

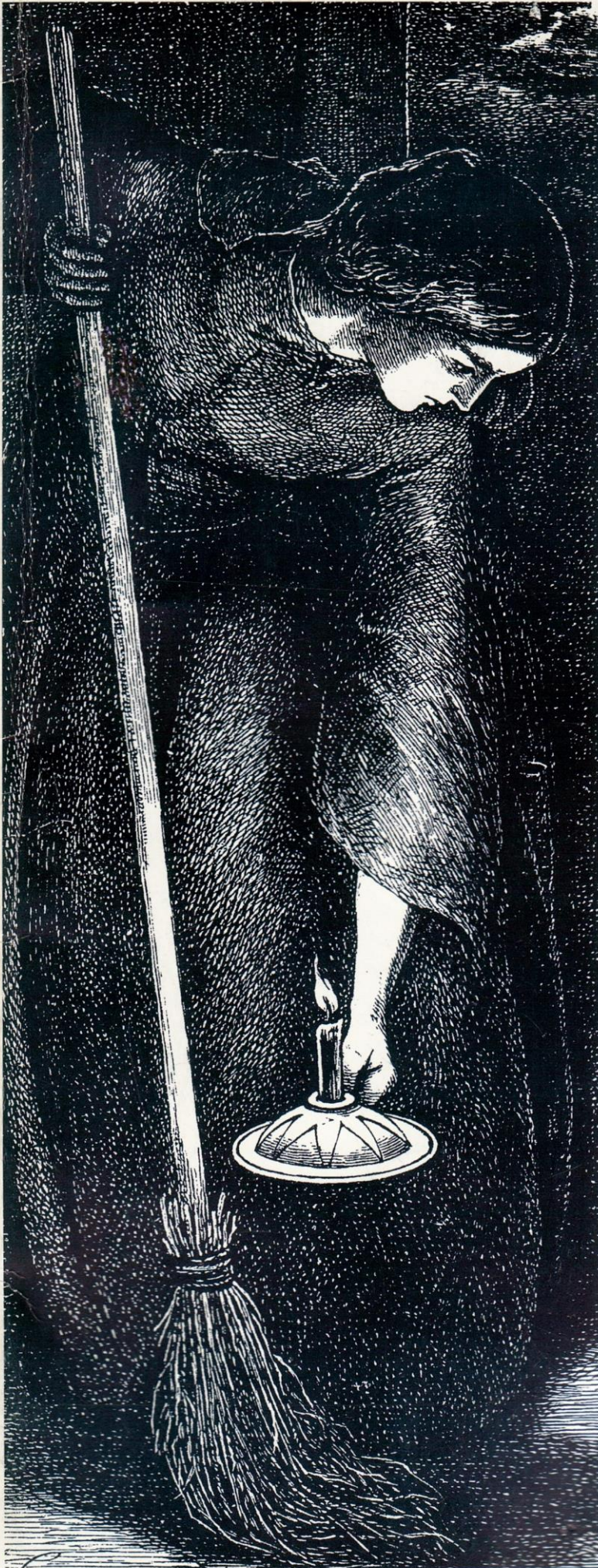
Udolpho

WINTER 1998

FINAL ISSUE

"The dinner took place on 28th September 1991. It was a wild stormy evening, with constant gusts of rain and wind, which made Newstead Abbey very atmospheric. We had a private tour before supper, which was good fun. The supper was not too bad either, though it began most decorously with people being extremely polite and well-behaved ... Drink, however, pretty soon put an end to all that rubbish. As the storm thundered over the Abbey Park, the wine disappeared at an alarming rate. There were several very heated arguments ... Alexander Dixon was told that emotions are not felt within the heart but the intestines, and discovered that there was a menacing sub-genre named 'funeralism', which had just been invented and nobody knew what it was yet."

*From a Brief History of
Udolpho & the Goth Soc*





Funeral Oration ~ Jennie Gray	3	17	Last Bites ~ Robert Furze
Rest in Peace ~ Bernard O'Brien	6	19	Reluctant Agony ~ Michael Axworthy
Melancholia ~ Jonathan Little	8	24	English Bone Crypts ~ Andrew Phelvin
Portugese Literature of Terror ~ Alexandre Dias Pinto	14	30	19th Century French Horror ~ Terry Hale

Front Cover: Millais, 'What happened to that sixpence for the gas meter?', from *Parables of Our Lord*



MANAGING EDITOR *Jennie Gray* MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY *Julie Fennelly*

UDOLPHO, the magazine of the Gothic Society • Issued quarterly: March, June, September, December, arriving around the middle of those months (slightly later for overseas members)
• Chatham House, Gosshill Road, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5NS • Tel: 0181-467 8475, Fax: 0181-295 1967 •
Produced by The Gargoyle's Head Press • © The Gargoyle's Head Press Ltd.

• Subscription per Annum: UK £22.50; Overseas £26; US \$47 •

Cheques should be made out to 'The Gothic Society'

Special packing £3 per annum UK (overseas already sent in reinforced envelopes). All overseas magazines are sent surface mail unless airmail supplement paid (£4/\$8 all areas except Australia, New Zealand, Far East, which are £8/\$16)



Solitudo

Democritus Abderites

Solitudo



Furor

THE ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY.

*What it is With all the kind's causes,
symptomes, Prægnosticks & severall cures of it.*
In three Partitions, with their severall
Sections, members & sublections.

*Philosophically. Medicinally.
Historically, opened & cut up.*

By

Democritus Junior

*With a Satyricall Preface, conducing
to the following Discourse.*

*The first Edition, corrected and
augmented by the Author.*

Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.



Hypochondriacus



Superstitiosus



Democritus

Junior



Maniacus



Dorae



Oxford
Printed for
Henry Cripps.

1638



Helicorus

MELANCHOLIA:

Mental Illness or Vital Creative 'Humour'?

by JONATHAN LITTLE

PRIOR TO the twentieth century, the 'disease' of Melancholia (later Melancholy) was widely recognised and much discussed in medical and artistic circles. Indeed, the scholar Erwin Panofsky has demonstrated, in pictorial or iconographic records, how the representation of Melancholy may date back 'thousands of years'.

In more recent times, Aubrey and Clarendon defined Melancholy as a 'disposition to gloominess'; Sidney saw it as a 'gloomy, pensive, discontented temper'; and, most germanely, Milton believed it to be a 'kind of madness, in which the mind is always fixed on one object' (sixteenth and seventeenth century definitions as documented in Samuel Johnson's celebrated *Dictionary of the English Language* of 1755).

Yet this 'disease' should be recognised as much for its positive qualities as its dismal and unfortunate consequences, for it is capable of inducing a visionary creative state which is often the precursor to the creation of extraordinary, and sometimes bizarre and innovative, works of art and intellect. Indeed, it was the contention of no lesser a figure than Aristotle that genius is inextricably linked to Melancholy:

All truly outstanding men, whether distinguished in philosophy, in statecraft, in poetry or in the arts, are melancholics — some of them even to such an extent that they suffer from ailments induced by the black gall.

PROBLEMATICA

It is, however, to the Greek physician Galen (129-99 BC) that we must first turn to gain a basic understanding of this intriguing state of mind. His widely accepted theory of the Four Temperaments (sanguine, choleric, melancholic and phlegmatic) gained great currency in Western civilisation. The Four Temperaments were influenced by the four principal fluids or 'humours' of the body — blood (warm and moist), choler (yellow gall, hot and dry), melancholy (black gall, cold and dry) and phlegm (cold and moist), the differing proportions of which determined one's physical and mental characteristics. These humours were thought to partake of the same essence as their corresponding elements (air, fire, earth, water), winds (pleasant Zephyr, hot Eurus, rough Boreas, bitter Auster), seasons (spring, summer, autumn, winter), times of day (morning, midday, evening, night), and

the four phases of life (youth, maturity, late middle age, old age). In absolutely healthy (i.e. immortal) individuals, the four humours supposedly maintained themselves in perfect harmony. In all human beings since the Fall of Man, however, the proportions of these fluids had changed continually, and, from time to time, the balance might be seriously and sometimes irrevocably upset, leading to illness, even to death.

Renaissance artists knew 'Dame Melancholy' to be a Muse. The quintessential depiction of this concept is Albrecht Dürer's famous engraving, *Melencolia I* (1514). (The singular roman numeral most likely refers to the fact that Dürer had intended at least one further engraving in this series, portraying another aspect of the 'tragic unrest of human creation'.) With *Melencolia I*, Dürer in effect produced a 'spiritual self-portrait', indeed a reflection of the inner life of all artists. Here Melancholy is personified as a beautiful young woman, an insomniac seer who, shrouded in sombre thought, 'beholds no outward sight'. This superhuman winged creature has every creative possibility encoded before her, as well as the tools with which she can interpret and create. But as yet the unhappy genius is unable to set to work, for, as W H Auden explains, 'she has the knowledge but not the will to build'; she has seen perfection and knows she will never be able quite to realise it:

Her fate heroic and calamitous,
Fronting the dreadful mysteries of Time,
Unvanquished in defeat and desolation.
Undaunted in the hopeless conflagration
Of the day setting on her baffled prime.

JAMES THOMSON

And so the Lady Melancholy is held in the grip of a menacing despondency in the guise of 'a batlike creature'.

To Dürer the very worst of the 'black humour' was this 'Melancholia imaginativa', a condition particularly affecting artists, architects and artisans, which he found described in the manuscript version of Agrippa von Nettersheim's *De Occulta Philosophia* of 1510. This type of Melancholy was classified by other authors as 'Melancholia artificialis' (Artist's Melancholy). It was a virulent form of Melancholia intensified by the knowledge that the artist's theoretical insight and practical skills are so often unsuitably matched as to rarely allow for the creation of a true masterpiece; where intuition and execution remain disunited, where the ideal has been glimpsed but not attained, and all is 'impotence and gloom'.

In England, it was the theologian Robert Burton who best summarised the thoughts of his age on Melancholy. From his rooms in Christ Church, Oxford, he produced a three-volume treatise, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1621,

which the learned Dr Johnson accounted the most fascinating book he ever read. Burton's erudite tome ran through six editions in thirty years, making it one of the most widely read books of the period. Burton's subject, like that of Democritus the Greek two thousand years before him, was 'melancholy and madness'. In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton aimed 'to find out the seat of this black bile, or melancholy, and how it is engendered in men's bodies'. The illness was rampant at the time. Even on the stage the 'careless desolation' of the Melancholic was routinely portrayed. 'Kingdoms and provinces are melancholy,' Burton wrote: all the world has 'need of physic'. 'Who is not brain-Sick? Oh, giddy-headed age! Mad endeavours! Mad actions!'

Ultimately, Burton felt the principal cause of Melancholy to be our own sins, or — as with Dürer — our 'imperfections'. The 'greatest enemy to man is man,' he asserted, 'his own executioner, a wolf, a devil to himself and others'; and he described Melancholy as a 'cold and dark, thick, black and sour humour, purged from the spleen'. Burton sought to categorise various types of mental sickness, and determined Melancholy to be one of several maladies of the brain:

Melancholy is the most eminent of the diseases of the phantasy or imagination; and dotage, phrensy, madness, hydrophobia, lycanthropy, St Vitus's dance and ecstasy are forms of it

DESPITE SUCH afflictions, Burton warned it was better for the populace to endure the transient miseries of Melancholy than have recourse to witches for a cure, for in so doing they might well 'hazard their souls' health for ever'. Significantly, Burton delineated three main types of Melancholy: scholar's melancholy, religious melancholy and love melancholy.

In later times, love melancholy came to be regarded as the most deep-rooted and pervasive form of Melancholy. According to a letter written in 1804, the artist Henry Fuseli recalled how a medical acquaintance had once informed him that the largest number of inmates confined to Bedlam were lovelorn women. Philosophers have seen the archetype of this condition in the loss of perfect love (the ultimate truth — the great good and healer of mental and bodily ills) following the Fall of Man. The condition remains real enough, however, and can completely unbalance the mind.

Leaving aside the question of cause, the way Melancholia acts seems to be this: it initiates a disordering of the immediate world of sense-impressions, thereby forcing the sufferer entirely in upon himself. As Milton observed, once this state of mind takes hold, the outside

world is forgotten, and all the powers of the solitary sufferer may be focused upon one object with extraordinary forcefulness and clarity (even to the point of catatonia). The sufferer has then a need to isolate him or herself from the world, sometimes dubbed the 'aesthetic retreat'. This stage has aptly been termed the period of 'musing', 'incubation' or 'germination' (see H B Lee's essay, *A Theory Concerning Free Creation in the Inventive Arts (Psychiatry, 1940, vol 31)*). Indeed, the mind being so disordered, the most efficacious way back to 'sanity' (i.e. being able once again to interact successfully with the outside world) is to employ the imagination to create a work of art — a symbolic construction which makes sense of one's experience, and, in fact, 'builds' the world anew. This recurrent type of mental cycle has often been documented in the life in creative artists, and leaves them ever one step away from 'madness'. (The link between art and madness — in all its forms — is best explained in John MacGregor's fine study, published in 1989, *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane*).

H B Lee even goes so far as to argue that a light depression will produce a much less inspired work than one stemming from a full-blown psychological disturbance. Marcel Proust was quite clear on this subject, and spent a lifetime in narcissistic self-examination, developing a universal artistic credo which derived from his own repeated experiences. In *Time Regained* (written 1914-22), Proust maintained that it is suffering alone which sets ideas in motion, and that suffering is the best one can expect to encounter in life. Proust, a self-isolated melancholic, expounded on how 'unhappiness develops the forces of the mind', and his voluminous writings arrive at this conclusion: 'Ideas come to us as the successors to griefs, and griefs, at the moment when they change into ideas ... [release] suddenly a little joy.'

Creation is born out of sorrow, but euphoria is a by-product of fruitfulness. From such a viewpoint the poet James Thomson speaks of the Lady Melancholia, who, although weary and 'sick of soul', works all the more desperately to produce some wonder, knowing 'all her sorrow shall be turned to labour'. Certainly Thomson's contemporary, Paul Verlaine, would deliberately fling himself 'into the lowest depths in order to gain the peaks'. Verlaine fully appreciated the artist's creative dilemma by the time he produced his *Poèmes saturniens* in 1866, a work imbued with the most poignant regret and remorse, and which was characterised by Baudelaire as an 'orgiastic and melancholy book'.

As it is so much an inner change of mental state not always apparent to an observer, Melancholia has sometimes been dismissed as an imaginary illness, the singular domain of those persons with 'fanciful' or 'hypochondriacal' tendencies (Glanville), yet it remains a state to

which all true artists and original thinkers seem prone — at least in some degree. This illness, however, should not in truth be styled 'imaginary'; rather, it might be likened to a psychological key which opens up the world of the imagination, a world of infinite possibilities normally unfathomable beneath the surface of everyday life.

IN MILTON'S *Paradise Lost*, 'moping Melancholy' is among the horrors to be found in the infernal regions. The experience of Melancholia could even be said to be a model of Death, initially to be feared with unparalleled terror for its sufferings and seeming annihilation, but then (as we may believe) leading to an ineffable paradise. Milton found numerous ways of describing this metamorphosing Beast:

... loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born
In Stygian cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights
unholy!
L'ALLEGRO

Yet in *Il Penseroso*, 'divinest Melancholy' is transformed into a 'Goddess, sage and holy', such that Milton no longer shrinks from her presence, but would gladly choose to live with this 'chauntress' who is capable of bestowing the greatest pleasures.

Melancholia is undoubtedly a strangely attractive demon. Charles Lamb, who suffered the dual misfortune of having to cope with the fact that his sister had murdered their mother while insane and with his own long-standing mental disturbance, could thus write to Coleridge in 1796:

In your absence, the tide of melancholy rushed in again, and did its worst mischief by overwhelming my reason. I have recovered ... At some future time I will amuse you with an account as full as my memory will permit of the strange turn my frenzy took. I look back upon it at times with a gloomy kind of envy. For while it lasted I had many hours of pure happiness. Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of Fancy, till you have gone mad.

A few years earlier, the encyclopaedist Denis Diderot, paraphrasing Plato, had finely expressed the predicament of the artist at the very point approaching creation:

I conjecture that these men of sombre and melancholy temperament only owed that extraordinary and almost divine penetration which they possessed at intervals, and which led them to ideas sometimes so mad and

sometimes so sublime, to a periodic derangement of the organism. They then believed themselves inspired, and were insane. Their attacks were preceded by a kind of brutish apathy, which they regarded as the natural condition of fallen man. Lifted out of this lethargy by the tumult within them, they imagined that it was Divinity, which came down to visit and exercise them ... Oh, how near are genius and madness.

Such notions were inherited from Plato's theory of 'divine frenzy' (*furor divinus*), whereby the artist is possessed by the spirit of God. In a fever of inspiration, the artist literally 'breathes in' celestial air. Aristotle likens this ether of sublime contemplation to a powerful but dangerous wine inducing mysterious ecstasies which 'petrify and almost kill the body while they enrapture the soul'. It was upon such a basis that there developed, from the time of the early middle ages through to that of the Florentine Renaissance Neo-Platonists, a growing conviction that the 'furor divinus' was in fact synonymous with that archetypal inspirational state, the 'furor melancholicus'.

This divine frenzy, or mania (a special type of 'mental derangement'), would seem to be the essential prerequisite to creative activity. According to the Renaissance theoretician Marsilio Ficino, writing in 1489, the cause of such mania is 'Melancholia atra bilis' (black-bile Melancholy). This manic condition then gives way to a period during which there may occur insights of extraordinary lucidity. But first the artist must enter into that stage of dissolution which Coleridge viewed as facilitating one's powers of association. In other words, the mind, as when dreaming, requires to be free of accepted connections in the outer world in order to try new associations, and then construct new meanings. Here is how Wordsworth, in the early years of the nineteenth century, sought to describe this chaotic condition in his autobiographical *Prelude* (Book I):

The Poet, gentle creature that he is,
Hath, like the lover, his unruly times,
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts.

In his *Ode to Melancholy*, Thomas Hood even spoke of his woeful Lady Muse as one who 'taunts men's brains, and makes them mad'. The Romantic poets were, around this time, beginning to perceive themselves as 'outsiders' in the world, and Hood longed to return to a mythical Age of Gold, willing his departure from this 'wilderness' of an earth 'where tears are hung on every tree'. Indeed, Hood felt all things to be 'touch'd with Melancholy', and ended his Ode with the now famous lines:

There's not a string attuned to mirth,
But has its chord in Melancholy.

NO ONE ARTIST demonstrated such perils in both life and art better than Francisco Goya. The notes attached to Goya's works even spell this out: 'Deserted by reason the imagination breeds impossible monsters' — but the artist's mind must then make sense of what the imagination has seen, in order to create a work of art — 'united with it, it is the mother of the arts and of all their wonders'. In this context the magic square in Dürer's *Melencolia I* has been interpreted as 'a Jovian device used to counteract the unfavourable influence of Saturn' — inasmuch as Jupiter (Saturn's son) symbolises the reason required to order the fantasies of imagination induced by Saturn.

Saturn Devouring His Son is, in fact, the title of the most grotesque work Goya ever produced. This work is one of a series of pictures known as his 'black paintings' — so called because of their frightful subject matter and extensive use of black paint. All the 'black paintings' belong to the period 1820-23, and are so bizarre that critics have disputed Goya's sanity at the time. Some years prior to this period, the artist had suffered a serious mental and physical illness which resulted in total deafness, and led to profound changes in his work. Significantly, Goya's highly personal 'black paintings' were all executed in solitude on the inside walls of his house. In *Saturn Devouring His Son*, the image is arresting: Saturn's hideous face is contorted and his eyes are frenzied as he grips his half-eaten child with arm and head gone, the mutilated body dripping blood.

Goya's painting is, however, not the mere product of despair. It is based on the myth of Kronos (otherwise Saturn), who, having been told by his parents that he would be dethroned by his youngest born, swallowed his first five offspring to prevent fulfilment of the prophecy. Saturn dethroned his own father, and turned to cannibalism to preserve his power. In the wider context, this work can be seen as representing the devil devouring his own temporal progeny. Others have interpreted it as showing the artist himself dying, being mortified, in order that others might live through his creations: thus Jean Cocteau could describe all artists as 'blood donors'.

There are further intriguing implications to Melancholia arising from beliefs handed down to us from the very earliest days of Western civilisation. These ideas involve the planet Saturn and the very concept of Time itself. To the Ancients, Saturn was the cruel god of chill and gloom. It is not surprising, then, that they expected a 'saturnine' character to predominate in children born when this planet was in the as-

endant. Ponderous Saturn has long been viewed as cold, slow, and, according to astrologers, the most evil and dangerous of the heavenly bodies.

Dry, icy Saturn, 'star of Melancholy', corresponded to the frosty, disabled, melancholic temperament, just as benevolent Jupiter (and friendly Venus) did to the sanguine, fiery Mars to the choleric, and the Moon (whom Shakespeare calls the 'watery star') to the phlegmatic. Nevertheless, the Florentine Neo-Platonists came to think of Saturn, who symbolised the 'Mind' of the world, as superior to all the planets. Saturn became more important even than Jupiter who dethroned him (being the only one of his children he was tricked out of devouring!). Although Jupiter was the world's 'Soul', Saturn was the originator of ideas, the bestower of insight, celestial patron of melancholics. By comparison with Saturn, Jupiter seemed a mere caretaker or, at best, an 'overseer'.

It was Saturn who regulated the production of black bile from the spleen, and it was this bile which could, if uncontrolled, induce the 'furor melancholicus'. People born 'under the dominion of Saturn' might well possess a personality ferocious like the purely bilious temperament, but also gloomy to the point of madness. Those whose temperament was entirely Saturnine tended to be full of hidden malice, to be grumpy celibates and cruel to children, and to have a permanent feeling of bondage and captivity and a love of concealment.

On the positive side, Melancholics are frequently compelled by their illness to work hard, and to think and plan deeply. Furthermore, they are made cautious by fear, which may sometimes border on paranoia, and, being ever conscious of human limitations, are keen to discover new ways of overcoming them. Black is supposedly the preferred colour of the Melancholic, and may well match his general appearance.

An even more striking corollary is the fact that the word 'saturnus' derives ultimately from the Latin *serere*, meaning 'to sow'. Indeed, Saturn was honoured by the Romans as the god of the earth — or, more particularly, the god of planting or agriculture. But Saturn was to the Romans a 'sower' in both literal and figurative senses, and can therefore be understood as the sower of ideas as well as seeds. His festival, beginning on December 17th, was, by extension, not the gloomy affair one might expect, but marked rather by wild revelry and orgiastic tumult. The pagan festival of Saturnalia was later absorbed into our Christmas, which joyfully celebrates the birth of our Saviour, whom we, as Christians, believe to have ascended into Heaven, having first overcome Death through perfect truth and bloody sacrifice on the cross.

As Saturn sows, so shall the Artist reap. This is

the logic by which we reconcile the paradox that Melancholia, gift of Saturn, has become intimately associated with evening, the time of gloom, of twilight shadows and mysterious half-lights; with silence, stillness, burial grounds and fading light; and with the season of autumn and the autumn of man's years. The spirit of this atmosphere is admirably evoked in the famous *Elegy written In a Country Church-yard* by Thomas Gray. Gray himself echoes an earlier lyric ascribed to the poet John Fletcher, a well-respected contemporary of Shakespeare, who captured this indelible mood through splendid imagery:

Welcome, folded arms, and fixèd eyes,
A sigh that piercing mortifies,
A look that's fasten'd to the ground,
A tongue chain'd up without a sound!
Fountain heads and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves!
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly housed, save bats and owls!
A midnight bell, a parting groan —
These are the sounds we feed upon;
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley;
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

Although adapted to blend with the predominant aesthetic imagery of the period, there is a manifest continuity stemming from Dürer's depiction of Melancholia, through that of Fletcher, and on to these lines from *The Passions* by the once fêted eighteenth century 'sentimentalist' poet, Williams Collins:

With eyes up-rais'd, as one inspir'd,
Pale Melancholy sat retir'd,
And from her wild sequester'd Seat,
In Notes by Distance made more sweet,
Pour'd thro' the mellow Horn
her pensive Soul:
And dashing soft from Rocks around,
Bubbling runnels join'd the Sound;
Thro' Glades and Gloom
the mingled Measure stole,
Or o'er some haunted Stream
with fond Delay,
Round an holy Calm diffusing,
Love of Peace and lonely Musing,
In hollow Murmurs died away ...

From evening, it is but a short step to autumn, season of the last but sweetest fruits, of the

richest, headiest and most potent of all forms of earthly produce. Yet overripeness, in its turn, contains the seeds of decay. The pathos of such decay is nowhere better conjured up than in the *Ode to Autumn* by Thomas Hood, who uses language reminiscent of the fourth part ('Melancholia') of James Thomson's majestic hymn of woe, *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874):

But here the Autumn melancholy dwells,
And sighs her tearful spells
Amongst the sunless shadows of the plain.

KEATS, BY CONTRAST, sang more joyful paeans to Autumn (season of 'mellow fruitfulness') and particularly to evening — the time of stillness and cool shade, when the toil of the day is done. For Keats, evening was also a time when the emotional and creative turmoil of his life was temporarily assuaged. He savoured the restorative properties of evening, which became his medicine and motto. In a letter of 1817, he declared: 'The setting sun will always set me to rights'.

Keats affirmed the philosophy which he discovered in Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, that Melancholy itself is a desirable experience, and far from trying to reject it, the sufferer, often being of a particular artistic temperament, should, in order to draw forth inspiration and further his art, 'seize on to its manifestations and make out of them a new and peculiar strength' (from Gittings' seminal biography of Keats). Indeed, once we are aware that in his ode, *On Melancholy*, the 'Mistress' of which Keats speaks is none other than the Lady Melancholy herself, we can appreciate the true implication of these lines:

Or if thy Mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

Melancholia, which in recent years the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* has defined as an 'emotional mental disease marked by depression and ill-grounded fears', can thus clearly be seen as long having played a crucial role in the creative psyche.

Author's Note: For an exhaustive study of the subject of Melancholia from Classical times; to the Renaissance, see the exemplary Saturn and Melancholy by Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl (London: Nelson, 1964).

