart, and fill us with inextinguishable hatred and contempt for our species. They tear off the trappings and decorations of polished society, and show it in all its hideousness.[32]

In the face of this revelation of the underlying hideousness of civilization, St. Leon manages to maintain his benevolent disposition; chance saves Walberg from having to learn to live with this revelation, but Melmoth is not so fortunate as Walberg and he, like Bethlem Gabor, turns against his species out of anger and contempt. Finally, Melmoth discovers, through his

encounter with Immalee, that human beings are not by nature evil, but that they are only victims of their environments; this new revelation appears to pacify his wrath and humble him considerably, and may even have helped him to accept his own humanity and fallibility.

Maturin's vision of a "natural existence" is not simply confined to a kind of animalism that merely demands the satisfaction of thirst, hunger, and the need for shelter. Immalee's parents are able to satisfy these needs, so are the monks and the Monçada family, but there is little naturalness in their existence. "Natural," for Maturin, also implies the satisfaction of those needs so often referred to as "civilized": art, music, literature, and intelligent conversation. Maturin describes the futility of the Walberg family's struggle and he concludes that those who have experienced this struggle for mere survival

> feel as if there was no evil in life but want, and no object of rational pursuit but the means of avoiding it. Alas! if it be so, for what purpose were hearts that beat, and minds that burn, bestowed on us? Is all the energy of intellect, and all the enthusiasm of our feeling, to be expended in contrivances how to meet or shift off the petty but torturing pangs of hourly necessity? Is the fire caught from heaven to be employed in lighting a faggot to keep the cold from the numb and wasted fingers of poverty?[33]

In support of this observation, we might recall both Ines' and Marguerite's determination to teach their daughter music, even while their families are sinking into destitution. For Maturin, a natural existence implies a world in which the needs of the heart, love and fellowship, are united with the needs of the mind, art and thought. From his own experience and observation, Maturin knew these needs to be incompatible with institutionalized civilization. If either of these needs can be satisfied, it is usually at the expense of the other. Maturin saw that modern life is

incomplete and discordant because the institutions of modern civilization are antagonistic towards human affection because it threatens their power; Maturin, therefore, joined the ranks of those opposed to modern civilization.

Godwin saw how the divisions caused by "interests" and institutions within his own society reduced the dignity of men.

> In a country where the existence of spies and informers is frequent, the whole nation must of necessity be made up of two classes of hypocrites: hypocrites who hold out a false appearance, the better to ensnare; and hypocrites, who hold out a false appearance, that they may not be ensnared.[34]

Godwin may have been more successful than Maturin in resisting this hypocrisy in his own life and art, but Maturin was certainly aware of its existence and he shows how it develops in monastic Spain. Alonzo is forced to lie to his parents and to his religious superior; he points the finger of blame for this necessity of lying at the system:

> I did not undeceive them; but I reflected with increasing horror on a system that <u>forced</u> hypocrisy to a precocity unparalleled, and made the last vice of life the earliest of conventual youth. . . . But dissimulation always teaches dissimulation and the only question is, whether we shall be the masters of the art or its victims? a question soon decided by our self-love.[35]

Even Alonzo does not believe that this type of perversion is limited to monasticism; instead, he sees it as part of a general truth that "the fear of circumvention always teaches falsehood."[36] Wherever entrenched institutions exist, they will jealously guard their power by trying to create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, turning individual against individual and destroying the very basis of any human relationship, trust.

Another result of a society divided against itself is the unnatural division of humanity into those who work and produce and those who enjoy

and consume. St. Leon's decline from opulence forces him to consider this situation for the first time because it threatens his family and his self-interest. He is ready to do almost anything rather than submit his family to "the slavery of perpetual labour, [which devotes] them to the lowest degree of ignorance and degradation."[37] In Melmoth the Wanderer, similar sentiments drive one of Maturin's most selfless characters, Juan, to declare, "When I saw the indignity with which the lower classes were treated, I said to myself, 'No, he shall never suffer that,--he is my brother.'"[38] However, the most eloquent and bitter condemnation of this system of inequality is made by Melmoth when he describes European society to Immalee:

> "This," continued the stranger,"is the most exquisite refinement on that art of torture which those beings are so expert in--to place misery by the side of opulence--to bid the wretch who dies for want feed on the sound of splendid equipages which shake his hovel as they pass, but leave norelief behind--to bid the industrious, the ingenious, and the imaginative, starve, while bloated mediocrity pants from excess--to bid the dying sufferer feel that life might be prolonged by one drop of that exciting liquor, which, wasted, produces only sickness or madness in those whose lives it undermines;--to do this is their principal object, and it is fully attained."[39]

Are we to believe that the same indignation that St. Leon and Juan express out of love, Melmoth expresses out of hate? Melmoth is a man torn by his fate. He received his curse because of a mistaken idealism and he must carry it eternally. His fate makes him an outcast among men, but his original impulse was primarily curiosity. The unnaturalness of the social conditions that arouse the sarcasm and bitterness of Melmoth is proven by the fact that he experiences "incredible difficulty to make Immalee comprehend how there could be an unequal division of the means of existence," so alien is such a possibility to a child of Nature.[40]

Immalee discovers that "The world that thinks does not feel,"[41] and that such a world must be a "moral wilderness."

In his Preface to St. Leon, Godwin declares, "True wisdom will recommend to us individual attachments; for with them our minds are more thoroughly maintained in activity and life than they can be under the privations of them; and it is better that man should be a living being, than a stock or a stone."[42] When St. Leon accepts the gift of the philosopher's stone, he discovers that he has absolutely cut himself off from reciprocal attachments:

> I was utterly alone in the world, separated by an insurmountable barrier from every being of my species. No man could understand me; no man could sympathize with me; no man could form the remotest guess at what was passing in my heart. I had the use of words; I could address my fellow-beings; I could enter into dialogue with them. I could discourse of every different thing that the universe contained; I could talk of everything but my own feelings. This, and not the dungeon of Bethlem Gabor, is true solitude.[43]

In St. Leon, only St. Leon, the old stranger, and Bethlem Gabor experience this alienation from their fellow beings, but in Melmoth the Wanderer, where most hearts are made of "stock and stone," alienation appears to be the norm. The monks are divided by their suspicions and their "sophistication," and families are divided by fear. Alonzo is continually threatened with "the annihilation of hopeless and interminable solitude. . . ."[44] Immalee fails to integrate herself into the moral waste of civilization. Melmoth, however, is the most alienated of all these characters, and even though he need fear no dungeon and is free to go wherever and to visit whomever he pleases, he is, like St. Leon, "separated by an insurmountable barrier from every being" of his species. Melmoth is described passing

> from region to region, mingling with, yet distinct from all his species, like a wearied and uninterested spectator rambling through the various seats of some vast theatre, where he knows none of the audience. . . .[45]

Melmoth is not above feeling the pain of being "utterly alone in the world." He is usually described as a rather "staid" and ordinary looking man with little remarkable in his aspect other than his burning eyes. When he visits Alonzo's Inquisition cell, Melmoth impresses the prisoner with his "rich, various, and intelligent" conversation, and, strangely enough, all Melmoth seems to want to do is talk and tell stories. Night after night Melmoth returns, not to tempt, but to relate incidents from his past experience and to vent his "indignation" at the Inquisition and his "abhorrence of the whole system."[46] Alonzo is a "captive" audience, and perhaps Melmoth feels that Alonzo's misery and loneliness are such that he might be able to "sympathize" with Melmoth's own suffering and perhaps come to "understand" what is "passing in his heart." Although in the narrative Melmoth's visit to Alonzo precedes his visit to Immalee, chronologically he visits Immalee first, and as a result the reader may be aware that the Melmoth who visits Alonzo seems a much milder individual than the monster who tempts and persecutes Stanton. Because Maturin breaks up and reverses narrative sequence and chronological time, this change in Melmoth's personality is not accounted for until the introduction of Immalee into the novel. In his relationship with Immalee, Melmoth is continually showing "more feeling than he could have been suspected of."[47] The sincerity of his emotions is demonstrated in his selfless gesture: "I stood between myself and her."[48] In this paradoxical act, Melmoth

is able to separate his fate from his humanity, and to allow his human nature to triumph, even if only sporadically. After this moment, although Melmoth continues to tempt, he no longer persecutes, because he has, to some degree, reestablished his identity with humanity. When he finally appears before John Melmoth, everything in his conduct seems to give credence to his claim, "I have been a terror, but not an evil to its inhabitants."[49] Melmoth seems to have learned, like St. Leon, that what are important in life are "individual attachments." He learns through his relationship with Immalee that he is capable of such attachments, and in his later conversations with Alonzo and John Melmoth he seems to be trying to reestablish communication with his race. Perhaps the fact that Melmoth returns "home" to "die" reaffirms his human nature and shows that he is influenced by human emotions and such human attachments as family and home.

If Melmoth remains a terror to his race, it is because the nature of his existence threatens fundamental illusions by which human beings have for centuries rationalized their crimes against their fellow men. Melmoth is outside the normal human limits of time and space; he is alienated from his fellows and outside their society. He observes civilization from the outside and shows no respect for the concepts of status, law, and religion, speaking of them as only "the fashion of a country,--as a thing of form, of accident, of habit."[50] By his refusal to "profess a faith," he remains a threat to men's certainty, complacency, and self-righteousness.

Although Maturin ruthlessly attacks human institutions and civilization, it is a mistake to believe, as Robert Kiely does, that Maturin is also

condemning human nature. Kiely claims that "Maturin's point--certainly a familiar Protestant one--is that, even in his acts of apparent charity, man shows himself to be a corrupt creature motivated by self-interest."[51] No doubt Maturin does expose the role of "interest" in many human activities, but although he is intensely aware of the ignorance and corruption that pervert human relations, Maturin is always aware of human selflessness and benevolence. Even while in the midst of exposing the cruelty and brutality of human society, Melmoth reveals to Immalee the fundamental generosity of human nature:

> "These creatures have not the least cause of enmity to each other--they do not know, they never beheld each other. Perhaps they might, under other circumstances, wish each other well, as far as human malignity would suffer them; but from the moment they are hired for legalized massacre, hatred is their duty, and murder their delight. The man who would feel reluctance to destroy the reptile that crawls in his path, will equip himself with metals fabricated for the purpose of destruction, and smile to see it stained with the blood of a being, whose existence and and happiness he would have sacrificed his own to promote, under other circumstances. So strong is this habit of aggravating misery under artificial circumstance, that it has been known, when in a sea-fight a vessel has blown up . . . the people of that world have plunged into the water to save, at the risk of their own lives, the lives of those with whom they were grappling amid fire and blood a moment before, and whom, though they would sacrifice to their passions, their pride refused to sacrifice to the elements."
>
> "Oh that is beautiful!--that is glorious!" said Immalee, clasping her white hands; "I could bear all you describe to see that sight!"[52]

Melmoth, still obsessed with human selfishness and cruelty, and blind to human generosity, tries to pass this self-sacrifice off as a whim of pride, but Immalee, even in the spontaneity of her response, recognizes it as a noble and spontaneous act that reaffirms the underlying goodness of human nature and discovers the brotherhood of man. From this image of self-sacrifice Immalee derives great hope and confidence in humanity. Eventually,

Melmoth's despair is tempered by some of Immalee's optimism and he learns to seek the consolation of human attachments and emotions, even while he continues to condemn human civilization.

Through the mouth of Melmoth, Maturin expresses his own indignation and frustration at the state of the world. Only after "he ceases to regard her as his victim,"[53] does Melmoth explain to Immalee the evils of european society, partly to warn her and protect her from "a world of suffering, guilt, and care."[54] Melmoth's revulsion at human civilization is sincere. The relationship between the reader and Melmoth is like Alonzo listening to the dying monk, "forced by conviction to listen on, wishing every word to be false, and knowing every word to be true."[55] It is impossible to believe Maturin's disclaimer that "the sentiments ascribed to the stranger are diametrically opposite to mine. . . ."[56] The description of the filth of cities has too much foundation in reality; the concern of the poor man for his starving children is too similar to sentiments Maturin expressed to Scott. Only when, through the voice of Melmoth, Maturin lets his indignation carry him to the point of condemning kings and taxation does he suddenly realize that he is walking on dangerous ground and places his asterisk in order to footnote his innocence.[57] Granting that Maturin felt some sympathy for the radical views of Melmoth, it is only understandable that he should be reluctant to own them. Maturin was writing in a period after the French Revolution when Britain was gripped by fear and reaction; it was a time dangerous to radical views in politics, a time when, as Godwin says, "Terror was the order of the day."[58]

Terror in literature has a very definite potential for propaganda; this

is a fact recognized by Godwin, Maturin and Orwell. They do not just indulge in terror for its own sake, but utilize it to guide their readers towards certain conclusions and sentiments. The vision of terror, when skillfully presented, has the ability to break down the complacency of the reader and force upon him a sympathetic realization of the pain and the suffering of others; as Alonzo discovers, "The drama of terror has the irresistible power of converting its audience into its victims."[59] Using terror, Maturin and Godwin force on their readers a whole range of experience that we may otherwise never be aware of because of protective psychological and social walls that have been built up around us. The novel of terror introduces the comfortable and complacent to poverty, persecution, grief, and pain. The hope of many terror novelists is that this new experience will expand the heart of the reader and increase his sympathy for the plight of those who are less fortunate than, or different from him. In other words, the novel of terror has the definite potential of reinforcing the reader's humanity. Alonzo, after years of painful experiences, finally discovers that "Grief had perhaps subdued my prejudice --it had certainly softened my heart--and at this moment I half believed that a Jew might find entrance and adoption amid the family and fold of the blessed."[60] This sudden benevolent recognition of a common humanity between Alonzo, the Catholic, and Adonijah, the Jew, may even go so far as to inspire the reader, who Maturin probably expected to be a Protestant, to forgive both Alonzo and Adonijah for their heresies, or perhaps even question the validity of his own prejudices. Because the reader has shared, through his imagination and Maturin's literary skills, the suffering of Alonzo, he can recognize Alonzo's debt to Adonijah, and may even come

to identify with Adonijah's persecution, and finally wonder that such men should ever have seen cause to hate and fear each other. This certainly was the objective of Godwin when he allowed his hero, St. Leon, to escape from the persecution of the Inquisition to the protection of a stranger, a Jew, and there is every reason to believe that Maturin allowed Alonzo to follow the same route in order to propagate the same humanistic message.

Godwin and Maturin lived in a world of "terror," in which human nature was threatened with being crushed or twisted beyond recognition by the weight of institutions of modern civilization. It is only fitting that they should choose to express themselves through the novel of terror, the Gothic novel, because the Gothic genre conforms so well to the atmosphere of the world as they experienced it. The popularity of the Gothic genre has more to do with the political and social climate of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century England than is generally accepted. The Gothic spirit is a political as well as an aesthetic impulse, and it had great influence on such later political artists as John Ruskin, William Morris and George Orwell.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Quoted in George Woodcock, William Godwin (London: The Porcupine Press, 1946), p. 219.

[2] Quoted in Ibid., p. 161.

[3] Quoted in Ibid., p. 172.

[4] Quoted in Ibid., p. 121.

[5] William Godwin, St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century, ed. Devendra P. Varma (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 163.

[6] Ibid., p. 282.

[7] Ibid., p. 448.

[8] Quoted in Woodcock, Godwin, p. 27.

[9] Charles Robert Maturin, Melmoth the Wanderer, a Tale, ed. W. F. Axton (1820; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 101.

[10] Ibid., p. 95.

[11] Charles Robert Maturin, The Wild Irish Boy (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), I, 124.

[12] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 125.

[13] William Morris, News from Nowhere, or an epoch of rest, ed. James Redmond (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 90.

[14] Alex Comfort, The Novel in Our Time (Vancouver: Fendejo Press, 1969), p. 19.

[15] F. Ratchford and H. McCarthy, eds. The Correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1937), p. 16.

[16] Ibid., p. 15.

[17] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 172.

[18] Ratchford and McCarthy, The Correspondence of Scott and Maturin, p. 9.

[19] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 91.

[20] Ibid., p. 139.

21 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 143.

22 William Godwin, *Caleb Williams, or Things as they Are*, intro. George Sherburn (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 279.

23 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 140.

24 Quoted in Woodcock, *Godwin*, p. 234.

25 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 258.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

27 Quoted in Woodcock, *Godwin*, p. 70.

28 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 246.

29 Godwin, *St. Leon*, p. 30.

30 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 317.

31 Godwin, *St. Leon*, p. 79.

32 *Ibid.*, 119.

33 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 320.

34 Quoted in Woodcock, *Godwin*, p. 115.

35 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 65.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

37 Godwin, *St. Leon*, p. 105.

38 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 94.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

42 Godwin, *St. Leon*, p. x.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 466.

44 Maturin, *Melmoth*, p. 179.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 274.

[46] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 176.

[47] Ibid., p. 299.

[48] Ibid., p. 297.

[49] Ibid., p. 408.

[50] Ibid., p. 298.

[51] Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 205.

[52] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 233.

[53] Ibid., p. 229.

[54] Ibid., p. 218.

[55] Ibid., p. 88.

[56] Ibid., p. 233.

[57] Elsewhere in his works, Maturin seems to get carried away in condemning society and finds himself in a situation where he feels he must back away from, qualify, or apologize for the radical sentiments of his characters. For example, in The Wild Irish Boy, III, 251-253, Ormsby finds himself condemning the English court and quickly tries to qualify his criticism, but his qualifications are inadequate and the whole passage becomes very confused and ambiguous. Also, at the bottom of page 74 of this thesis is a quotation in which Maturin puts a radical condemnation of church bureaucracy into the mouth of a very unsympathetic character, the parricide monk, and in this way manages to distance himself from his own dangerous observations.

[58] Quoted in Woodcock, Godwin, p. 104.

[59] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 197.

[60] Ibid., p. 206.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Gothic Spirit and the Obsession with Power

Although the world of the Gothic novel is usually a romantic dream world, it is not necessarily divorced from reality, but is often like the world of Immalee in Spain: "Alas! in the life that I now lead, dreams have become realities, and realities seem only like dreams."[1] The confusion of dream and reality in many Gothic novels is not necessarily an attempt to escape reality, it is often a nightmare vision of reality. Although Gothic novels are often set in the Middle Ages or on the continent, Robert Kiely insists that "For most English novelists, human relations of any sort, however distant in place or time, however distorted by private vision, bore resemblances to the familiar patterns of organized society and served, therefore, as reminders of an objective and general reality."[2] Nevertheless, the Gothic past also offers a somewhat different reality and part of the attractiveness of Gothic civilization for the novelist is its contrast to the civilization of modern industrial capitalism. The Gothic world is romantic, but as Alex Comfort defines romance, it is not "antithetic" to realism as "a novelistic quality":

> For me romanticism implies a belief that humanity, by virtue of the development of autonomous mind, is in a constant state of conflict with the external universe; a conflict, in face of the human instinct for survival, with death, and with those members of the human race who have lost their nerve and sided with death against man: the advocates of power.[3]

Inherent in Gothic novels, therefore, is the conflict between the "autonomous mind" and the "advocates of power." Much of the Gothicist's obsession with power may result from his own feeling of impotence in the face of an oppressive, mechanical society, and in this sense the Gothic past can be seen as an ideal civilization, simpler and more dignified than the present, and one in which people can maintain power over their own lives and remain defiant of

arbitrary external authority. Even in those Gothic novels that are not set in the past, this rebellious and independent "Gothic spirit" can often be found. The anarchistic impulse that lies at the center of the Gothic genre and rejects the claustrophobic nature of modern industrial society is most clearly revealed in the Gothic obsession with power, and a nostalgia for the vanishing Gothic spirit.

In The Castle of Otranto, as Theodore prepares himself for execution, a careless phrase from Manfred causes him to exclaim, "Is the princess then again in thy power?"[4] Of course she is not, and Theodore lives to tell her that "he would die rather than suffer her to return under Manfred's power. . . ."[5] In The Mysteries of Udolpho, Montoni angrily tells Emily, "You shall be removed this night . . . to the east turret; there, perhaps, you may understand the danger of offending a man who has unlimited power over you."[6] When, in Caleb Williams, Emily asks Tyrrel what right he has to keep her confined, his reply is, "By the right of possession. This house is mine and you are in my power."[7] In The Monk, Ambrosio informs the captive Antonia that "for your sake have I committed this murder, and sold myself to eternal tortures. Now you are in my power; the product of my guilt will at least be mine."[8] In The Italian, Ellena rejects Olivia's escape plans, saying, "what could it avail me? I am entirely in the power of the abbess, who would soon put my sincerity to proof; when a discovery of my duplicity would only provoke her vengence, and I should be punished even for having sought to avoid injustice."[9] Even the Marchessa wishes she had used more reserve in her dealings with Schedoni and had "not committed herself so wholly to his power."[10] When the hero of St. Leon is thrown into prison, he discovers "how miserable a slave a man is, the moment he falls completely into the power of another."[11] When, in Maturin's first novel, Fatal Revenge, Montorio visits his captive,

Annibal, he suggests, "Reflect how extensive my power is, and reflect you are within it."[12] In Melmoth the Wanderer, the parricide monk tells Alonzo, "you are in my power," and Alonzo is revolted to find that "I was in the power of all I dreaded most, and must submit to the operation of that power for my liberation."[13] Still later, Melmoth tells Immalee, "You are in my power,--absolutely, hopelessly in my power."[14]

Throughout the main Gothic texts we find always the extremes of power and powerlessness. The theme is so extensive that we can find a question asked in The Italian, "Is power then . . . the infallible test of justice?"[15] answered in Melmoth the Wanderer, "Do you, then, make a question between right and power?"[16] An appropriate rejoinder might be found in Caleb Williams: "Detested be the universe, and the laws that govern it! Honour, justice, virtue are all the juggle of knaves! If it were in my power, I would instantly crush the whole system into nothing!"[17] The attempt of Power to triumph over Justice, and the threat of being helplessly caught within the power of men and systems, are essential ingredients of Gothic novels. In Maturin's novels, says Robert Kiely, the definition of "the good man" is "Compassion without power,"[18] and W. F. Axton correctly states that "In the 'nightmare' symbolism of Gothic fiction, the characteristic metaphors are those of imprisonment (usually with overtones of horror or death) and its resultant paranoia."[19] Wherever power is found in Gothic novels, resistance to that power is usually also found. More than any other "internal element," an anarchistic impulse that expresses itself by an obsession with power and rebellion is the uniting spirit, which, along with a minimum of "external forms," allows us to consider a work as more or less Gothic, and allows us to include such divergent novels as The Mysteries

of Udolpho, Caleb Williams, Frankenstein, Melmoth the Wanderer and Old Saint Paul's; closer to our own era, George Orwell's 1984 preserves the Gothic spirit by sharing a similar paranoid fascination with powerful men, powerful systems and awful architecture.[20]

Edmund Burke was probably one of the earliest to point out the fascination of power for the benefit of Gothic enthusiasts: "wheresoever we find strength and in what light soever we look upon power, we shall all along observe the sublime the concomitant of terror, and contempt the attendant on a strength that is subservient and innoxious."[21] Of all power, Burke believed the most affecting to be "natural" power, which is strength characterized by "unmanageable fierceness."[22] After Burke, the Gothic writer's fascination with raw power can be legitimized as an appreciation of the sublime, but images of wild and rugged landscapes, whether in a painting by Rosa or a novel by Radcliffe, are at least in part an expression of the preoccupation with power.

Nature, of course, suggested a variety of ideas to the Gothic mind that resulted in a flexible use of the metaphors of nature. In The Italian, for example, Ellena, contrasting the power of nature to that of her human oppressor, found the inspiration to endure and even to transcend her vulnerable situation:

> How poor the boasted power of man, when the fall of a single cliff from these mountains would with ease destroy thousands of his race assembled on the plains below! How would it avail them, that they were accoutred for battle, armed with all the instruments of destruction that human invention ever fashioned? Thus man, the giant who now held her in captivity, would shrink to the diminutiveness of a fairy; and she would experience, that his utmost force was unable to enchain her soul, or compel her to fear him, while he was destitute of virtue.[23]

Ellena's optimism might be more reassuring if it did not seem to rest on a false assumption. To contrast the power of common men with that of nature is one thing, but to assume that Schedoni, her real oppressor, is a "common man" would deny much of what we have been led to believe about him, and it is perhaps ironic that Ellena should choose to compare him to a fairy whose diminutive size might lead one to underestimate its mysterious powers.

What is truly significant in the above quotation from The Italian is that an impression of power, and a vision of the destructive potential of that power, somehow elevates Ellena above the oppressive circumstances of her life. Although Ellena's interpretation of this elation may be faulty, her response to the scene is strikingly similar to a feeling experienced by Ruskin, which he interprets to be similar to Wordsworth's "intimations of immortality," and which provides him, too, with a reserve of inspiration and strength; the source of this emotion, as he explains, is peculiarly limited to scenes of "wild" nature:

> In myself, it has always been quite exclusively confined to wild, that is to say, wholly natural places, and especially to scenery animated by streams, or by the sea. The sense of the freedom, spontaneous, unpolluted power of nature was essential in it.[24]

The fact that Ruskin's emotion, like Ellena's, seems to rest on an awareness of "spontaneous, unpolluted power" perhaps suggests that it is not so much an intimation of immortality as it is an expression of a worship of raw and naked power that seems so characteristic of the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The same natural metaphors that are used by way of contrast to show the feebleness of general humanity and human civilization are, in other Gothic

novels, used by way of comparison to reveal and enhance the power of certain individuals. The same image Ellena uses to try to show human weakness, Falkland uses to impress his power upon Caleb, saying, "Remember that the insanity is not less to trifle with the resolved determination of my soul than it would be to pull a mountain upon your head, that hung trembling upon the edge of the mighty Appenine."[25] In almost every Gothic novel there is at least one character like Falkland who possesses this "natural" power, and these characters, such as Montoni, Schedoni, Manfred and Melmoth, become focal points within the novels for the obsession with power. These characters often possess Byronic temperaments[26] and seem to be rebellious at the same time that they are being oppressive, but almost always they have an uncivilized quality, an "unmanageable fierceness," that parallels the savage power of nature.

In an article on Maturin's use of myth, Veronica Kennedy has already pointed out how Maturin uses natural imagery to increase the impression of Melmoth's power:

> Much of the mythical potency of Maturin's writing lies in the imagery as well as in the events and personages of the romance. The roughest classification of Maturin's imagery reveals a definite scheme: images of death, beast, the sea, storms, seafaring, shipwreck, supernatural beings, light, darkness, and physical suffering preponderate in the novel. References to "devouring," "rending," "overwhelming," "engulfing," abound in the images and tropes of the work. The effect of such a choice of imagery is obvious: it reinforces the impression of the Wanderer as a superhuman creature, almost one with the most powerful and destructive forces of nature, with the raging sea, with the fiercest beast, and with the most cruel and destructive traits of man.[27]

In her description, Kennedy has only isolated the superhuman half of Melmoth's divided personality and we must not forget that Maturin often tries to impress his readers with the ordinariness of this middle-aged Irishman. Also, she seems to stress the negative aspects of Melmoth's power without showing any

awareness of the nobility and pathos it lends his character. Nevertheless, she makes the intended association between the power of Nature and the power of Melmoth quite clear.

Gothic thinkers were neither limited to nor most interested in contrasting the powers of nature and man.. More often the two powers are viewed, either implicitly or explicitly, as united in a mortal struggle against superior oppressive forces, whether they be time, decay, God, or civilization. Although this struggle could be used to express moral commonplaces about the futility of human resistance in the face of divine power, it is very often combined with an expression of admiration for unrelenting resistance, as in Ruskin's admiration for this personified mountain:

> Other and weaker things seem to express their subjection to an Infinite power only by momentary terrors; as the weeds bow before the feverish wind. . . . Not so to the mountains. They, which at first seemed strengthened beyond the dread of any violence or change, are yet also ordained to bear upon them the symbol of a perpetual Fear: the tremor which fades from the soft lake and gliding river is sealed, to all eternity, upon the rock; and while things that pass visibly from birth to death may sometimes forget their feebleness, the mountains are made to possess a perpetual memorial of their infancy, --that infancy which the prophet saw in his vision; 'I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void, and the heavens and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they _trembled_; and all the hills _moved lightly_.'[28]

Ruskin's mountain, with its strength, its scars to be borne for eternity, and its defiance of Infinite power appears to have much in common with Gothic-Byronic characters such as Melmoth.

Mountains are subjected to Infinite power and they fear it, but they do not submit or succumb to it; instead they suffer and resist. Ruskin's descriptions of mountains drift into personifications that approach the

Byronic temperament, and he expresses an uninhibited admiration for their powers of resistance and defiance. Ruskin describes Precipices

> robed with everlasting mourning, for ever tottering like a great fortress shaken by war, fearful as much in their weakness as in their strength, and yet gathered after every fall into darker frowns and unhumiliated threatening; for ever incapable of comfort or of healing from herb or flower . . . haunted only by uninterrupted echoes from far off, wandering hither and thither, among their walls, unable to escape. . . .[29]

The Precipice is dangerous because it is unpredictable, because its weaknesses are as extreme as its strengths; it is proud and suffering, unhumiliated, yet haunted by "echoes from far off" like the whispers of conscience or memories that cannot escape or be escaped. Ruskin's precipice has much in common with Alonzo's description of the parricide monk in Melmoth the Wanderer:

> He clasped his hands with a fierce and convulsive agony, that might have pictured the last struggles of the impenitent malefactor,--that agony without remorse, that suffering without requital or consolation, that, if I may say so, arrays crime in the dazzling robe of magnanimity, and makes us admire the fallen spirit, with whom we dare not sympathize.[30]

Here Maturin has protected himself by reserving his observation of the attractiveness of remorseless struggle for a character so obviously unattractive that any real sympathy is prevented by his atrocious conduct. Therefore, the observation remains on a safely verbal plane, without seducing the reader into an emotional acceptance of an idea that might burden him with guilt. Nevertheless, the admiration described for the parricide monk is the same admiration that is felt for Melmoth, a much more sympathetic, and therefore dangerous, character.

Architecture, like nature and Byronic hero-villains, contributes to the atmosphere of the Gothic dream and its obsession with power. In

his discussion of ancient Gothic literature, Bishop Hurd makes a note on the allegorical nature of the appearance of giants and castles: "These Giants of Chivalry were oppressive feudal Lords; and every Lord was to be met with, like the Giant, in his stronghold, or castle."[31] So it often occurs in the Gothic novel that oppressors inhabit castles or monasteries, which become symbols of oppressive power. When Caleb is forced to return to Falkland's mansion, he utilizes this castle metaphor to express his foreboding: "I seemed as if conducting to one of those fortresses, famed in the history of despotism, from which the wretched victim is never known to come forth alive; and, when I entered my chamber, I felt as if I were entering a dungeon."[32] Although Gothic ruins are sometimes identified with oppressive power, this is only one aspect of their relation to power, and common though this motif may be in the literature, it can hardly explain why Walpole was fascinated by Gothic architecture, or why he would build his Strawberry Hill castle, or why Beckford would go to the expense of constructing Fonthill Abbey while most of cultured England was still busy setting up Palladian pillars; neither does it explain why Gothic ruins grasped the imagination of the nation sufficiently to create a Gothic revival. More than mere antiquarian interest is needed to explain this enthusiasm for ancient architecture. In Gothic novels, architecture often provides more than a setting; it sometimes seems to take on a personality of its own, becoming a sympathetic character with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Though Walpole broke ground by setting his novel in an ancient Gothic castle, and, of course, naming his novel after that castle, he failed to provide any striking descriptions of the castle, although he

does quite well at creating a castle atmosphere. One of the earliest and most characteristic descriptions of Gothic grandeur is the description of Montoni's castle in The Mysteries of Udolpho:

> Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the Gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its wall, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped in splendour. From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity; and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend.[33]

This castle may be Montoni's "stronghold," it may be a potential prison for Emily, but this does not seem to be the dominant concern of the description; the castle evokes sentiments of awe and wonder rather than of fear and disgust, and the entire description seems calculated to make the reader's appreciation of the castle sympathetic. The words Radcliffe chooses to describe the castle are often the same as those we are accustomed to see referring to Byronic figures or mountain scenery: "gloomy," "melancholy," "Silent, lonely, and sublime," and, perhaps more important, all three "frown defiance" and seem "awful in obscurity." Perfectly situated among mountains and precipices (which, though in Italy, have a distinct northern atmosphere) and inhabited by the absolute power of Montoni, the architecture interacts with the mountain scenery and the man, and all three acquire heightened power and splendour from their interaction.

By the eighteenth century, Gothic monuments were well aged and had receded into the natural landscape: Montoni's castle is mouldy and has grass growing out from between its stones; its spires stand out in the forest skyline like taller trees; the castle almost seems part of the mountain on which it sits. Nevertheless, natural as these monuments seem to be, they are the product of men and as such they serve as a link between defiant nature and defiant men. Gothic ruins, mountains and precipices, and Byronic hero-villains are all images of power, but are all pitted in an everlasting struggle against even greater forces, such as Time, Decay, and even the Almighty. When Stanton sees a Roman tower shattered by lightning, he stands "appalled, and, awaiting his summons from the Power in whose eye pyramids, palaces, and the worms whose toil has formed them, and the worms who toil out their existence under their shadow or their pressure, are perhaps all alike contemptible. . . ."[34] Again, this occurrence serves to reinforce the relationship between human and architectural power in the face of a greater power that finds them "contemptible"; but the architecture is able to return that contempt by defiantly continuing to exist, even though wounded. Montoni's castle, though mouldy and decaying, remains defiant and "stands sovereign of the scene," more than a dwelling, almost Montoni's equal partner in power.

Ruins, Gothic castles, mountains and those mountain-like supermen we term Byronic are admirable for their own awful power and for their heroic defiance of even greater power. Within the Gothic novel the Gothic-Byronic type, such as Melmoth, Montoni, Ambrosio, Falkland, and Schedoni, often appears to be a sort of middle-man

in rebellion. While he carries on with his cosmic struggle, he serves as an agent of oppression on a more human plane. He serves as an example of great rebellion and, in turn, he himself becomes an adversary against which inferior beings must struggle; and when these more human characters who have repressed their own nature and desires out of fear are finally forced into a position in which they must rebel, their fear often gives way to an exhilarating awareness of their own powers and potential. The result is that the spirit of rebellion filters down and pervades the Gothic world so entirely, on both spiritual and actual planes, that the reader may begin to suspect that it is not so important what or whom one is rebelling against as long as one is actively rebelling.[35]

All the major works of Gothic fiction have moments of crisis when the hero or heroine breaks through the walls of his own repressions in order to assert a free nature and stand defiant in the face of threatening oppressive power. The hero of The Castle of Otranto exercises a restraint he finds suffocating and seems almost joyful when he is suddenly released, even though he faces physical danger: "The valour that had so long been smothered in his breast, broke forth at once: he rushed impetuously on the knight, whose pride and wrath were no less powerful incentives to hardy deeds."[36] It turns out, unfortunately, that in his desire for active struggle this youth has mistaken a friend for an enemy. In The Mysterious Mother, Edmund's defiance is directed not so much at an individual as it is at systems, and his paranoia seems to foreshadow concerns that surface again in Godwin, Maturin, and later writers:

> 'Tis false; I will not hence. I have been fooled too long, too long been patient. Nor are my years so green as to endure the manacles of priests and nurseries.[37]

A writer as apparently conservative as Ann Radcliffe can allow one of her heroes to rebel against paternal authority, an institution one might assume she considered sacred:

> He had no hesitation on the subject of their dispute; but regarding his father as a haughty oppressor who would rob him of his most sacred right, and as one who did not scruple to stain the name of the innocent and defenseless, when his interest required it, upon the doubtful authority of a base informer, he suffered neither pity or remorse to mingle with the resolution of asserting the freedom of his nature ....[38]

The acceptance of the idea of rebellion is obvious enough in Caleb Williams, but in Fatal Revenge, the moment when Ippolito turns on his pursuer, Schemoli, is reminiscent of Caleb's sudden awareness of his power to fight against Falkland rather than flee any longer; says Ippolito:

> I have groveled under you until I am weary of suffering and submission. These struggles are not of despair, but resistance; I have fled, not to shun, but to pursue. My mysterious inscrutable tormentor, I have too long been your vassal, your power was illusive and imaginary --it was borrowed from *my* weakness; my visionary folly arrayed you in the attributes of imagined terror, but it can strip and mock you for its sport; My triumph shall have its turn now.[39]

Along with rebellion and the incumbent heightened awareness of danger, there is often a feeling of elation so pleasurable that it strengthens the hero and tempts him to more defiant action. This is experienced by Ippolito immediately after he defies his tormentor:

> Methinks I breathe a new element. The ground on which I tread bears me up since I have conceived the thought. The very activity of motion, the energy of pursuit will be congenial to my nature, and a relief to my spirits.[40]

This appreciation for energy, motion, and struggle becomes an important aspect of Maturin's later novel, Melmoth the Wanderer, and certainly accounts for some of the pleasure felt in the act of defiance. However, Caleb Williams experiences a similar elation and suggests an equally

probable explanation for its source:

> The instant I had chosen this employment for myself, I found a strange sort of pleasure in it. To do what is forbidden always has its charms, because we have an indistinct apprehension of something arbitrary and tyrannical in the prohibition. To be a spy upon Mr. Falkland! That there was a danger in the employment, served to give an alluring pungency to the choice. I remembered the stern reprimand I had received, and his terrible looks; and the recollection gave a kind of tingling sensation, not altogether unallied to enjoyment. [41]

The similarities between Caleb's and Ippolito's experience is apparent. Their excited acceptance of danger and challenge, and their surprise at their audacity and self-assertion may appear suited to masculine characters of male authors, but, perhaps surprisingly, a very similar emotion seems to be experienced by Emily in The Mysteries of Udolpho:

> As she passed through the chambers that led to this, she found herself somewhat agitated; its connection with the late lady of the castle and the conversation of Annette, together with the circumstances of the veil, throwing the mystery over the object that excited a faint degree of horror. But a terror of this nature, as it occupies and expands the mind, and elevates it to high expectation, is purely sublime, and leads us, by a kind of fascination, to seek the object from which we appear to shrink. [42]

Although Emily's experience of the sublime is not associated with a specific and blatant act of rebellion, she does transgress "what is forbidden," and she does recognize the danger of her insubordination. Her reaction to danger, to abusing certain prohibitions, is just as positive as that of either Caleb or Ippolito. She finds her emotional response to her situation strangely fascinating and appealing, and like the moth and the flame, she finds herself in the paradoxical situation of being attracted by objects and situations that pose a threat to her safety and existence.

Several explanations for the "rapture" that accompanies rebellion have been suggested so far, and all seem equally valid and no doubt work in unison. First, the thrill of danger causes the mind to be alert for the least sign of danger, and this heightened awareness makes Caleb feel that he had never before been "so perfectly alive." Second is an appeal to what the Gothic novel seems to assume as a basic human anarchistic impulse that takes delight in breaking rules, cheating authority and getting away with doing what is forbidden, simply because one suspects "something arbitrary and tyrannical in the prohibition." Last, and perhaps less obvious, is the pleasure and often surprise of discovering one's own powers and potential; unsuspected and repressed until jarred by danger, these powers allow one the opportunity to act and struggle with some degree of courage and energy, an alternative more "congenial" to human nature than silently and patiently suffering in the face of abuse and oppression. In this sense the Gothic novel serves as a kind of call to arms; it rejects patient suffering as essentially a denial of life; it calls us to throw ourselves into life's battles with a will, because that is the best way to experience life. As Maturin tells us, "A storm without doors is, after all, better than a storm within; without we have something to struggle with, within we have only to suffer, and the severest storm, by exciting the energy of its victim, gives at once a stimulus to action, and a solace to pride, which those must want who sit shuddering between rocking walls, and almost driven to wish they had only to suffer, not to fear." [43] Usually this call is expressed only implicitly, within the limitations of a literary dream world, and often by authors who in their public lives would never admit to any radical impulse or unconventional ideas. This does not invalidate the observation that the wish

to struggle against oppressive powers or moral restraints is ever present in novels with a Gothic spirit, but, just as are so many of the characters in the novels, this natural wish for freedom from external restraint has been driven "underground," into the semi-conscious world of the Gothic dream.

Rebellion is so inherent to Gothic novels that one might expect novelists to take advantage of this for political propaganda, but, except for Godwin, few Gothic writers seem politically aware, but this does not necessarily mean that their novels are detached from the political and social climate of their day. The Gothic enthusiast generally focusses his attention on the past. In a modern "political" novel, _1984_, the central character, Winston, becomes a rebel against a powerful totalitarian state and marks his decision to rebel with a toast "To the past."[44] Winston believes that people who are oppressed by a closed and tightly controlled system can only know their situation to be "intolerable" if they have "some kind of ancestral memory that things had once been different."[45] George Orwell recognized the past as a powerful political tool when used as an ideal to contrast with present conditions. For some Gothic novelists the past may only be a curiosity, for others it may only provide exotic settings, but for writers possessed of the true "Gothic Spirit" the past is a world of great attraction and importance. The Gothic setting becomes a "social comment" insofar as it expresses a dissatisfaction with the present society. Gothic novelists intuitively turn to the Gothic dream world and an idealized past culture to escape the "intolerable" conditions of the actual world, but some go further and use the Gothic world to criticize, even if only obliquely, our modern mechanical society.

Not only Robert Kiely has detected an "authentic republican spirit in

Maturin's novel."[46] Maurice Lévy explains how Maturin, because of his Irish nationalism, gives the Gothic ruins of his novels an expressly political significance:

> C'est que ces ruines non seulement incitent, comme toutes les ruines, à la mélancolie; non seulement sont source, comme celles de Gilpin, d'une intense émotion esthétique, mais elles ont encore une âme, dont l'invisible présence n'est perceptible qu'à ceux qui sont capables de communier au sort de l'Irelande. C'est tout un passé national qu'elles symbolisent, la souffrance d'un peuple opprimé, le défaite d'une nation. Ni Ireland, ni Horsley Curtis, ni R.M. Roche, ni Eliza Parsons, ni même Anne Radcliffe, n'avaient su donner à leurs ruines la même valeur émotive ou la même signification.[47]

Lévy is correct in his evaluation of Maturin's ruins, but I believe that the significance of the Gothic ruin as seen by Maturin is not limited to one writer, but is part of a fundamental vision of the Gothic past shared by many other Gothic enthusiasts, a vision that has important implications and practical ramifications in their attitudes to the present and their hopes for the future.

I have already discussed the developing popularity of Gothic art, as contrasted with Classical art, in the opinions of Walpole, Hurd, Maturin, and others. What is equally important is how the Gothic world contrasted with the modern everyday world that the Gothic enthusiast inhabited. For William Morris there is little doubt that the Neo-classical and the modern worlds constitute a regressive step from Gothic culture; he describes how his Cathedral

> was left to bear as best it could the successive waves of degradation, the blindness of middle-class puritanism, the brutality of eighteenth-century squire-archy, and the stark idealless stupidity of the early nineteenth century; and there it stands now, with the foul sea of modern civilization washing against it; a token, as I said, of the hopes that were, and which civilization has destroyed. Might it but give a

> lesson to the hopes that are, and which shall some day destroy civilization.[48]

Morris's opinion of modern society is explicitly stated and may at first appear an extreme and isolated position, but other Gothicists shared this glorification of an ideal past and expressed a very similar anarchistic revulsion at contemporary society.[49]

Morris saw in the Gothic cathedral the spirit of an era culturally developed and spiritually admirable, but somehow "uncivilized" and preferable to modern civilization. Similar sentiments towards an idealized past culture are expressed in Maturin's description of the Milesian in The Wild Irish Boy; Maturin describes this character, using an architectural metaphor:

> I never beheld hoary grandeur more awful; I feel some reluctance in attempting to describe this noble old ruin. . . . He was seventy-six years of age, but he was upright as the towers of his own castle, and his intellects were as vigorous as his frame; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; his hair, which flowed loose and wild, was as white as snow; his dress was the English habit of fifty years ago; but he always wore a cloak of the brightest scarlet, whose folds he grasped and waved, when he spoke with animation. His demeanour was marked with dignity, but it was a wild and original dignity; that of a chief of a warlike country, lofty with unborrowed grandeur and habitual command; amid the unpolished forms of modern life, he looked the oak, amid the poplar and the willow.[50]

Not only do we discover in this description a nostalgia for a lost era, more free, more spirited and dignified, less polished and artificial than modern society, but we also begin to detect a note of nationalism, or perhaps "cultural chauvinism" would be a more exact term, for the feeling attaches itself to a culture that transcends national barriers. This

chauvinism admires a Northern Gothic culture which, though long past, still survives in spirit. This culture is preferred to a "mechanical" classical culture that has imposed itself on modern man, labels itself "civilization," and tries to oppress the natural characteristics of the "Gothic spirit," which still survives in individuals and out of the way places. This "Gothic spirit" is best described by Ruskin:

> Strength of will, independence of character, resoluteness of purpose, impatience of undue control, and that general tendency to set the individual reason against authority, and the individual deed against destiny, which, in the Northern tribes, has opposed itself throughout all ages, to the languid submission, in the Southern, of thought to tradition are all more or less traceable in the rigid lines, vigorous and various masses, and daringly projecting and independent structure of the Northern Gothic ornament: while the opposite feelings are in like manner legible in the graceful and softly guided waves and wreathed bands, in which Southern decoration is constantly disposed; in its tendency to lose its independence, and fuse itself into the surface of the masses upon which it is traced; and in the expression seen so often, in the arrangement of those masses themselves, of an abandonment of their strength to an inevitable necessity or a listless repose.[51]

This same Northern and Gothic chauvinism is explicitly stated by Maturin in Fatal Revenge when Cyprian relates to Ippolito some strange information he has received from the chaplain of the English Embassy in Italy concerning the literature of North-western Europe:

> He tells me that (from the roughness of the climate, or from a taste derived from their ancestry) there is a spirit in their poesy, quite different from that of the continental. A simple appeal to the strong and common feelings of our nature, often made in such language as the speakers of common life clothe their conceptions in. Of this he describes the effect to be inconceivable by a reader accustomed to the poetry of Italy. From their dramas and poems, remote and heroic adventures are almost banished, and they turn with more emotion to the indigent peasant, weeping over her famishing babe--to the maniac, who shrieks on the nightly waste--to age, pining in lonely misery--to honest toil crushed in the sore and fruitless struggle

> with oppression and adversity--than to the raving
> princess, or the declaiming hero.[52]

What Ruskin sees in Gothic architecture is a spirit similar to that which Maturin finds in this "Gothic" literature: this "national spirit" or "character" is independent; it values the individual and is always willing to struggle against authority and even destiny. The spirit of the Gothic world as seen by Maturin, Ruskin, and Morris is one that admires and aligns itself alongside those heroic individuals who engage in "fruitless struggle with oppression and adversity" rather than resign themselves "to an inevitable necessity, or a listless repose." Melmoth the Wanderer is a supreme example of such heroic rebellion.

Actually, the Gothic "national spirit" probably never existed except in the minds of writers and artists, and in their works this spirit is embodied by individuals rather than peoples. Even when the novels are set in Italy or Spain, the major figures, such as Emily, Melmoth, and St. Leon, are often from more northern countries. At least part of the purpose of the Gothicists was to remind the people of the North of their true nature, a nature that was still in the process of being moulded and defined by these same Gothicists. For example, Ruskin claimed that this Gothic spirit remained as the power and inspiration behind the art of his favourite contemporary painter, Turner, who

> had in him the wonder and sorrow concerning life and
> death which are the inheritance of the Gothic soul
> from the days of its first sea kings; and also the
> compassion and the joy that are woven into the inner-
> most fabric of every great and imaginative spirit,
> born now in countries that lived by the Christian faith
> with any courage or truth.[53]

Turner shares the "Gothic" interest in basic human fears and emotions; he

ignores the "raving princess, or the declaiming hero" and instead makes a "simple appeal to the strong and common feelings of our nature."

Maturin was also able to find contemporary survivals of the Gothic spirit in Ireland in the tradition of Milesian chiefs that he so admired and whose roots went back beyond Christianity. The Milesian chief in The Wild Irish Boy shares the same "uncivilized" superiority characteristic of Morris's cathedral:

> It is not from a contempt, or a savage and wilful blindness to the utility of jurisprudence, that its exercise is an indelible insult to a Milesian, it is from a rooted belief of a native and necessary aristocracy of character and station, a belief that the conquests of the English have not reached him, that he is yet a sovereign in his own territory, and accountable only to himself for his actions. The forms of modern policy, that equal distribution of justice that extends to every part of society, he does not despise, or defy, but he does not understand, or imagine how they can affect him. He hears of them as if they were the laws of another country--hears of them and rejoices that he is a Milesian, and exempt from all restraints but those of his own spirit.[54]

The nostalgia of this passage is apparent, but one should not overlook the irony of the phrase "as if they were laws of another country," because they were English, not Irish, laws. Also, the fact that Maturin distinguishes between aristocracy of "character and station" becomes ironic within the context of the novel when the Milesian is implicitly contrasted with English nobles. He describes a party of nobles assembled around the prime minister as a "splendid Pandemonium," and confesses that

> No human power could have discovered, under such an exterior, the passions that were tearing every heart --no one could have believed at that moment, the despair of the bright leader of the fashionable host, or the degeneracy of her glittering, fallen train--the very means that had supplied this splendid fete, would have disclosed a shocking history, had they been known.[55]

At least as far as this one group of nobles is concerned, splendor only

"concealed the depravity that raged in many a heart, and the misery that corroded all."[56] Nevertheless, Maturin had an ambiguous attitude towards the English because he sincerely dreaded political upheaval of the kind then happening in France, and yet sincerely despised the pompous, frivolous aristocracy that imposed itself on the Irish people. The fact that this English aristocracy seemed the only viable bulwark against chaos placed Maturin in a contradiction that proved extremely difficult. Against this degenerate aristocracy that he feared and hated, hated all the more because he felt dependent upon it, Maturin imagined a purer, more natural, and truly high-principled aristocrat, the Milesian. The "Milesian character" that Maturin so admired survives in his later novels and can be found in that other wild Irishman, Melmoth The Wanderer: a man out of the past, proud, aristocratic, "uncivilized," refusing to resign himself to "inevitable necessity."

A state of dignified freedom in which man is "exempt from all restraints but those of his own spirit" is the holy grail of the Gothic quest. The sense of a dull, oppressive, degenerate reality that threatened to suffocate imagination and human dignity is the force that propelled Maturin into his Gothic dream world and gave it its distinctive atmosphere. As early as his first letter to Walter Scott in 1812, Maturin was complaining of the stifling nature of his existence: he describes himself as "one who has hitherto known little of life but labour, distress and difficulty, and who has borrowed the gloomy colouring of his own pages from the shade of obscurity and misfortune under which his existence has been wasted."[57] The claustrophobic description Melmoth gives of European cities, even though

Maturin disavows Melmoth's sentiments, is consistent with the predominant atmosphere of suffocation, confinement, and oppression the pervades most of Maturin's writing:

> the more civilized crowd all together into a space which their own respiration, and the exhalation of their bodies, renders pestilential, and which give a celerity inconceivable to the circulation of disease and mortality. Four thousand of them will live together in a space smaller than the last and lightest collonnade of your young banyan-tree, in order, doubtless to increase the effects of foetid air, artificial heat, unnatural habits, and impracticable exercise. The result of these judicious precautions is just what may be guessed. The most trifling complaint becomes immediately infectious, and, during the ravages of pestilence, which this habit generates, ten thousand lives a-day are the customary sacrifice to the habit of living in cities.[58]

Again it is the more "civilized" who suffer and create most suffering. The ironic tone may be Melmoth's, but the picture painted could well be that of Dublin or London, and the vision of the civilized world, an increasingly urban world, as artificial, crowded, foetid, and unnatural is a vision that belongs to Maturin. In a letter written to Walter Scott, Maturin says,

> I envy you beyond expression, with your Highland tour and your magnificent feudal Castle--what I would give to be losing myself among its passages, or plunging into its donjon. Here I am stuck opposite a blank brick wall, listening to the unpoetical murmurs of a spout that is discharging a deluge along the pavement, two or three solitary drenched figures forming a group to the landscape, the only verdure in my sight a pot of withered mint, brown with smoke, and the thundering Machinery of a Brewery in <u>full employment</u> grating in my Ears, while its thick volumes of fetid smoke come rolling in at the windows, which I am compelled in spite of the Rain to leave open, the heat being nearly what people enjoy at Borneo. I do envy you from my soul and wish almost as much for your <u>local</u> felicity as for the permanent one which your Genius and your heart must secure you every where.[59]

For Maturin, the Gothic dream, the world of castles and dungeons, stood partly in contrast to modern life, partly as an allegory of it; either way

it revealed his disgust at the stifling mechanical world of modern, materialistic, industrial society. The very drabness and circumscription of nineteenth-century industrial society drove the imagination of some of its most creative thinkers into another world. Ruskin believed that people in the nineteenth century could not take pleasure in modern buildings, only in mediaeval architecture, and that "all men of true feeling " delight "To escape out of modern cities into natural scenery."[60] This same phenomenon that resulted in the "peculiar love of landscape" that began to develop early in the eighteenth century, accounts in part for some of the popularity and almost parallel development of the Gothic novel.

The dream world of the Gothic romance served as a safer medium of expression than the realistic novel for those who wished to take advantage of its unique qualities to release repressed desires and emotions or to attack the nature of modern civilization. Certainly its symbolic and allegorical potential allowed the Gothic novel to make implicit social comment and to release psychological repression during a period of political hypersensitivity, but it also offered a dream world that could be contrasted to the present. The novel may offer an excellent field for the ironist and satirist, but the Gothic novel presents an excellent medium for the idealist who is dealing with new or sensitive ideas, because the freedom from time and place in the Gothic dream allows the author to imagine and create new worlds. The Gothic world became a measure for the actual world, as all Romance not only serves as an escape from the tedium of our existence, but also offers us hope and inspires us to seek an improved existence. William Morris was well aware of this potential when focussing on the Gothic past through his Gothic cathedral:

> Besides these [towns], there are many more which have but a trace or two [of the past] left; sometimes, indeed, this link with the past is so beautiful and majestic in itself that it compels us when we come across it to forget for a few moments the life of today with which we are so familiar that we do not mark its wonders or its meannesses, its follies or its tragedies. It compels us to turn away from our life of habit which is all about us on our right hand and our left, and which therefore we cannot see, and forces on us the consideration of past times which we can picture to ourselves as a whole, rightly or wrongly, because they are so far off.[61]

Such, also, is one task of the Gothic novel: to recreate a picture of another world, not simply a utopia, but a "whole" world that takes into consideration the range of weaknesses and strengths in human nature, partly to contrast critically with our own world, partly to arouse recognition of aspects of our own natures that are either ignored, and therefore potentially dangerous, or threatened with atrophy, a process that reduces our humanity.

The Gothic obsession with power, which is at least partly a reaction to a claustrophobic civilization that denies the individual will and threatens to destroy his energy with mechanisms, systems, and habit, and the nostalgia for the past are two central qualities of Gothic novels. The tremendous popularity of these novels indicates that these qualities struck a sympathetic note in the hearts and minds of the mass of common readers. However, the obsession with power and the nostalgia for the past are not without potential danger. Power, of course, includes itself in two points of view: either that of the person exercising the power, or that of the victim of that power. In <u>The Monk</u>, for example, there is a greater tendency for the reader to identify with Ambrosio and to riot in his excesses, whereas in the works of Radcliffe identification is more readily made with the heroine's

attempt to free herself from another's superior power. This scope allows a Gothic novel to develop in either the direction of sensationalism and pornography, or in the direction of pedantic and, often, radical social comment. Maturin tends to view the world of his novels through the eyes of the persecuted in order to express his own sense of frustration and to comment on the human condition. Nevertheless, Maturin is aware that the obsession with power, which may simply arise out of a frustrated but natural desire to have power over one's own life, can easily turn into a temptation to surrender one's will entirely and to "join those members of the human race who have lost their nerve and sided with death against man: the advocates of power."[62] The continual frustration of the individual will may result in power worship, as Maturin shows in Melmoth the Wanderer when Alonzo escapes with the parricide monk:

> My companion proposed to ascend first, and I did not venture to oppose him. I was too much in his power to resist; and in early youth superiority of depravity always seems like superiority of power. We reverence, with a prostituted idolatry, those who have passed through the degrees of vice before us. This man was criminal and crime gave him a kind of heroic immunity in my eyes. Premature knowledge in life is always to be purchased by guilt. He knew more than I did,--he was my all in this desperate attempt. I dreaded him as a demon, yet I invoked him as a god.[63]

Just as the obsession with power can become a worship of power, so can nostalgia for the past become a worship of the past, and cultural chauvinism can become uncontrolled xenophobia and hysterical cultural imperialism.

The Gothic spirit, therefore, is characterized by at least two obsessions: one is a nostalgic longing for a past culture, another is an obsession with power and rebellion. Both of these obsessions are

familiar in recent history. Arthur Koestler says that during the last years of the Weimar Republic, "when a Communist or Fascist Revolution seemed equally possible," a certain Ernst Juenger coined the phrase "anti-capitalistic nostalgia of the masses." Koestler, who modifies this phrase to "anti-materialistic nostalgia," defines this phenomenon as a "vague but violent longing" shared by"groups of people otherwise very different in tendencies"; it is "attracted by mysticism, romanticism, the irrational ethical values, by medieval twilight."[64] Hitler benefitted from this nostalgia by reviving Nordic myth and exploiting cultural chauvinism, while at the same time developing a cult of power worship. This does not mean that the Gothic spirit is inherently fascist. During the same period that Hitler was perverting the Gothic spirit for fascism in Europe, George Orwell, following Morris' path, was dedicating his own Gothic spirit to the cause of socialism and democracy in England. At least for Koestler, the late 1930's and the 1940's constituted a new Gothic age, one stage in a cycle in which Gothic periods are followed by Renaissance periods in a "succession of yoga-nights and commissar-days in the curriculum of the race." The Gothic periods, the "irrational or romantic periods of mass-psychology are periods of sleep and dream. The dreams are not necessarily peaceful; more often they are nightmares. . . ."[65] Whether one sees the Gothic spirit in society as part of a cycle or as a continuous movement that fluctuates in strength, its roots can be traced back at least to the eighteenth century, and one can safely assume that this same spirit will, in some form, be part of our future. The dangers of the spirit have been proven by history, and may threaten human existence again if irrational forces repossess humanity and the frustrated individual will leads to a

mass worship of raw power, and the nostalgia for a past more "generous and colourful" than the present is ignored until it bursts out in an explosion of mass hysteria. The danger is not in the Gothic-anarchistic spirit itself, but in ignoring its existence and not attempting to understand its source and significance. Men like Maturin, Ruskin, Morris and Orwell have shown that the Gothic spirit is an expression of basic human needs and desires that have been denied by modern civilization: the need of the individual to express his own power and will in his life, the need to be free of habit and routine, the need for simplicity and privacy, the need to be close to nature and its cycles and part of an organic human community free from the tyranny of closed systems and institutions, the need for a man to be guided by his heart and not to be an alienated automaton in some vast social machine set to run like a clock. The strictly rationalistic nature of modern industrial civilization, with its worship of efficiency and scientific determinism, poses a threat, often only sub-consciously recognized, to human nature; it satisfies the need for food, clothing, and shelter by suppressing the need for community, simplicity, and independence, but this "neglected branch" may take its "revenge by reverting to archaic myths, and beating the jungle tom-tom drowned by the ticking of the scientific clock."[66]

The Gothic novel is an early murmur of this "jungle tom-tom," heard when the "scientific clock" and the industrial machine were young and new and creating an intolerable din in Western civilization. Bewildered by their new and frightening civilization, many people took relief in the world of the Gothic dream. At first, this dream had no apparent political significance, but Godwin and Maturin both discovered the propaganda potential of Gothic horror, and Maturin, in <u>Melmoth the Wanderer</u>, isolated in 1820 many of the

fears and forebodings of a later Gothic spirit, George Orwell. Maturin envisioned a world in which closed systems of thought, institutions, and bureaucracies restricted the lives of men and robbed them of energy, privacy, and individuality, creating a claustophobic environment in which men who refused to submit entirely to the machine were faced with almost certain destruction. Orwell

> detested "the smelly little orthodoxies" as he called them, by which he meant all the closed systems of thought from Catholicism to communism. His own limitations of thought and feeling, his obsession and his enthusiasms, were always personal and temperamental rather than partisan and theoretical.[67]

So did Maturin have

> a genuine distaste for authoritarian political systems, especially as they are linked with religious tyranny, and an insistence upon the right of the individual to determine his destiny on earth as well as to make his appeals to God without priestly interference.[68]

Both Orwell and Maturin analysed the obsession with power and understood its possible benefits and potential dangers, both hated the idea of a world dominated by mechanism, both shared a nostalgia for a simpler, more generous and colourful past existence, both admired and longed for independence, both loved and admired what they saw as the natural simplicity and generosity of the human heart, and both believed that the anarchistic impulse is the main hope for saving men from becoming anonymous automatons in a modern, mechanized, institutionalized civilization.

The Gothic novel thrived during the last half of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century. These novels are most easily recognized by external paraphernalia: ghosts, castles, monks, manuscripts and monasteries. Yet the greatest of the Gothic novels share a more fundamental Gothic spirit. Certainly it is conceivable that many

of the second-rate writers who tried to profit from the popularity of the genre created works that are "Gothic" in name only, just as many modern harlequin romances can be made "Gothic" by merely setting them in an old Scottish castle, or in a deserted country mansion, and introducing a mysterious stranger and the odd ghost. Nevertheless, the masters of the Gothic genre, Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, Godwin and Maturin, have not merely exploited unusual settings and supernatural incidents, but they have captured a spirit in their works that is truly Gothic, a spirit that is at once reactionary and revolutionary, a paradoxical spirit that takes the present into the past in order to find the future. Even in the relatively gentle works of Radcliffe we find a genuine nostalgia for the past that constitutes a tacit rejection of the present, and always we find in these Gothic novels an obsession with power that manifests itself as a preoccupation with oppression and rebellion. The Gothic concern for the past and the obsession with power are both aspects of a fundamental rejection of modern, materialistic, industrial society, and this Gothic-anarchistic impulse has survived even the passing of the Gothic genre.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Charles Robert Maturin, Melmoth the Wanderer, a Tale, intro. W.F. Axton (1820; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 265.

[2] Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 23.

[3] Alex Comfort, The Novel and Our Time (Vancouver: Pendejo Press, 1969), p. 11.

[4] Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, a Story, in Three Gothic Novels, ed Peter Fairclough (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 90.

[5] Ibid., p. 110.

[6] Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, a Romance, intro. R. Austin Freeman (London: Everyman's Library, 1962), I, 310.

[7] William Godwin, The Adventures of Caleb Williams, or Things as They Are, intro. George Sherburn (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 65.

[8] Matthew G. (Monk) Lewis, The Monk, intro. John Berryman, ed. L.F. Peck (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1952), p. 364.

[9] Ann Radcliffe, The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents, a Romance, ed. Fredrick Garber (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 97.

[10] Ibid., p. 175.

[11] William Godwin, St. Leon, a Tale of the Sixteenth Century, ed. Devendra P. Varma (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 244.

[12] Charles Robert Maturin, Fatal Revenge, or The Family of Montorio, a Romance (New York: E. Sargeant, 1808), I, 162.

[13] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 141.

[14] Ibid., p. 298. Note: In the novel, when Immalee is taken to Spain her name is changed to Isidora. However, to avoid confusion, throughout this thesis she is always referred to as Immalee.

[15] Radcliffe, The Italian, p. 121.

[16] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 105.

[17] Godwin, Caleb Williams, p. 135.

[18] Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England, p. 198.

[19] W. F. Axton, "Introduction," to Melmoth the Wanderer, a Tale by Charles Robert Maturin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. xi.

[20] George Orwell's, Nineteen Eighty-Four, a Novel (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949) has more in common with Gothic novels than just a double title. It is related to the Gothic novel in much the same way Godwin's Caleb Williams is: although, in a strict sense, neither of these works are Gothic novels because they are not set in the past and have no ghosts or castles, both books have exploited a great deal of conventional Gothic imagery and both share a strong "elemental" relationship with the best Gothic novels. Orwell's novel may not have castles, but it does share the Gothic fascination with architecture, whether it be in the description of the windowless Ministry of Truth, "an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, 300 metres into the air"(1984, p. 7), a structure that seems to symbolize the heirarchical and totalitarian nature of Ingsoc, or Winston's discovery of the picture of the Church of St. Clement Danes, that only survives as a ruin, and his obsession with finding the words of the song about the ancient churches of London (1984, p. 82).

In Nineteen Eighty-Four, the Party has only perfected methods of oppression that have their roots deep in the past, and it is compared to "organizations such as the Catholic Church" the essence of whose rule is "the persistence of a certain world-view and a certain way of life, imposed by the dead upon the living" (1984, p. 168). So the Inquisition that persecutes Alonzo, in Melmoth, or Ellena, in The Italian, is similar in essence to the Party that persecutes Winston. Winston's imprisonment in the Ministry of Love, where there "is no difference between night and day" (1984, p. 186), is reminiscent of Alonzo's confinement in the monastery dungeon, where "time withheld its delicious diary of rising and setting suns"(Melmoth, p. 114). Alonzo knows that in the monastery or Inquisition he "is in their power"(Melmoth, p. 110), and Winston knows that if he is caught by the Thought Police he "will be without power of any kind"(1984, p. 135). Both Winston and Alonzo are debased in their captivity: Alonzo finding that "fear is very debasing. I had a dread of violent means"(Melmoth, p. 110), and Winston finding that "In the face of pain there are no heroes"(1984, p. 192), and becoming "as shameless as an animal"(1984, p. 193). Winston is persecuted by a "skull-faced man" who is an "inquisitor"(1984, p. 196). O'Brian compares the Party's methods to the Inquisition's and notes their improvement on past techniques of eradicating "heresy"(1984, p. 203). The Superior's reminder that "we have the power here, and that you shall feel"(Melmoth, p. 111) is not greatly different to O'Brian's statement,"'We are the priests of power,'he said, 'God is power. . . . It is time for you to gather some idea of what power means.'"(1984, p. 212).

George Woodcock, in The Crystal Spirit: a Study of George Orwell (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1966) says that in the late 1940's Orwell was given to talkingin an "apocalyptic vein" and painting "a horrifying Gothic picture of the fate that might befall us"(Crystal Spirit, p. 26), and this Gothic vision resulted in the novel, Nineteen Eighty-Four. Most importantly, however, most of George Orwell's work share with the best Gothic novels the fundamental anarchistic impulse that is characterized by a nostalgia for a simpler more human past existence, and an obsession with power and the struggle of the individual to resist the oppression

of institutions and the "advocates of power." Orwell, like many Gothic novelists, in particular C. R. Maturin, believed that "The important thing is to have understood the truth about one's situation, and to have uttered the cry of rebellion that confirms one's humanity. This is what real heroism consists of"(Crystal Spirit, p. 227). This spirit of rebellion in the interest of humanity is the most important aspect of the Gothic Spirit found in the works of such divergent writers as Walpole, Godwin, Radcliffe, Maturin, Ruskin, Morris, and Orwell.

21 Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, in Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, ed. Bredvold, McKillop and Whitney (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1973), p. 1107.

22 Ibid., p. 1108.

23 Radcliffe, The Italian, p. 91.

24 John Ruskin, quoted in Ruskin Today, ed. Kenneth Clark (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 22.

25 Godwin, Caleb Williams, p. 327.

26 For an excellent discussion of the Byronic temperament see: Mario Praz, "The Metamorphoses of Satan," The Romantic Agony, trans, Angus Davidson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 53-94. Praz isolates such important characteristics as "heroic energy"(p. 58), the spirit of revenge and "Satanic defiance"(p. 71), and he quotes heavily from "the sombre portrait of his idealized self drawn by Byron in three famous stanzas of Lara(Canto I, xvii-xix)" beginning:

In him inexplicably mix'd appear'd
Much to be loved and hated, sought and feared.

27 V.M.S. Kennedy, "Myth and the Gothic Dream: C.R. Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer," Pacific Coast Philology, 4 (1968), 47.

28 Quoted in Clark, Ruskin Today, pp. 107-108.

29 Ibid., p. 106.

30 Maturin, Melmoth, p. 148.

31 Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, "Letters on Chivalry and Romance," in The Works of Richard Hurd, D.D. Lord Bishop of Worchester (1811; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967), p. 300.

32 Godwin, Caleb Williams, p. 174.

33 Radcliffe, Mysteries of Udolpho, I, 230.

34 Maturin, Melmoth, p. 23.

[35] The importance of rebellion persists in modern "anarchist" novels. George Woodcock says that for George Orwell "The important thing is to . . . have uttered the cry of rebellion that confirms one's humanity." The Crystal Spirit, p. 227.

[36] Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, p. 110.

[37] Horace Walpole, The Mysterious Mother, in Constable's edition of The Castle of Otranto and The Mysterious Mother, ed. Montague Summers (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1924), p. 204.

[38] Radcliffe, The Italian, p. 40.

[39] Maturin, Fatal Revenge, II, 36.

[40] Ibid., II, 36.

[41] Godwin, Caleb Williams, p. 124.

[42] Radcliffe, Mysteries of Udolpho, I, 252.

[43] Maturin, Melmoth, pp. 47-48.

[44] Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, p. 144.

[45] Ibid., p. 51.

[46] Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England, p. 189.

[47] Maurice Lévy, Le Roman "Gothique" Anglais: 1764-1824 (Toulouse: Association de publications de la Faculté de Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Toulouse, 1968), p. 551.

[48] William Morris, "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," in Counter Tradition: A Reader in the Literature of Dissent and Alternatives, ed. Sheila Delany (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), p. 205.

[49] George Orwell also shares this tendency to idealize the past. George Woodcock says that "He [Orwell] regretted the fading of a past society which, for all its faults, seemed to him more generous and colourful than the present"(The Crystal Spirit, p. 3). Woodcock also claims that "Like William Morris, he disliked modern machinery, though he knew it was unavoidable, and he loved to make things with his own hands, no matter how inefficiently. And he shared with both Morris and Chesterton a great nostalgia for the past which he tended to idealize"(The Crystal Spirit, p. 29).

[50] Charles Robert Maturin, The Wild Irish Boy (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), I, 181-182.

[51] John Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," in The Stones of Venice, vol. II of The Works of John Ruskin, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, X vols. (London: George Allen, 1904), p. 242.

[52] Maturin, Fatal Revenge, I, 49.

[53] Quoted in Clark, Ruskin Today, p. 190.

[54] Maturin, The Wild Irish Boy, II, 262-263.

[55] Ibid., p. III, 355.

[56] Ibid., III, 43.

[57] F.E. Ratchford and H. McCarthy, Jr., ed., The Correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin: with a few other allied letters (Austin,Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1937), p. 7.

[58] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 231.

[59] Ratchford and McCarthy, ed., The Correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin, p. 81.

[60] Ruskin, The Nature of Gothic," p. 207.

[61] Morris, "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," pp. 202-203.

[62] Comfort, The Novel and Our Time, p. 11.

[63] Maturin, Melmoth, p. 152. In another passage Alonzo is delighted to render both his "physical" and "moral responsibility": "The precipitate vigour of Juan's movements seemed to impel mine without my own concurrence; and as the shortness of the time left me no opportunity for deliberation, it left me also none for choice. I was like a clock whose hands are pushed forward, and I struck the hours I was impelled to strike. When a powerful agency is thus exercised on us,--when another undertakes to think, feel, and act for us, we are delighted to transfer to him, not only our physical, but our moral resposibility"(Melmoth, p. 141). Whereas these passages show the temptation to admire, even worship power for its own sake, a latter passage shows the temptation to take a sadistic delight in weakness and suffering: for there is an "excitement which the sight of suffering never fails to give, from the spectacle of a tragedy, or an auto da fe, down to the writhings of the meanest reptile on whom you can inflict torture, and feel that torture is the result of your own power. It is a species of feeling of which we never can divest ourselves,--a triumph over those whose sufferings have placed them below us, and no wonder,--suffering is always an indication of weakness,--we glory in our impenetrability" (Melmoth, p. 160).

[64] Arthur Koestler, The Yogi and the Commissar and other Essays (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 19.

[65] Ibid., p. 20.

[66] Ibid., p. 243.

[67] Woodcock, The Crystal Spirit, p. 56.

[68] Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England, p. 190.

CONCLUSION

Gothic: An "Instinct for Freedom"

Although Melmoth the Wanderer is a dark and gloomy novel that seems to dwell on the perversity of human nature and the futility of existence, its author, Charles Robert Maturin, was not an enemy of life. He did not submissively succumb to a philosophy that dwelt on the vanity of human existence: originally, he loved to dance, to entertain, to shine, but he found his deepest impulse to live stifled and enslaved by the physical and moral wilderness of his society. The very nature of his art, both in structure and content, is a rebellious attempt to liberate himself from the monotonous routines, institutions, systems and machines that threatened to enslave him.

The "perfected rhythms" of the new industrialized world that surrounded him disgusted Maturin, as they later did Ruskin, Morris and Orwell. According to Ruskin:

> Alas!. if read rightly, these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek. Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and best sense, free. But to smother their souls within them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin which, after the worms work on it, is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with,--this is to be slavemasters indeed; and there might be more freedom in England, though her feudal lord's lightest words were worth men's lives, and though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields, than there is while the animation of her multitudes is sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke, and the strength of them is given daily to be wasted into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line.[1]

Like Ruskin, Maturin distrusted and despised the rapid changes in the society around him, and if he was unable to translate his own inner

impulses into some kind of coherent political philosophy, as Ruskin finally did and as Morris and Godwin did, it is because, like Swift, Maturin "was fighting the battles of the future with the weapons of the past."[2] Although one might easily accuse Maturin of being timid and hypocritical in his avowed political and religious opinions, one must remember that Maturin was always painfully aware of his responsibility to his family and of his precarious social position on which their well-being depended. Maturin was a true victim of his circumstances; his life was twisted by financial problems and fear of the oppressive power of the very Church he served. Always he dreaded "the Hour in which the Heart of Man is tried above any other, the Hour in which your children ask you for Food, and you have no answer."[3] According to his wife, "he laboured with incessant assiduity for his family even after it had pleased the Almighty to deprive him of health--his suffering with regard to pecuniary circumstances preyed on a constitution naturally delicate, till at last it put a period to his existence."[4] Turning to writing to supplement his meagre income, he found that almost everything he wrote threatened to ruin him, and always he felt obliged to defend, apologize for, and disavow the sentiments expressed in his fiction.

Added to all his other misery is the painful torment of conscious hypocrisy, which added to his burden of guilt; in an apology for The Wild Irish Boy, Maturin asserts, "He who would prostitute his morals, is a monster, he who sacrifices his inclination and habits of writing, is--an author," but he cannot help wistfully adding:

> At the same time, it is desirable to look forward to the time, when independence, acquired without any sacrifice of integrity, will enable a man to consult only himself in the choice and mode of his subject.

> He who is capable of writing a good novel, ought to feel that he was born for a higher purpose than writing novels.[5]

The "independence" that Maturin so desired was never achieved and became for him more and more an impossible dream, a Gothic dream. Throughout his life the tone of Maturin's prefaces and letters changes from hopeful servility, to bitterness, to the bitter despair that coloured his last years and his greatest novel, but what Morton says of Swift is equally applicable to Maturin: "the bitterness is not that of a man with a low estimate of human dignity and the value of human happiness but of one who found his high estimate of man's place in the universe perpetually contradicted by everything around him."[6]

I do not wish to place Maturin under the shadow of Swift, nor to claim that Maturin was in Swift's debt for literary inspiration, but the similarities between the two men, not only in situation and region, but also in temperament, are revealing. Both Maturin and Swift were concerned for human dignity, and their hatred of injustice and oppression was intensified by the example they discovered in Ireland. Whatever Maturin's true political and religious convictions were, that is if one assumes that he was ever able to sort them out himself, he definitely shares a distinctive world view with men such as Swift, Godwin, Ruskin and Morris, a view that Morton has defined as Tory radicalism:

> Swift may be reckoned the first in that curious succession of Tory radicals who expressed in a more or less distorted form an opposition to those features of capitalist development which bore most oppressively upon the masses. In the direct succession, Cobbett was perhaps the last and greatest figure; but the line reappears in the nineteenth century, touching the fringes of Chartism in the person of Oastler, J.R. Stephens and Charles Kingsley. Finally, through Ruskin, this Tory radicalism was not without influence on William Morris and the modern working class movement in Britain.[7]

Of this group at least Kingsley, Ruskin, and Morris were Gothic enthusiasts, and one could easily add others, such as Walpole, Lewis, Lytton, and, of course, Maturin. Although some might find it difficult to accept Godwin as a Tory, Morton shows Godwin's admiration of Swift's political views and his own distrust of revolution.[8] Perhaps some confusion can be avoided if, instead of calling these men Tory radicals, we refer to them as Anarcho-humanists, an equally applicable term and one that allows us more easily to extend the line down into our own era to include such writers as George Orwell.

The fact that many of these Tory radicals or Anarcho-humanists were fascinated by the Gothic dream world (Swift, of course, had his own dream world) is not really surprising. This new world of adventure, with its constant struggles for liberty and its battles against oppressors, became the perfect "control" by which one could evaluate the actual world, a world in which state, church, and the market place were imposing impersonal systems that threatened to stifle the individual by mechanically ordering his existence. Even as early as the first Gothic prophet, Horace Walpole, we find the seeds of that aversion, not just to powerful individuals, but to whole systems of power which developed into the dread of system so apparent in the works of Godwin, Maturin, and later Gothicists. Benedict, in The Mysterious Mother, believes that the Countess is developing heresies that are a threat to the power and influence of the Church, for whose sake, he says, "I have forgot I am a man."[9] The cynical monk, Martin, believes that all orthodoxies are fundamentally the same, that Zeno and Ignatius differ only in power, and that the advocates of power remain secure in their domination of humanity:

> Fear not a reign so transient. Statesmen too
> Will join to stem the torrent; or new follies
> Replace the old. Each chieftain that attacks us
> Must grow the pope of his own heresy.
> E'en stern philosophy, if once triumphant,
> Shall frame some jargon, and exact obedience
> To metaphysic nonsense worse than ours.
> The church is but a specious name for empire,
> And will exist wherever fools have fears.
> Rome is no city; 'tis the human heart;
> And there suffice it if we plant our banners.[10]

Martin's observation seems prophetic of the 200 years of history that have followed the publication of Walpole's works. It reads like a manifesto for the Gothic school: the enemy is systems of power; the battlefield is the human heart; the weapons of the enemy are our own fears. The weapons with which we can fight the enemy are not stated, but they include a spirit of independence, an appreciation of human dignity and a faith in human potential, and a willingness to fight an unbeatable foe.

If these sentiments could be expressed by Walpole in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the world was still limited in its movement towards urbanization and just beginning its industrial transformation, a world in which an Englishman was still "closer in material things to Caesar's legionnaires than to his own great-grandchildren,"[11] how insecure would be the sensitive writer seventy years later "in the face of triumphant materialism?"[12] In Maturin's world, segments of the nobility refusing to conform to commercial necessity decayed and vanished, the church was becoming increasingly material and secularized, ordinary farmers were driven from the land to become cogs in machines, even the bourgeois was "a prisoner of his investment,"[13] and every part of society, caught up in irresistible change, felt threatened by other parts of society. The industrialization of society must have had more profound psychological

effects than can easily be grasped by the modern mind. The fear, uncertainty, and impotence felt when faced with a changing world that threatened to transform all it could reach into parts of a vast machine can easily be ignored by the modern thinker, who is born at a time when such threats are more familiar and better understood. For the working class, perhaps, the change was most abrupt and all-encompassing, but soon no segment of society was untouched by extensive mechanization and rationalization. The factory becomes the perfect metaphor for modern society:

> On almost all . . . the machine imposed a new discipline. No longer could the spinner turn his wheel and the weaver throw his shuttle at home, free of supervision, both in their own good time. Now the work had to be done in a factory, at a pace set by tireless, inanimate equipment, as part of a large team that had to begin, pause, and stop in unison--all under the close eye of overseers, enforcing assiduity by moral, pecuniary, occasionally even physical means of compulsion. The factory was a new kind of prison; the clock a new kind of jailer.[14]

In Melmoth the Wanderer there are no factories, and only one man with the "natural cowardice of a mercantile spirit."[15] Nevertheless the atmosphere of the factory pervades the novel: men become machines; not even Melmoth can avoid the feeling of always being observed; a monotonous routine triumphs everywhere in a world that has become a prison dominated by a clock.

In the last chapter of The Gothic Quest, Montague Summers takes great pains to prove that "The Romanticist is not a revolutionary; he is rather a reactionary. He turns back towards and seeks to revive--in some measure to relive the past."[16] To a degree Summers is right, but he seems to have forgotten his earlier assent to Professor Boyesen's description: "Romanticism is really in one side retrogressive, as it seeks to bring back the past,

and on the other hand, progressive as it seeks to break up the traditional order of things."[17] This is the best way to approach the Gothic Romance, through its contradictions, for the tension of its contradictions provides the dynamism of the genre. Within the novels we find various contradictions and often considerable paradox: pure maidens and incest; delight in power and struggle for liberty; evil charismatic "villains" and good but often bland "heroes"; religious enthusiasm and atheistic scepticism; conformity and anarchy. Depending on the personality of the particular author, the weight of any novel can be unbalanced in favour of either the reactionary or progressive elements. Some Gothic novels revel in sadism, xenophobia, a delight for power to the degree that their hysterical nature could easily be described as "fascist"; others, such as Godwin's, express sentiments that are libertarian and humanitarian, but all are derived from the same impulse to escape or break the bonds and limitations of a life of monotony, habit, impotence, and nonentity.

The growth of the Gothic novel, therefore, is a process of defining an impulse that was vague, confusing, and often frightening to those who experienced it. When this impulse reached its highest and clearest expression in Charles Robert Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, the path was clear for prose fiction to make new advances based in part on what it had learned during those first decades of the Gothic experiment. In the Gothic novel, representatives of natural power, such as mountains, storms and torrents, as well as the Gothic hero-villain and Gothic architecture, exist in an atmosphere of Gothic nostalgia and together define the rebellious and anarchistic impulse that lies at the centre of the genre. Seldom is this impulse openly admitted by the novelist, even to himself,

but the very choice of the genre implies a dissatisfaction with the orderly constructions and drabness of a society that rests its own impressive power on the mechanical ordering and the mindless anonymity of the huge mass of its members. On the surface this repugnance at "civilization" only appears to be represented in the Gothic novels by their nature as "escape literature," a term often used disdainfully by those who fail to recognize that the very presence of such literature implies a need to "escape." "Escape literature" is a social comment. Most of the early Gothic texts are very cautious about polluting the purity of their Romance with overt social comment; only occasionally is frustration released in spasmodic outbursts of indignation and despair, and it is primarily these outbursts that in turn provoked the wrath of contemporary critics against a supposed genre of degeneration. Godwin, however, took the language and spirit of the Gothic novel into the world of actuality, and by this technique both exposed the hidden nature of the genre and harnessed its psychological power for the purpose of his message. But it was Maturin who realized the most significant step by merging the world of actuality and historical verisimilitude into the environment of the Gothic dream, thereby opening up his masterpiece, Melmoth the Wanderer, as a battlefield in which idealism battles with actuality, nature opposes the artificial, human beings battle automatons, individuals defy systems of power and thought, and the free spirit struggles against "civilization."

The Gothic quest had explored and defined one of the essential paradoxes of modern man: the apparent contradiction between an anarchistic impulse and impatience of external restraint, and man's social nature, the desire to belong to a human community and to be accepted by one's fellows.

This contradiction is embodied in the Gothic-Byronic hero-villain, especially Melmoth. Yet it is the suspicion that this contradiction is only "apparent" and not "natural" that led the Gothicists to explore the historical past and to render their impressions of that past, whether correct or faulty, in literature. It is not coincidence that the genre began almost in unison with, and witnessed its greatest popularity during the Industrial Revolution when factories and machines were "rationalizing" life and creating a new, and for many a repulsive, even frightening, "civilization." The explanation that the Gothicists were searching for is perhaps best described by Ruskin when he says,

> It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature themselves.[18]

The conclusion that Ruskin can state intellectually was only felt intuitively by earlier Gothicists, but without their efforts at sorting out their repressed "nature" and trying to define the nature of a freedom they only "suspected," it is unlikely that Ruskin could have arrived at such a clear statement of the greatest "evil of the times." One can easily imagine that the words spoken by Schemoli to Ippolito in the dark recess of a damp vault represent an inner voice calling out of the darkness in an attempt to explain to the Gothic artist the nature of his creation: "if you were capable of reason, would you not perceive that this restlessness of mind, this appetite for vehement struggle, and rapid pursuit, is but the oppressive sense of unaccomplished destiny?"[19]

FOOTNOTES

[1] John Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," in The Stones of Venice, vol. II of The Works of John Ruskin, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, X vols. (London: George Allen, 1904), p. 193.

[2] A.L. Morton, The English Utopia (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1952), p. 93.

[3] F.E. Ratchford and McCarthy, Jr., ed., The Correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin: with a few other allied letters (Austin,Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1937), p. 35.

[4] Ibid., p. 103.

[5] Charles Robert Maturin, "Dedication," to The Wild Irish Boy (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), p. vii.

[6] Morton, The English Utopia, p. 110.

[7] Ibid., p. 91.

[8] Ibid., p. 91.

[9] Horace Walpole, The Mysterious Mother, in Constable's Edition of The Castle of Otranto and The Mysterious Mother, ed. Montague Summers (London: Constable and Company, 1924), p. 212.

[10] Ibid., p. 213.

[11] David S. Landes, The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 5.

[12] Ibid., p. 25.

[13] Ibid., p. 43.

[14] Ibid., p. 43.

[15] Charles Robert Maturin, Melmoth the Wanderer, a Tale, intro. W.F. Axton (1820; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 336.

[16] Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 404.

[17] Ibid., p. 23.

[18] Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," p. 194.

[19] Charles Robert Maturin, Fatal Revenge, or The Family of Montorio, a Romance (New York: E. Sargeant, 1808), II, 37.

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