



# Constructions of Melancholy in Contemporary German and Austrian Literature

ANNA O' DRISCOLL

Peter Lang

# CULTURAL HISTORY AND LITERARY IMAGINATION

Melancholy has become a central theme of German literature since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The rapidly changing sociopolitical circumstances of the post-1989 period and the continued burden of the Nazi past have directly contributed to this upsurge in melancholy themes. This book traces the complex discourse of melancholy in contemporary literature in the work of Monika Maron, Christoph Hein, Arno Geiger and Alois Hotschnig. Focusing on key concepts of melancholy – time, transience, historical dislocation and *posthistoire* – the author's readings reveal the close connection between the body and melancholy from ageing to our gendered relationships with history. This study also emphasizes the relevance of melancholy for current theoretical issues in German Studies, including Heimat discourse, genealogy and transgenerational memory, and postmemory.

Anna O' Driscoll received her PhD in German from University College Dublin in 2010 and has published on the topic of melancholy and GDR writers and artists. She is currently working as a freelance translator.



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*I dedicate this book to my parents,  
Nellie and Ted O' Driscoll,  
in love and gratitude.*





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All translations are my own, apart from: page 51: Sigmund Freud, Mourning and Melancholia. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XIV (1914–1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1957), pp. 237–258 (p. 248); pages 54 and 55: Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pages 83, 117, 161 and 163; page 183: John Osborne, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: NLB, 1977), p. 66.



## Introduction

This book explores how melancholy, both as a pathological phenomenon and a cultural construct, is expressed in the novels of a selection of German and Austrian writers. The burden of the past and sense of loss in the present are the main drivers of melancholy sentiments in these texts. A number of motifs are used in this context, the struggle with a difficult legacy being an obvious evocation of these conditions. While both historical and familial legacies lurk in the background of all of the narratives analysed, they are most directly addressed in Arno Geiger's *Es geht uns gut* as well as Christoph Hein's *Frau Paula Trousseau*, the title of which specifically highlights the protagonist's inability to escape the legacy of her unhappy marriage to Hans Trousseau, along with other legacies that shape her life. The intrusion of the past into the empty present, whether welcome or not, is also depicted through the long-standing association of melancholy with the spectral, a communication with ghosts being particularly evident in the novels of Monika Maron and Arno Geiger. The feeling of being stranded in the present, of being left behind while others race into the future, is also an abiding motif. It is most powerfully expressed in the image of 'terminal moraines', which is the title of the first novel to be analysed here: *Endmoränen*. In analysing the aforementioned narratives one must focus not only on the sociopolitical conditions that may give rise to melancholy but also on the authors' conscious interpretation of the concept of melancholy and their desire to contribute to the dialogue on melancholy that has been enacted over many centuries.

Recent years have indeed seen a boom in melancholy discourse. It is evident not only in the literary and philosophical analyses that form the background to this study but also in the wider cultural sphere. The most obvious example of this was the large-scale art exhibition entitled

‘Melancholy – Genius and Madness in the West’, which opened in Paris in 2005 and in Berlin in 2006.<sup>1</sup> This exhibition demonstrated that melancholy has been an enduring motif throughout the history of art and continues to be so up to the present. In his introduction to the volume *Melancholie*, published in Leipzig in 1999, Lutz Walther reflects on the preoccupation with melancholy, which has been particularly evident in the German-speaking area. He wonders whether it has to do with the desire to rescue this concept from being reduced to a feeling of sentimental nostalgia, or instead indicates that behind the busy façade of our modern information and entertainment society there exists a burgeoning melancholic unease with the present conditions.<sup>2</sup>

The sense that the constant bustle of contemporary society is giving rise to melancholy sentiments recalls Wolf Lepenies’s assertion that melancholy becomes a dominant topos when the *vita activa* dominates in any particular period over the *vita contemplativa* and that this has very much been the case since the success of capitalism. He considers the modern European era to have begun with the rational but optimistic Cartesian outlook on the world and ended with a melancholy turning away from the world, albeit only in the sphere of intellectuals.<sup>3</sup>

In order to understand the origins of contemporary melancholy sentiments, and to situate the above narratives within the melancholy tradition, it is necessary to trace the tradition of melancholy theory and discourse back to antiquity. The following is an overview of how melancholy has been interpreted since its conceptual beginnings in ancient Greece, focusing on the moments in its history which are of particular significance for the interpretation of the contemporary novels analysed here.

1 This exhibition was staged in the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, Paris from October 2005 to January 2006 and in the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin between February and May 2006. A similar exhibition, entitled ‘Saturn, Melancholie, Genie’, had already been staged at the Hamburger Kunsthalle from 31 March to 31 May 1992.

2 *Melancholie*, ed. by Lutz Walther (Leipzig: Reclam, 1999), p. 11.

3 Wolf Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft, Mit einer neuen Einleitung: Das Ende der Utopie und die Wiederkehr der Melancholie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998; originally published 1969), p. xix.

## Antiquity

The theory of the four humours, or *quattuor humores*, was first developed in *The Nature of Man*, written by Hippocrates or his son-in-law Polybos in the fifth century BC.<sup>4</sup> The system originated out of the desire of the Greeks to discover the primordial elements and qualities which could definitely be said to form the structure of the microcosm of the human body as well as the macrocosm of the universe.<sup>5</sup> Firstly, the four elements of fire, air, water and earth were derived from the four basic entities of the sun, sky, sea and earth. While this system worked at a macrocosmic level it needed to be adapted in order to be applied anthropologically. This was done by attributing a quality to each of the elements: therefore to fire belonged heat; to the air, coldness; to water, dampness; and to earth, dryness.<sup>6</sup> The next step was to align the four humours with the four elements. Hence, the blood was said to be like the air; yellow bile reflected the qualities of fire; black bile resembled earth; and phlegm the qualities of water.<sup>7</sup> The four seasons were already linked to the four ages of man, probably by the Pythagoreans, and these were divided either into childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age, or else youth was calculated to the age of twenty, adulthood to the age of forty, declining adulthood to about age sixty and after that old age.<sup>8</sup>

The inclusion of blood in this classification was problematic in that it was conducive only to good health, and hence could not be considered as a cause of illness, even in excessive amounts. The opposite was true for black

4 This text first appeared around the year 400 BC. The first English translation was published in 1599 under the title 'Discourse of Human Nature Written by Hippocrates' in *The Key to Unknowne Knowledge. Or, a Shop of Five Windowes* from the French translation by Jean de Bourges (London: Edward White, 1599).

5 Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, 'Die Lehre von den "quattuor humores"', in *Melancholie*, ed. by Lutz Walthert, pp. 30–31.

6 Klibansky et al., 'Die Lehre von den "quattuor humores"', pp. 33–36.

7 Klibansky et al., 'Die Lehre von den "quattuor humores"', p. 30.

8 Klibansky et al., 'Die Lehre von den "quattuor humores"', pp. 39–41.

bile, as it was already believed to result from a degeneration of either yellow bile or blood, and thus was more likely than any of the other humours to lead to ill health. It was also the only humour which was linked to only one specific disease, i.e. melancholy, albeit with many varying symptoms. Another major contrast between melancholy and the illnesses resulting from the other humours was that the majority of the symptoms of melancholy were due to psychic dysfunction – ranging from fear, sadness, dejection, lassitude, a desire to isolate oneself from society, etc. to actual madness. Since not everyone considered to have an excess of black bile could be called psychically abnormal, it was believed that a slight overabundance of the humour would produce a melancholy temperament or disposition, whereas a considerable excess would lead to a mental disorder.<sup>9</sup>

Aristotle subscribed to this view and provided the first positive interpretation of melancholy in the *Problemata Physica* (written either by Aristotle or perhaps by one of his followers, Theophrastus), in which the famous question appears: ‘Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic?’. Thus the link was formed between melancholy and genius, a connection which has abided throughout the history of the concept. The negative aspects of a melancholy temperament are not downplayed however. According to Aristotelian theory the black bile can become too hot as well as too cold and the melancholiac’s brilliance can only be maintained if the temperature of his bile is regulated. If it becomes too hot it will lead to madness or epilepsy; if it becomes too cold it will cause depression. Maintaining a balance is difficult; therefore the melancholy type is always prone to falling ill.<sup>10</sup>

9 Klibansky et al., ‘Die Lehre von den “quattuor humores”’, pp. 44–48.

10 *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. by Jennifer Radden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 56.



## The Middle Ages

The early Middle Ages saw the reintroduction of the ancient Greek teachings on melancholy. The genius dimension of melancholy disappeared and psychic and physical suffering became the focal point. In the Early Middle Ages Arabian astrologers were the first to connect the four temperaments to the planets, linking melancholy to the planet Saturn. The coldness, dryness and darkness already connected to the melancholy disposition were also believed to be the distinguishing features of this planet. However, the association which is of most interest for this study is that between Saturn and Chronos, and therefore between melancholy and transience:

Schon in der Spätantike verschmolz der alte römische Flur- und Saatengott Saturnus mit der mythologischen Gestalt des Titanengottes Kronos, des Herrschers des Goldenen Zeitalters [...] Zudem kommt durch den Gleichklang von Kronos und Chronos, dem antiken Gott der Zeit, der Aspekt der Zeitlichkeit und Vergänglichkeit zum Melancholiegott Saturn und dem Melancholiediskurs hinzu.<sup>11</sup>

[In late antiquity Saturn, the old Roman god of sowing and harvesting, had already been conflated with the mythological figure of Kronos, the Titan god and ruler of the Golden Age. Moreover, through the consonance of Kronos and Chronos, the ancient god of time, the element of temporality and transience came to be associated with the melancholy god Saturn and incorporated into melancholy discourse.]

In the later Middle Ages melancholy was associated with the theological concept of *acedia*, which characterized the lethargy and despondency of those who were unable to devote themselves joyfully to God. Thus melancholy was turned around from being a medical condition or temperamental disposition to being something which the individual was responsible for.<sup>12</sup> This link between what we might call the medical and theological aspects of melancholy was made by Hildegard von Bingen in the twelfth century and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Apart from her work on

<sup>11</sup> Walther, *Melancholie*, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> Walther, *Melancholie*, p. 17.

acedia, Hildegard von Bingen was the first and indeed only theorist to establish a clearly genderized classification of melancholy; therefore her work is essential for an analysis of contemporary melancholy discourse.<sup>13</sup> Her assessment of melancholy symptoms is entirely negative, in the case of men as well as women, in contrast to the Aristotelian observation, cited above, and the later Renaissance conception of the connection between melancholy and male genius. In fact, as Schiesari points out, Hildegard's 'conceptual rigor firmly eschew(s) any privileging of some psychological apotheosis over physiological baseness.'<sup>14</sup> In her classification women and men are subjected to different but equally pernicious symptoms. Of particular interest are the social consequences that these effects entail for melancholy women:

Aufgrund einer schwachen und gebrechlichen Gebärmutter sind [Melancholikerinnen] in der Regel unfruchtbar und werden von Männern gemieden. Es ist ihrer Gesundheit förderlich, wenn sie ihr Leben ohne einen Ehegatten verbringen. Die melancholische Frau steht demnach entschieden im Gegensatz zu ihrer Rolle als Ehefrau und Mutter, die ihr von der religiös-patriarchalischen Gesellschaft auferlegt wird.<sup>15</sup>

[Owing to a weak and fragile womb, melancholic women are barren, as a rule, and shunned by men. It is beneficial to their health if they spend their lives without a husband. The melancholic woman is thus decidedly in conflict with her role as wife and mother, which is imposed on her by the religious-patriarchal society.]

The consequences for women of a patriarchal society, as well as for men who seek to break away from stereotypical roles, is a main concern for Christoph Hein and will be discussed with reference to his latest novel in Chapter 3.

13 Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 141.

14 Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 142.

15 Walther, *Melancholie*, p. 18.

## The Renaissance

The Renaissance saw the revival of the classical writings on melancholy and the creative aspects of melancholy were brought to the fore again, particularly through the link with Saturn. The Italian humanist Marsilio Ficino believed that all scholars are under the influence of Mercury, but that those who contemplate more deeply are all children of Saturn. Just as the earth's centre of gravity is in the middle, so they are drawn into their own soul and into the heart of things.<sup>16</sup> The Aristotelian idea that all great men were melancholiacs turned into the claim that all melancholiacs were great men. Nevertheless, Ficino did not discount the negative effects of melancholy, the third volume of his *De vita triplici* consisting of a comprehensive therapeutic approach to accentuating the positive effects of a melancholy temperament while ensuring that one did not fall prey to its negative aspects.

The humanists differentiated between male and female melancholiacs. Unlike Hildegard von Bingen, who had assessed both sexes equally, the glorification of melancholy meant that the humanists considered only men capable of creativity and genius, whereas women were always associated with the negative, pathological side of melancholy. This gender alignment continued to influence conceptions of melancholy into the twentieth century, as will be seen below, and is thematized by contemporary authors such as Monika Maron and Christoph Hein.

## Albrecht Dürer

No study of melancholy can ignore the significance of Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I*, produced in 1514. It is a seminal work, not just from an iconographical perceptive, but because of its influence on artists of all media.

16 Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Die Melancholie der Literatur*, p. 49.

The engraving has thus informed all subsequent writings on melancholy and inspired an amazing number of interpretations, continuing to do so up to the present day. As Hartmut Böhme illustrates in his analysis of the piece, it is impossible to formulate a complete and total interpretation of the engraving, as attempts to do so have led to one-sided and false perceptions.<sup>17</sup> Even deciphering what exactly the various images in the engraving are has proved to be difficult, as it is not clear whether the figure sitting in the forefront is a woman, a man, an angel or a genius.

Apart from the central figure itself, the important motifs for the present context include the image of the head resting on the hand, the dog, and also the various instruments that surround the personification of melancholy. Firstly, as it is a fist on which the head is resting, one could refer to the emblematic connection between the fist and the miserly nature associated with melancholiacs, but because the fist is supporting the head, the centre of thought and imagination, this motif takes on a completely different meaning, and emphasizes rather the thoughtful nature of melancholy.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, the dog is the animal classically depicted as the companion of melancholiacs and also of learned men. His sleepiness represents perhaps the sleepiness attributed to the melancholic person but he may also represent a contrast to reflective melancholy. Thirdly, the various instruments represent geometry, which is linked to Saturn. The hourglass measures not only the passage of time, but also defines a moment in time of melancholy reflection balanced between the past and the future. The Jupiter tablet was meant to counterbalance the negative influence of Saturn, the god of melancholy and it also portrays the height of mathematical competence.<sup>19</sup> Böhme does not perceive the inactivity of melancholy, surrounded by so many objects of geometry and measurement, as negative, since in his writings Dürer emphasizes the importance of reflection on the use and meaning of such instruments as well as on one's own limits and abilities.<sup>20</sup>

17 Hartmut Böhme, *Albrecht Dürer Melencolia I: Im Labyrinth der Deutung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1989), pp. 5–6.

18 Panofsky, 'Die Kulmination', p. 89.

19 Böhme, *Albrecht Dürer Melencolia I*, p. 28.

20 Böhme, *Albrecht Dürer Melencolia I*, pp. 51–52.

More important than an interpretation of each of the elements singularly is an understanding of their combined effect. Of particular significance is the combining of melancholy and geometry, both of which had a specific iconographic usage until then but had never been brought together before. It resulted in the intellectualization of melancholy, on the one hand, and the humanization of geometry on the other hand. Melancholiacs had earlier been seen as unhappy misers and idlers, despised for their unsociability and general incompetency. Geometrists were previously regarded as abstract personifications of a noble science, who were incapable of human emotion or suffering. By combining the attributes of both, Dürer was able to portray a ‘melancholia artificialis’, or in other words, an artist’s melancholy.<sup>21</sup>

The complex conceptualization of melancholy in Dürer’s image has inspired numerous artists and writers in the intervening centuries, not only through the rich associations of the piece itself but also in its elevation of the artist. Those writers in the German-speaking world who have closely engaged with the work include Walter Benjamin, as will be seen below, and Günter Grass,<sup>22</sup> while other prominent authors, such as Heinrich Böll and Wolfgang Hildesheimer, have engaged with various aspects of the melancholy tradition.<sup>23</sup> Of the writers I have chosen to focus on in the following chapters, Monika Maron, Arno Geiger and Christoph Hein all allude to aspects of the engraving, or, in the case of Hein, to the paradigm of the melancholy artist.

21 Panofsky, ‘Die Kulmination’, pp. 87–88.

22 Günter Grass, ‘Vom Stillstand im Fortschritt: Variationen zu Albrecht Dürers Kupferstich “Melencolia I”’, in *Aus der Tagebuch einer Schnecke* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1972), pp. 544–567.

23 See for instance Günter Blumberger, *Versuch über den deutschen Gegenwartsroman: Krisenbewußtsein und Neubegründung im Zeichen der Melancholie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985).

## Baroque Period

In the Baroque period the major contribution towards furthering the concept of melancholy was Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, first published in 1621, but followed by many subsequent extended editions. Burton leans heavily on classical ideas of melancholy, in particular on humoral theory. He emphasizes the physiological aspects of the disease and the therapeutic means of dealing with the many and varying symptoms of such a phenomenon: 'The Tower of Babel never yielded such confusion of tongues as this Chaos of Melancholy doth variety of symptoms.'<sup>24</sup> In this respect he is following the template of writers who came before him, such as Ficino. Burton's work also has a dominant sociological aspect, however. Wolf Lepenies' *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* focuses in particular on the relationship between melancholy and utopia and refers to the preface of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, entitled 'Democritus Junior to the Reader', as being the first original utopia portrayed in English.<sup>25</sup> Burton took the idea of melancholy as a phenomenon only applicable to the individual, whether in a positive or a negative way, and turned it into something which referred to the society or state as a whole. He achieved this universalization by suggesting not only that no person is free from melancholy, but also that it affects plants, animals and even minerals. Since melancholy had so pervaded society, in his opinion, Burton developed a highly detailed and ordered utopia where there would be no cause for melancholy.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries interpretations of melancholy were so diverse that all the symptoms associated with it could hardly be brought together to describe just one particular concept or condition. The symptoms of other illnesses such as hypochondria and hysteria were considered so similar to melancholy that it was difficult to distinguish them

24 Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, p. 5.

25 Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft*, p. 22.

26 Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft*, pp. 25–28.

from one another. It was only in the nineteenth century that advancements in medicine enabled the various conditions to be classified.<sup>27</sup>

Religious uncertainty following the Reformation was a major catalyst for feelings of fear and melancholy during the Baroque period, 'Angesichts der verheerenden politischen und religiösen Auseinandersetzungen der Barockzeit und dem sie begleitenden Vertrauensverlust in die göttliche Heilsgewißheit wird die Melancholie zum Signum einer ganzen Epoche' [In the face of the devastating political and religious conflicts of the Baroque era, and the loss of faith in divine salvation that accompanied these conflicts, melancholy became the hallmark of a whole epoch].<sup>28</sup> The characteristics of Baroque melancholy in the German context are the subject of Walter Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*. During the Counter-Reformation Catholicism had won back its control over secular life, which Lutheranism lost by renouncing the power of human acts of goodness: 'Jeder Wert war den menschlichen Handlungen genommen. Etwas Neues entstand: eine leere Welt' [Human actions had been robbed of any value. Something new had emerged: an empty world].<sup>29</sup> Benjamin's analysis of the sense of emptiness and meaninglessness engendered by a loss of faith in the Baroque period can also be related to postmodern sentiments, as will be shown later.

The preoccupation with mortality was especially prevalent, as seen in *vanitas* art, which emphasized the transience and futility of life in its depictions of hourglasses, which had already appeared in Dürer's image, skulls, withering flowers, rotten fruit, as well as musical instruments and disintegrating sheaves of paper, which symbolized the futility of our efforts and pleasures in life. The notion of transience is very prominent in contemporary perceptions of melancholy, as already mentioned, although without the religious connotations of the Baroque. Nevertheless the loss of faith in the contemporary context is shown to manifest itself in the

27 Walther, *Melancholie*, pp. 20–21.

28 Walther, *Melancholie*, p. 21.

29 Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978; originally published 1928), p. 119.

search for some alternative connection to the spiritual realm, as can be seen in Chapter 2. Concepts of utopia and of the failure of utopian ideals also resurface in current representations of melancholy. Furthermore, the concept of melancholy as a group phenomenon also reappears, as will be seen in Chapter 5.

## The Enlightenment

Religious uncertainty turned into religious fanaticism during the Enlightenment, as outlined by Hans-Jürgen Schings in *Melancholie und Aufklärung*. Such religious fanatics and others who did not fit in with the secular, rational ideas of the Enlightenment, or who denounced them publicly were branded as melancholiacs: 'Die Melancholie wird zum ideenpolitischen Instrument, um jeden ideologischen Kontrahenten zu diffamieren und die eigene Position zu stärken' [Melancholy becomes an instrument of political ideology in order to defame every ideological adversary and strengthen one's own position].<sup>30</sup> In fact Schings regards the Enlightenment to be paradoxically dominated by melancholy, in all of its various guises, just as the Baroque had been.<sup>31</sup> The rational philosophy of the Enlightenment entailed much contemplation on the nature of man, which itself often led to melancholy gloom. A widespread tendency toward inwardness and melancholy developed throughout society, affecting not only the aristocrats, as it had in the seventeenth century, but also the middle class, according to Lepenies, who had achieved economic success and now were also striving for political power. As melancholy had become such a societal phenomenon, this led to it being positively valued;

30 Walther, *Melancholie*, p. 23.

31 Hans-Jürgen Schings, *Melancholie und Aufklärung: Melancholiker und ihre Kritiker in Erfahrungsseelenkunde und Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977), p. 3.



one could reinterpret melancholy as a sentimental pleasure in one's own despondency. Nature was viewed as the ideal topos in which to indulge in such emotions since reclusion, as the outward expression of inwardness, can only be realized in nature.<sup>32</sup>

Wolfram Mauser emphasizes that the high level of self-expression evident throughout the eighteenth century was not just the result of the bourgeoisie or middle classes being excluded from all power relations, which is Lepenies' thesis, but was due to their desire for not only political autonomy but for emotional freedom, and above all happiness – this being seen as the ultimate goal of society. The justification for this particular goal lay in the conviction that happiness was the correlate of nature and reason.<sup>33</sup> Lepenies himself seems later to concede that melancholy could, in fact, have had no exogenous causes but come merely from the will of the individual to experience such emotions, and thereby prove his autonomy to himself. The sentimentality of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods seems to have known no bounds, as is evidenced in the literature of the time. Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* was, of course, a catalyst for this in the German context. Weeping, according to Lepenies, was very popular, being the most 'active' way of expressing emotion. Of course it was also a way of releasing feelings of melancholy and powerlessness. The cult of letterwriting of that period was not used primarily as a means of making contact with others but rather a way of doubling the output of emotions. The other person was regarded merely as a reflection of oneself.<sup>34</sup>

Mauser's understanding of the causes of bourgeois melancholy is more differentiated in that he believes not only melancholy but other depressive disorders, such as hypochondria, to be the result of complex social factors, whereby the individual is, on the one hand, actually expected to be, and desires to be autonomous; but, on the other hand, is tied to traditional norms and responsibilities, not only through external pressures,

32 Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft*, p. 97.

33 Wolfram Mauser, 'Melancholieforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Melancholie*, pp. 129–142 (pp. 136–137).

34 Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft*, p. 100.

but through internalization of societal and religious expectations.<sup>35</sup> The inclusion of hypochondria here is interesting, in that it was conceived in the eighteenth century as a disorder bearing the symptoms associated with melancholy, but which emphasized the somatic aspects of melancholy, which had been downgraded since the Renaissance in favour of its psychic characteristics.<sup>36</sup> It is not clear whether Mauser is using hypochondria here as it was originally understood, or in its present form, both of which would, in any case, imply that the suffering endured was imaginary, or at least self-created. The connections between autonomy and authenticity that arise in this context are particularly fruitful for the analysis of contemporary melancholy sentiments.

## Romanticism

A reevaluation of the melancholy phenomenon began to appear during the transition to Romanticism, as Schings outlines:

Wenn im folgenden Metamorphosen der Melancholie besprochen werden sollen, so ist damit vor allem die sich neu ausbildende Melancholie der literarischen Intelligenz (oder doch gewisser Teile dieser Intelligenz) gemeint [...] Die Melancholie der Genies steht, so unsere These, in einem deutlichen Ablöseverhältnis zur Melancholie der Schwärmer. Sie erbt deren Außenseiterrolle, erbt aber auch die Möglichkeit zur Neubewertung, zu neuer Dignität. Es zeichnet sich eine Konstellation ab, die der Melancholie-Theorie von Aristoteles/Theophrast neue Resonanz verschafft.<sup>37</sup>

[If, in the following, metamorphoses of melancholy should be discussed, it is the newly emerging melancholy of the literary intelligentsia that I have in mind (or at least certain elements of this intelligentsia). [...] The melancholy of the genius stands, according to our thesis, in a definite relationship of succession to the melancholy of

35 Mauser, 'Melancholieforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts', p. 139.

36 Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Die Melancholie der Literatur*, p. 145.

37 Schings, *Melancholie und Aufklärung*, p. 225.

the sentimentalists. It inherits their outsider role, inherits also, however, the possibility of a new evaluation, of new dignity. A constellation is emerging, which offers new resonance to the melancholy theory of Aristotle/Theophrastus.]

Thus we move from a type of melancholy with which mainly unbridled religious fanatics are afflicted to an elevated melancholy sensibility associated with poets and intellectuals. In reference to the metamorphoses in the concept of melancholy at the end of the eighteenth century, as described by Schings, Franz Loquai posits the melancholy of the Romantic era as an instrument of opposition to rationalism, in contrast to the use of melancholy to brand those with anti-rationalist tendencies during the Enlightenment.<sup>38</sup>

The positive estimation of melancholy and of melancholic self-expression throughout Romanticism led to a revival of its connection with brilliance, and in fact to a cult of genius, building on the revitalization of these concepts in the Renaissance.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the Romantic genius is an entirely lonely figure, since he is unable to reconcile his subjective desire for freedom with the constraints of objective social norms. He finds this freedom to an extent in nature, but the freedom afforded by the open expanses of nature also serves to heighten his loneliness as well as demonstrate his insignificance against the unending vastness of the natural world. This is epitomized in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich.<sup>40</sup>

The relationship to nature in the Romantic era was markedly different from that of the eighteenth century. Nature is not just conceived of as a backdrop to one's own emotions but is appreciated in its power and majesty. This conception of nature is reflected in the work of Hotschnig and Maron. In the depiction of a protagonist with anti-rationalistic tendencies, Maron's narratives also attempt to counteract the rationalism that dominates in contemporary society. The association of melancholy with creativity, which was revitalized during Romanticism, is also important for current representations, as will be seen in the last chapter.

38 Franz Loquai, *Künstler und Melancholie in der Romantik* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1984), p. 1.

39 See for instance Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, p. 15.

40 Földényi, *Melancholie*, p. 231.