Order Number 9020816

The melancholy imagination and the Romantic poets: English, French, and German

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City University of New York, 1990

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THE MELANCHOLY IMAGINATION AND THE ROMANTIC POETS: ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND GERMAN

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1990

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

22 Jan. 1990
date

Chairman of Examining Committee

31 Jan. 1990
date

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Abstract

THE MELANCHOLY IMAGINATION AND THE ROMANTIC POETS:
ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND GERMAN

by

Lillian Tobias

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This study considers the treatment of melancholy as a dominant and recurrent theme and mood that attempts to explore - through the medium of themes - the thematic possibilities by which melancholy, as a literary phenomenon, makes itself felt in some of the major and lesser poems of the English, French, and German Romantics. The perpetual reference to melancholy in this study is not to be understood as a "social" phenomenon in its conceptual aspect as a concern of human beings that creeps into the mind. Rather, it is to the "poetic" aspect of the term that we are dealing with, and that we characteristically identify as a feeling that is there, or that we sense in the way the poet has injected a mood into the work that, among other things, has solidified into a poem.

The focus of this inquiry rests on the assumption that the more commonplace melancholy themes appearing in Romantic poetry did not occur by chance but may be traced back to some of the more prevalent themes of melancholy that characterized the poetry of the three literatures considered here in the decades immediately preceding the coming of the Romantics. By examining Romantic melancholy poetry in

this way we have focused on questions that go far beyond the neoclassic melancholy themes of sentimentalism, where they will express a different kind of melancholy 'Weltschmerz' and 'mal du siècle,' that is darker and gloomier in feeling, to accommodate the growing despair reflected in the changing spirit of the time after 1789. Although the individual poet's state of mind is not to be inferred from the mood expressed in his verse, restrictive or disturbing outside forces were able to inflict much havoc on sensitive minds. As a result, a different state of mind affected the poet's 'Weltanschauung' that allowed him through the power of his imagination to seek new frontiers in worlds of his own making, often beyond accepted reality. Later, as the nineteenth century moved on, more extreme expressions of Romantic melancholy would reveal in the poetry of Vigny's pessimism and Baudelaire's black nightmares of the mind a poetry that in turn would harden into nihilism, eroticism, and even terror.

In Memory of My Mother

Acknowledgments

I should like to express my gratitude and deep thanks to Professor E. Allen McCormick as the Director of this dissertation for his unstinting advice and criticism during its preparation. At the same time, I should also wish to thank him for his continuing encouragement in my behalf and especially for the many hours of thought-filled material that he always generously and conscientiously passed on to his students during class hours. They were for me, at least, as one of them, a privilege to take part in and to enjoy.

I also wish to thank Professor Diana Festa-McCormick who was a wonderfully patient reader, and to Professor Vincent Crapanzano who agreed to step in at the last moment to fill an unexpected vacancy as a second reader. Both of them deserve much credit.

Lastly, my thanks to Ethel Z. Erlick who as cousin and friend has continued unquestioningly to express her confidence in me in ways that at times has extended far beyond family or friendship, when lack of funds often threatened the completion of my studies. In many ways, this dissertation is hers as well, and I thank her for it once again.

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Introduction

It has rightly been said that melancholy as a literary subject, theme, or topos, whether in drama, narrative, or poetry, can be a difficult business, holding all sorts of pitfalls for the unwary intruder. And it is with this caveat in mind that I venture into the study, watchful of the danger signs but bolstered by the knowledge that as subject and recurrent poetic theme, the moods and sentiments of melancholy expressed in the literatures of both ancient and modern times, have challenged scholars to explore its many plaintive tones and accents. Melancholy is after all one of the emotions everyone has felt or will feel at some time in his life. Through the medium of poetry, it has been and will continue to be a way for poet and reader to deal with those emotions which betray the darker side of human existence.

In recent years a renewed interest in the subject has produced an impressive body of works in all three of the literatures considered in this study. In English scholarship alone the bibliography is vast; works have appeared that explore the literary usefulness of melancholy from Renaissance inquiries on Dürer's engraving, "Melencolia I," to Elizabethan and early seventeenth-century studies that include Robert Burton's treatment of the subject in The Anatomy of Melancholy (1621), and John Milton's "Il Penseroso" (1645). Similarly, a number of important studies published in the 1920s and 30s cast new light on English eighteenth-century melancholy poetry, resulting in a reevaluation of that poetry, especial-

ly as it related to the development of Romantic poetry later on.* What emerged was the realization of the extent to which this phenomenon of melancholy had thrived, both as a social and literary force indulged in by a sympathetic audience, who recognized it as one of the indigenous manifestations of the inhabitants of the British Isles. Parallel studies on the eighteenth century followed by German and French critics and scholars which dealt with similar developments in their literatures. They pointed to the so-called "preromantic" schools of 'sensibilité' and 'Empfindsamkeit,' and in particular to the achievements of their principal writers, Rousseau and Goethe, whose works - this time in prose - had expressed unabashedly the sentiments that in all actuality became the distinguishing social features of their time.

This study attempts to explore - through the medium of themes - the thematic possibilities by which melancholy as a literary phenomenon, makes itself felt in some of the major poems of the English, French, and German Romantics. As such, it is a process that provides a way for the reader to gain access into a poem that in the case of melancholy is operating not only by way of an organizing principle, but within a tradition, or at least, part of a convention that had in the English poetry of the mid-eighteenth century, once again come

* Several important studies were R.D. Havens' The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (1922); A.L. Reeds' The Background of Gray's "Elegy": A Study in the Taste for Melancholy Poetry, 1700-1751 (1924); J.W. Draper's The Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism (1929), and E.M. Sickels' The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats (1932). In this respect, William Lyon Phelps' The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement: A Study in Eighteenth-century Literature (1895) is also important.

into fashion - this time with a greater vogue than it had ever had before. I have therefore devoted the first chapter to a look back into the eighteenth century - "Ein Blick in die Vergangenheit" (1782), "A Look into the Past," as the title of von Matthisson's prose poem aptly calls it - where all these romantic trends had emerged, later to reemerge in the greater picture of Romantic melancholy. Under such scrutiny, a continuity of thought and expression as well as patterns of relationship emerge that indicate a community of reciprocal influence, including literary and cultural traditions. Surveyed in this way, we are able to look backward as well as forward, to assess these themes of melancholy as they pass from one period to another, and from one literature to another.

The focus of this inquiry rests on the assumption that the more commonplace melancholy themes appearing in Romantic poetry did not occur by chance but may be traced back to some of the more dominant themes of melancholy that characterized English, German, and French poetry in the decades immediately preceding the coming of the Romantics. We tend to forget the close relationship which first generation Romantics at least had with their predecessors, whose works they studied and even emulated; and to the extent to which 'Angst,' dejection, despair, and world-weariness were already evident in that literature, to that extent were the Romantic poets infected by it. Added to this was the complexity of events surrounding the French Revolution and the general suffering caused by the wars, directly or indirectly, to further influence the kind of poetry they wrote.

Our inquiry therefore begins with the poetry of the English eighteenth-century poets since it is they who first showed signs -

during the transition period from Enlightenment to Romanticism - of establishing a melancholy poetry of their own which German and French poets not only found congenial to their imaginative temperaments, but could also learn to manipulate according to their own passions and tastes. Also, the perpetual reference to melancholy in this study is not to be understood as a "social" phenomenon in its conceptual aspect as a concern of human beings that creeps into the mind; rather, it is to the "poetic" aspect of the term that we are dealing with, not only as a literary phenomenon but as a literary theme or subtheme that, at the same time, reflects a mood or attitude that among other things has solidified into a poem. Characteristically, we identify it as the feeling that is there, or that we sense in the way the poet is trying to articulate something as a literary mode. As a theme, melancholy often spills over into other themes peripherally related to it: the contemplative theme which suggests the hermit theme, or the theme of solitude linked to a certain time of day that can also suggest the idea of escape or retirement from the pressures of daily living, that once again permeates other conventions to become the legitimate themes of the Romantics.

In examining Romantic melancholy poetry in this way we have focused primarily on the questions: How far and in what ways (if at all) the commonplace themes rooted in eighteenth-century neoclassic melancholy poetry have been absorbed, integrated, or otherwise transformed into the poetry of the Romantics where they expressed a different kind of 'Weltschmerz' and 'mal du siècle'; tones and feelings also intensified and became more inward as the poet, affected increasingly by outward forces, withdrew into the world of his poetry with even

greater self-scrutiny and introspection. Although the individual poet's state of mind is not to be inferred from the mood expressed in his verse, restrictive or disturbing outside forces causing frustration and loss of hope, had their effects on sensitive minds. As a result, a different state of mind affected the poet's 'Weltanschauung' that allowed him through the power of his imagination to seek new frontiers in worlds of his own making, often beyond accepted reality.

In this respect, we can cite the theme of nature - an early component of melancholy - as an example of the way it assumed new meaning in the poetry of the Romantics as it shifted from its former place where man could retire for meditation and repose, to one as in Shelley's "Mont Blanc," where the poet is more deeply withdrawn into his own sub-conscious. The change in Shelley's case allowed him to speculate with a different set of norms and with different spatial perspectives that ranged from Platonic, to pantheistic, to mythic, even to verge on the mystical. In the more extreme expressions of Romantic melancholy, a different kind of vision was revealed in the poetry of Vigny's pessimism and Baudelaire's black nightmares of the mind that was dialectically opposed to the melancholy poetry encountered up to then, where the poet's ills had been located primarily in the heart.

A word on the structure of the work: Following this Introduction and the first chapter that looks back to modes and themes of melancholy poetry, the neoclassic antecedents or models prevalent in the verse of the eighteenth century from which arose not only the world of the Romantic imagination but of Romantic melancholy, we proceed into the body of the work. Chapters two, three, and four con-

centrate directly on the Romantic poetry of each of the three literatures under consideration, accompanied by explications of texts meant to demonstrate a particular poet's use of melancholy themes or moods. The process - wherever possible - is also meant to throw new light on the many ways in which melancholy makes itself felt in the fabric and content of a work. Also, in chapter two, an end section is devoted to some of the melancholy themes encountered in Wordsworth's poetry of human suffering, as the poet 'par excellence' of that type of poetry in English Romanticism. A fifth chapter - followed by a short Conclusion of the study as a whole - deals with the poetry of melancholy in the poems of the so-called "end-of-the-liners," Nikolaus Lenau, Thomas Hood, and Charles Baudelaire, who sum up the poetry of Romantic melancholy, often with extreme examples of the genre.

Also, at this point, it is important to note that even though Romanticism came at slightly varying times to each of the three national literatures, similar movements and changes in perspectives as well as changing social forces occurred in all three, making it possible to study them as one phenomenon. Nevertheless, their own endemic traditions and cultural developments in the history of poetry do not readily submit to comparison of one with the other except by general reference to one theme or the other, or to one poet or other, where similarities often exist.

Lastly, wherever possible in this study, the rather confusing and often contradictory term "preromantic," used at random to denote the earlier period of Romanticism in the eighteenth century, has been avoided and replaced by the use of lowercase 'r,' to denote the distinction between that and the full-blown nineteenth-century period

of a movement that, though cut of one cloth chronologically straddled two centuries but covered only a part of each, extending from the early decades of the 1700s to about 1830 or '40.

Chapter I - Neoclassic Antecedents

1. The English

Melancholy has long existed in English poetry. Its recurrent moods and fashions have combined with other attitudes and themes to shape a pattern of cultural tastes, sometimes in the form of the pastoral or the elegiac, sometimes in the religious attitudes or sermons, and sometimes in the lyrical outbursts of romantic sentiment. In the poetry of the Romantic movement as well as in the neoclassic period that preceded it, melancholy plays a special part: the poet's mood, whether sad or gloomy, contemplative or philosophic, appearing to arise out of the natural surroundings in which he finds himself (Reed 140). In its overall presence in English literature, melancholy represents not so much a literary tradition as a state of mind or topos, a kind of social malady peculiar to the nation's temperament. Perhaps no other people feel as comfortable with it as do the English, so much so that it remains an "English" disease for which Burton's treatise on the subject in The Anatomy of Melancholy (1621) was an attempt to remedy some of the ailments attributed to it in his day. Byron, at a later period, once more calls attention to it in his Don Juan (Poetical Works 820), as well as to the paradoxical fact that while the English characteristically indulge in it, they prefer to borrow the term from the French:

> For ennui is a growth of English root,
> Though nameless in our language: -- we retort

The fact for word, and let the French translate
That awful yawn which sleep cannot abate.

Canto XIII, st. ci. (1822)

The particular brand of melancholy in English poetry we call "Romantic" had its roots in the early decades of the eighteenth century when a newer crop of poets, following Dryden, Swift, Prior, and Pope, attempted to go deeper into feelings than was evident in the poetry of their predecessors. They were tired of prescribed rhetorical rules and the artful but monotonous sound of the heroic couplet, in the same way that French poets, several decades later, would seek new ways to change or replace the twelve-syllable verse line of the alexandrine, which had dominated French poetry since the twelfth century. Instinctively, this newer breed of poets looked back to other and freer forms of metrical structure and content, and especially to the "old" poets - Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton - who, though not entirely neglected by the neoclassical Augustans, were nevertheless regarded with suspicion or not taken seriously by them (Phelps 47). In an age when reason prevailed and philosophy, science, and even religion worked hand in hand to establish its supremacy in every area of thought and emotion, the heart, the passions, and the imagination were either forgotten, or if remembered, repressed or hidden behind pretentious ideas, arguments, and abstractions. The love of beauty and an appreciation of nature for its own sake were literally suppressed in the best of minds; and, although writers and poets of the time were continually speaking of "nature" and adopting Pope's motto, "Follow Nature," the term meant something very different from the "nature" of the early romantics and the poets that fol-

lowed after 1750. Up to that time, and right on through the English empiricists, nature was seen through a hierarchical system where God's presence was omnipotent and everywhere, a view that had come to be understood and accepted through just about all history. After 1750 and Rousseau, nature underwent a change, becoming part of man's egotism and a metaphor for his feelings. Now it was the place of man's existence, and as such a place where he could vent his feelings and give expression to his melancholy.

In the poetry of these "natural geniuses," as the "old" poets were sometimes referred to (especially Spenser and Milton) venturesome poets such as Samuel Croxall, Lady Winchelsea, Thomas Parnell, and Allan Ramsay, were inspired by the expanse of their imagery and subject matter. They revelled in the supernatural and dreamland world of woods and streams of Spenser's Faerie Queene. But even more indispensable to them was the liberating spirit of Spenser's nine-line stanza which, along with Milton's blank verse, octosyllabics, and the sonnet form, gave them the tools they needed to cut their ties with the Augustans. In fact, the revived appreciation of Spenser was so widespread and fashionable, that it dominated the practice of poetry well into the mid-century, where poetasters of every sort tried their hand at imitating the rhythmic swing of the stanza, interspersed with a few obsolete words, that authenticated them to Spenser and The Faerie Queene.

But it was from Milton that these early romantics received their most important and lasting sources of inspiration. Not only did they copy his form and language, and infuse their poetry with special stylistic features in diction, tone, syntax, and imagery; they enriched

their verses with the sentiment and phrases of his octosyllabics which suggested a distinct fondness for solitude and twilight and a personal communion with nature. Although Paradise Lost was always considered Milton's greatest work, it was his minor poetry and in particular "Il Penseroso" which helped to fix for nearly a century in the minds of the English readers of poetry the connection between meditation, solitude, delight in nature, and melancholy (Reed 20).

Before the effects of "Il Penseroso" could take hold, however, the element of nature for its own sake and as a place of retirement and seclusion, had to be reintroduced into poetry through the poet's psyche and awareness of it as a credible component. Where previously man had looked to nature as a place from which to view more worldly and immediate events, as Pope had done in "Windsor Forest," nature now had to be transformed from a place of interest in landscape, cultivated and tamed, to one where, for no better reason, man could get at his feelings through communion with it. Here he becomes pensive, somber, and subject to his thoughts, and looks into nature for a mirror of himself. Here too he experiences an 'Einkehr,' an inner contemplation; and since there is betterment in meditation, moral reflection is combined with readability to become secularized through descriptive poetry. Nature becomes a metaphor for life, a place where man can rid himself of the traces of society to find his own "peaceful hermitage." In this early stage he is not yet the shape of the landscape, but merely a figure in it, as in Thomson's The Seasons, and a trespasser and stranger in its wilds, although a sympathetic one. Primarily, it represents a shift in perspective from viewing himself and nature through a hierarchical system where God's presence is ubi-

quitous; the other is to see God in every single thing, the pantheistic view, which relationship the Romantic poets would find in their encounter with nature. From this it is a mere step to ultimate submission or mystical union with nature, a kind of 'extase panthéiste,' that Rousseau aspired to and described in a letter to M. de Malesherbes (26 January 1762), and that Wordsworth experienced while revisiting Tintern Abbey, and Shelley imagined, awed by the immensity of Mont Blanc.

For now, however, nature remains the outward world into which man is received as a solitary walker and a place where he can escape from the pressures of society; it is still within the bounds of Rousseau's "back-to-nature" doctrine for which a poet like Joseph Warton, in his poem "The Enthusiast: or, The Lover of Nature" (Crane 751) expressed a yearning to withdraw:

> O who will bear me then to western climes. . .
> There, fed on dates or herbes, would I despise
> The far-fetch'd cates of luxury, and hoards
> Of narrow-hearted avarice; nor heed
> The distant din of the tumultuous worlds.
>
> 195, 200-03 (1744)

The poet does not yet make his landscape suffer with him or sympathize with whatever his mood may be; it is not yet the pathetic fallacy or Werther pouring out his heart into nature. Instead, he uses description to preserve his sense of objective reality still strongly influenced by Augustan thought.

Fortunately for English poetry, a fresh wind blew from the north and from the Scottish Highlands, away from the London influence of

the Augustans, where natural impulses inspired poets to describe the beauty of their own native landscapes. This began with the appearance of a number of poems written between 1724 and 1726: the Welshman John Dyer's "local poem," "Grongar Hill," the native poems and songs of the Scottish poet Allan Ramsay, notably his pastoral, "The Gentle Shepherd," written in his regional dialect, and the winter poems of Riccaltoun, Thomson, and Armstrong. The poems delighted readers everywhere and the enthusiasm with which they were received - especially Thomson's "Winter" - was evidence of the need for a poetry which spoke more to men's hearts than to their heads (Havens, The Influence of Milton 128).

But the work which eventually came to be known as The Seasons (1726-30), and to include over 5,500 lines, has its real significance not in the fact that it marked the beginnings of a Romantic movement, as is sometimes spuriously stated, but that it represented a new kind of poem, different from the prescribed literature coming out of London at the time. Essentially, it was a Scottish work, written by a Scot, suggested by Scottish verses, and picturing Scottish scenes; and despite the earlier nature poems, it was Thomson's poem more than any other that made the genre popular and influenced later writers (Havens 129).

Most importantly, however, these early nature poems lacked the artificiality and precision of the heroic couplet, which was now replaced by a renewed interest in blank verse and other experimental meters. They established a rapport between man and nature, influenced by Milton, which gave to literature a dreary, melancholy cast that harmonized with the sentimentalism of England and the Continent

in the mid-century (Phelps 171). The sensitivity of these northern poets to their native surroundings, the manner of the simple, every-day life, and the "wild" scenery of their land, expressed in the "beloved gloom" of Thomson's Seasons, in the melancholic mists of Macpherson's Ossianic poems (1760-62), and in Percy's collection of ballads and songs (Reliques of Poetry, 1765), appealed to the feelings of the reader. And the trend continued to provide readers with a poetry full of feeling and homespun sentiment, passing only at the end of the century with the poetry of Burns and Scott.

The world that inspired Thomson is the one he knew and loved best, the rural scenes of daily life viewed through a kind of pleasing gloom. The panorama is both religious and spiritual, and the hierarchy through which he informs himself in relation to his world is all too apparent: God, church, man, animal, insect, vegetable, mineral. Thomson taught the eighteenth century that nature has an emotional bearing on man, and that there is something in poetry that can express mood and feeling, first through an awareness of it in nature and then through an awareness of one's inner feelings. It is an element which neither the poetry of Milton nor Pope undertook to do; their poetry may give feeling, but not mood. In this sense, nature assumes a schizophrenic existence for man; it is not yet Wordsworth, but it is getting close to it.

Although not meant to be a poem to melancholy in the sense that "Il Penseroso" is, mood and melancholy are in Thomson's Seasons, in the quality and feeling that run through much of the work. Essentially, there is an overall mood that is assuring and benevolent to man as he interacts with nature:

The pale descending year, yet pleasing still,
A gentler mood inspires; for now the leaf
Incessant rustles from the mournful grove,
Oft startling such as studious walk below,
And slowly circles through the waving air.

"Autumn," 988-992.

In its darker moments it anticipates Byron's ennui and recalls Burton's pronouncements on melancholy, attributing to the ravages of winter, that most tempestuous season of winds and storms, a power capable of effecting "such as are melancholy" (Anatomy i. 241):

Thus winter falls,
A heavy gloom oppressive o'er the world,
Through Nature shedding influence malign,
And rouses up the seeds of dark disease.
The soul of man dies in him, loathing life,
And black with more than melancholy views.

"Winter," 57-62.

Then, in true Miltonic tradition, the Muse of Melancholy is evoked as it emerges through the stillness:

He comes! he comes! in every breeze the Power
Of Philosophic Melancholy comes!
His near approach the sudden-starting tear,
The glowing cheek, the mild dejected air,
The softened feature, and the beating heart,
Pierced deep with many a virtuous pang, declare.

"Autumn," 1004-1009.

Thomson recognized that nature plays a significant role in man's

existence. In the above passage, it is the Power of "Philosophic Melancholy" on which his attention is focused; but it is also the Power in nature which is capable of provoking man to become reflective, contemplative, once he finds himself in communion with it. The reaction realized in "Autumn," (1004-1009), is actually set off in the lines 988-992 (above) that begin: "The pale descending year. . ." where Autumn suggests the passing phase of nature that in turn suggests the passing phase of man: decline, death, mortality. Provoked into reflection, man is now ready to react accordingly to approaching "Philosophic Melancholy," and since it is "philosophic" it demands of him a reasoned and calm attitude in meeting his troubles. What follows are the consequences of man's reactions: "the sudden-starting tear" (possibly regret or sorrow), "the glowing cheek" (the blush of some remembered shame or modesty), "the mild dejected air" (the blues), "the softened feature, and the beating heart" (disappointment turned into pleasurable expectation), and the "virtuous pang," where moral anguish becomes secularized outside the church. All these things "declare" the approach of melancholy, and all these things Thomson has demonstrated not by definition but by furnishing the key to what it means when the term mood or melancholy is used.

What is apparent even from these brief fragments is the recognition that melancholy is everywhere in nature. In between the "heavy gloom" and the "gentler mood" all the themes unfold: the retirement shades in "Summer" (458-468), the effects of love-melancholy and the pathos of the nightingale's lament in "Spring" (1022-1110 and 712-726), the philosophic musings on the mutability of life ("Summer" 348-351), complaint of life and passing time, and a wish for the return to a

golden age ("Spring" 272-308), and the benefit of moral improvement gained by the solitary wanderer, affected by nature's immensity in its God-given presence:

> I solitary court
> The inspiring breeze, and meditate the book
> Of Nature, ever open, aiming thence
> Warm from the heart to learn the moral song.
>
> "Autumn," 669-672.

Thomson's poem inspired the most important poets of the mid-century, the Wartons, William Collins, and Thomas Gray, and enjoyed an unbroken popularity well into the following century. Wordsworth is purported to have said of Thomson: "He writes a vicious style," and Coleridge exclaimed: "That is true fame!" when seeing a worn copy of The Seasons lying in the window-seat of an obscure inn more than seventy years after its publication (Perkins 687).

It is not until the 1740s, however, that we begin to get nature as a theme and challenger of man's cultivated world. For the most part, the nature poetry is descriptive and meditative, and highly imitative of Thomson's works; but the genre was able to produce a number of poets during the years preceding the major Romantics who are unmatched in the way they dealt with nature, choosing items not merely of natural beauty, but more specifically, of the beauty of landscape and the little things that are so important to its physiography. Many exquisite descriptions in Thomson and Collins anticipate the sort of landscape that Wordsworth later sketches in "An Evening Walk," and the first part of "Tintern Abbey." Collins' "Ode to Evening" (1748) in particular, is perhaps unrivaled in anything that is in Wordsworth or

Shelley, in the musical effect of the words and economy of narrative due mainly to alliteration and form of the poem (Beach 33):

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat,
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn. . .
But when chill blustering winds, or driving rain,
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds, and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.

(Lonsdale 156-57, 9-12, 33-40).

In this connection it is important to mention again some of the earliest poets of the century - Samuel Croxall, Thomas Parnell, and Allan Ramsay - who showed a genuine feeling for nature in their work and who longed to infuse their poetry with a quality that Gray was later to call "the true lyric style." One early example is Parnell's "Hymn to Contentment" (Smith 155), a poem in octosyllabic couplets, which expresses true nature feeling in a way that foreshadows both Collins and Wordsworth:

The seas that roll unnumbered waves;
The wood that spreads its shady leaves;
The field whose ears conceal the grain,
The yellow treasure of the plain:

All of these and all I see,

Should be sung, and sung by me. . .

67-72 (1722)

In its final unfolding, this meditative, descriptive poetry of nature sets the course for two of the more notable movements in modern life and literature: the development of the love of nature and the power to express that love in poetry (Haven, The Influence 236).

In the literature of the mid-eighteenth century it is generally considered that the tradition of melancholy is with the graveyard poets and with the 'memento mori.' Two groups of meditative poetry occupy the period, however: the graveyard poets and the poetry of Sensibility, to make up this literature of gloom. Both kinds of verse derive from separate but related sources, and both express their own taste for melancholy; between them they usher in the poetry of English Romanticism at the end of the century.

The older and gloomier school of the graveyard poets - so called because of its morbid preoccupation with themes of death, immortality, overgrown country churchyards, the charnel house, tolling bells, and the like - was more in keeping with Burton's derogatory views of the subject than with either Milton's or Thomson's brand of melancholy, although akin to The Seasons in its more oppressive moods. The seemingly abnormal preference of eighteenth-century English poets for mortuary poetry was due in part to a type of religious melancholy practiced in the late seventeenth century and carried over into the eighteenth century. Basically, they were poems written as personal laments or eulogies to individuals of rank, or to commemorate events, and displayed publicly in broadsides and funeral elegies. This

strange poetry had its roots deep in the religious fervor of the Protestant sects of the previous two centuries and accounted for much of the pessimism and chiliasm of that time. The practice itself, however, was distasteful to the Augustans, who tried to avoid any reference to the grave or the mystery of life after death (Draper 6, 13-16, 46-58, passim). In the literature of the post-1750s, this poetry of gloom reappeared to blend its fondness for churchyards and graves, with the popularity of the Gothic novel that specialized in ruins, wild nature, magic, and haunted castles.

However dismal this school of melancholy was it, nevertheless, was prologue to Thomson's Seasons and to the better-known poems of the genre which appeared in the years immediately following Thomson. Thomas Parnell's "Night-Piece on Death" (1722), a poem in octosyllabic couplets, was the first of its kind and is interesting as the forerunner of Edward Young's "Night Thoughts" (1742-46), a collection of elegies im more than 10,000 lines of blank verse, Robert Blair's "The Grave" (1743), and especially as the prototype of Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751). The following few lines from Parnell's early poem show the obvious influence that it had on Gray's poem:

> Those graves, with bending osier bound
> That nameless heave the crumbled ground. . .

All these poems have themes in common with the elegiac tradition of the broadsides, and all combine the terrors of death as the great leveller, with nature as the background of death. The first section of Blair's poem "The Grave" (Draper 230, 29-35), is taken up with a description of a Gothic ruin that will later reappear to furbish the

interior scenes of some of the Gothic novels and of Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes":

> The wind is up: hark how it howls! . . .
> Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's foul bird
> Rook'd in the spire screams loud: the gloomy ailes
> Black plaster'd, and hung round with shreds of 'scutcheons
> And tattered coats of arms, send back the sound
> Laden with heavy airs, from the low vaults,
> The mansions of the dead.

The passage continues with an abundance of ghosts, "riven trees," and "wild shrieks from hollow tombs."

The less mournful tones of Gray's "Elegy" belong to the paler, more balanced shades of elegiac melancholy in the poetry of Sensibility; its darker qualities turn the emotions towards a Sentimentalism that is later appropriated by poets on the Continent: the Germans made use of the graveyard themes in their particular brand of 'Empfindsamkeit,' or sentimentalism, in poems such as Johann Gaudens von Salis-Seewis' "Das Grab" (1783), and Karl Friedrich von Matthisson's "Elegie" (1795); the French used the genre in poems that depicted death as cloaked and dark-hooded, holding a scythe, as in Victor Hugo's "Mors" (1854).

The popularity of the graveyard school fortunately did not overshadow the poets of Sensibility who also had their readers. This school derived its impetus from the lighter and gentler moods of Milton's "Il Penseroso" and Thomson's Seasons; its most important contribution to the literature of melancholy was its emphasis on nature as a backdrop for stimulating the emotions and for furnishing a

pleasant outlet when moralizing on the horrors of the grave. The better-known poets, Collins, Gray, and the Wartons, adhered to this type of poetry; primarily they were responsible for establishing in the literature of melancholy such themes and elements as twilight and stillness, retirement, romantic solitude, and delight in ruins. John Dyer's "Ruins of Rome" (1740) should be mentioned here as well, and Thomas Warton's "The Pleasures of Melancholy" (Crane 802-03) has them all:

> Beneath yon ruin'd alley's moss-grown piles
> Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve. . .
> While sullen sacred silence reigns around,
> Save the long screech-owl's note, who builds his bow'r
> Amid the mould'ring caverns dark and damp,
> Or the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves
> Of flaunting ivy, that with mantle green
> Invests some wasted tow'r.
>
> 28-29, 32-37

This combination of melancholy and nature in the poetry of these eighteenth-century verse-makers is responsible for a changing poetic attitude that would represent a clear break with Classicism and the Augustans. It is part of the incipient romantic and sentimental tendency of the time; poems would become more subjective and pleas more passionate in support of some favorite theme or 'locus amoenus.' Language, too, which up to this point had controlled emotion, would begin to crystallize in this transitional period to allow for the leap from an outmoded diction and framework to a new kind of emotional exper-

ience. This ability to control emotion through language would result in a more balanced and sincere expression of melancholy away from the maudlin cultivation of emotion for its own sake. Most notably these poets of Sensibility begin to "see into the life of things"; their form may still be Augustan but the undertones and the content are already Romantic.

2. The French

The French people who generally prefer to think of themselves as men of reason rather than of passion and who in the course of history have left the more serious aspects of melancholy largely to the English, have themselves long suffered from an inner, psychological experience they call 'l'ennui,' a condition that comes together with melancholy as an added ingredient, and is simultaneously recognized as the 'taedium vitae,' or the fatigue of life. In the many of literary melancholy - the spectrum we draw spanning from "white," to "gray," to "black," in expressing the sadder emotions of human feeling - ennui denotes the lighter tones of this sentiment when considered as a synonym for the trifling annoyances we encounter in daily living. It is this gentler quality of melancholy that primarily troubled the French populace in the decades before the Revolution, expressed in Parny's "Élégie" (1778):

> J'ai cherché dans l'absence un remède à mes maux,
> J'ai fui les lieux charmants, qu'embellit l'infidèle,
> Caché dans ces forêts dont l'ombre est éternelle,
> J'ai trouvé le silence, et jamais le repos. . .
>
> (Allem, Anthologie 420)

and in Antoine-Léonard Thomas poem "Ode sur le temps" (1762), where some of its expressions would reappear in Lamartine's "Le Lac":

O Temps, suspends ton vol, respecte ma jeunesse;
Que ma mère, longtemps témoin de ma tendresse,
Reçoive mes tributs de respect et d'amour;
Et vous, Gloire, Vertu, déesses immortelles,
Que vos brillantes ailes
Sur mes cheveux blanchis se reposent un jour.
(Allem 284).

The poem in its own right represents an interesting example of French lyric poetry in the eighteenth century.

Another darker kind of ennui however began to appear in poetry in the years immediately prior to and following the events of 1789. It was nurtured in part by Rousseau's 'mal,' which afflicted writers like Chateaubriand and Sénancour, in part by the influx of English and melancholy literature, and in part by the after-effects of the Revolution. This more threatening type of ennui, or 'maladie du siècle,' which the French identified with the German 'Weltschmerz,' represented their own state of weariness of soul: a condition of utter dejection, even despair, without faith or hope, arising from a personal disenchantment when brooding on shattered dreams and death. In time, this disaffection with life would become more readily defined in the English "spleen" which the French appropriated, a term that would become most familiar in the poetry of Baudelaire. In this context, ennui comes closest to the dreaded boredom of 'acedia,' of medieval religious origins, and to the "black bile."

In the few instances before the 1750s and the events of 1789,

where we find a true melancholy poetry - that is, where the main contents of the poetry are themes of melancholy - it is generally of the milder forms of ennui. An early example of this is found in the late poems of Amfried de Chaulieu (1639-1720), a poet of considerable sensibility and talent who seemed unaffected by the neoclassic conventions of his day that restricted French poetry to a more eloquent and highly polished type of versification. Like the early English romantics, Chaulieu chose instead to look back to the humanistic values of the Greek and Latin poets, Anacreon, Horace, and Virgil, and to his favorite poet, Ronsard, to find a more genial basis for his melancholy disaffection with old age and death which he expressed with a gentle mockery or wistfulness rare in French poetry. Here in a few lines of his own which he added to a translation of Virgil's poetry, we have a glimpse of Chaulieu's imagination that enables us to envision the poet's fantasy of another world - the nether world of Virgil's Elysium, or Happy Paradise, where he hopes, like the heroes and patriot before him, to pass a full and pleasant existence after death. Speaking from the heart, and addressing the gods directly by the personal 'tu' - perhaps to lessen the distance between them - he berates them for their insensitivity to mortals in seeking to deprive them so soon of the most precious gift they had ever given to them:

Le ciel impitoyable
A t-il voulu sitôt dérober aux Mortels
Ce qu'il leur a jamais donné de plus aimable. . .

Then, in a more conciliatory tone, he expresses the hope that in his fatal hour, they (the gods) would receive his soul in its last farewells, and that their friendship for him would always remain the same,

evidenced perhaps by a sigh as he closed his eyes forever. His thoughts suddenly turning pensive, and with a prescient look to the future that does not hide the irony of the situation, he gently reminds the gods that the pain of his grief has consoled him, but only in the knowledge that it is he, after all, who is to survive them, to carry their names to the ends of the world, to scatter daily flowers on their coffins, and to sing their pleasures and celebrate their charms, in these lines erased a thousand times by his tears:

> Quoi donc! quand j'espérais qu'à mon heure fatale,
> Tu recevrais mon âme à nos derniers adieux;
> Et que ton amitié, pour moi toujours égale,
> Peut-être, en soupirant, me fermerait mes yeux;
> C'est moi qui te survis! et ma douleur profonde
> N'a, pour me consoler dans l'excès de mon deuil,
> Que de porter ton nom jusques au bout du monde,
> De jeter, tous les jours, des fleurs sur ton cercueil,
> Chanter tes agréments, et célébrer tes charmes,
> Dans ces vers mille fois effacés par mes larmes!
>
> (Oeuvres 338)

We will need to wait another hundred years for lines to again appear that would equal or surpass these of Chaulieu in poignancy, depth, and feeling. Sainte-Beuve saw him correctly as one of those pivotal figures who most clearly characterized the joining together of two epochs; he had received the inspiration of the free and daring spirit that existed before Louis XIV, and he lived long enough to hand on the accolade to Voltaire and the eighteenth century (Potez 4). And, indeed, some of the neglected lyrical genius of the sixteenth

century - not only that of the Pléiade poets, but also those of their contemporaries, Louise Labé, Maurice Scève, and others of the Lyons group of poets - would return to French poetry in the elegies and poetry of Évariste de Parny, and his fellow 'créole' poets, Bertin and Léonard, so identified because of their birth in one of France's colonies (Barquissau 7). Through the force and beauty of their verse there would emerge, in the midst of a contagion of bad taste, bad style, and bad example of late eighteenth-century rhymers, an originality of expression that would - especially in the case of Parny's poetry - influence Lamartine. At the same time, the frank, simple, even direct diction of their poetry, would prove to be significant in legitimizing a lyricism that was tinged with sadness and nostalgia, in advance of the Romantic poets.

The fact that these few lyrical, even sensuous, poets appeared as and when they did is a phenomenon remarkable in itself. It is not, however, in the circumstances of their origins so much as in the opportunity it afforded them to develop their own unique talents and sensibilities, free and unhampered, away from the influence of Parisian, end-of-the-century versifiers. We may recall a similar situation in English poetry when the first nature poems of the Scottish, Welsh, and Irish poets - Thomson and Ramsay, Dyer, and Parnell - began to appear in the 1720s. Like these later French counterparts, they too had been raised in atmospheres far removed from their literary pundits in London, which allowed them in turn to develop their own sense of the beautiful in nature, that consequently contributed to the inspiration of a new aesthetic vision and a new poetic language to accommodate what the meditative poet felt and experienced in the midst

of nature.

In the intervening decades between Chaulieu and Parny the state of French poetry was complex and confused, at least in the area of feeling. Regimentation of language, its tendency to abstraction, logic, and clarity, and the adherence to established rules of prosody, that we have already encountered in English poetry and will again in German neoclassical poetry, all these came together to restrain inspiration and to make poetry a docile instrument of reason rather than of the imagination. But despite the rather dismal prognosis of many critics and writers that philosophy would eventually replace poetry altogether, the literature of feeling and passion, and by the same token, of imagination, did survive, but not without paying a heavy toll for the lack of at least one great poet or one great work that would lend support in its behalf (Gilman 4).

The major trends of French literature after 1650 were not of the quality that would eventually lead to a language of 'des transports.' On the contrary, rhymers did not look for inspiration or originality but pursued ingenuity, cleverness, and wit, and the poetry that did exist and that Voltaire produced - supposedly the best of the lot - was uniquely the expression of an elegant, polite society, meant for their pleasure, and as a means for writers of poetry to display their skills. As for melancholy, Voltaire for example never occupied with it. Had the word been the fashion of the time, he would have ridiculed it. In practice, he never mused to himself; and, as Villemain commented in his Littérature au XVIII^{e} siècle, II, 321 (Potez n.1, 18), if there was grass in his epic poem Henriade (1723), it was there only for the horses.

Unexpectedly, however, and in opposition to the optimism of the 'philosophes,' some of the ennui of Pascal's pessimism had carried over from the previous century to disturb the complacency of the times and to bring doubt into the hearts and minds of the people in their faith and hope of the Age of Reason. The contradictions between the 'lumières de la raison' and the 'transports de la sensibilité,' were too great for them to sustain: reason alone was no longer able to satisfy the impassioned feelings of their enraptured hearts when disposed to sighs, tears, and despair.

As if in response to such needs, a more original and lyrical verse began to appear from the 1760s on in the poetry of the 'petits poètes,' or minor poets, in which the central concern of the times was more clearly discerned, to reveal an 'angoisse' of consciousness irrevocably tied to self-analysis (Steele xxix). This crisis of consciousness - the root cause of the 'mal du siècle' so widespread at the end of the century - expressed the aching void of the soul that could find relief only in some 'divertissement,' preferably a diversion of pleasure which for the moment would make living more bearable. An example of this state of near-fatigue appears in a line of poetry by Claude-Joseph Dorat (1734-1780), that is not far from Baudelaire's 'au fond du gouffre,' when he says:

L'ennui seul veille au fond des âmes. . .

What we have here is a mid-century 'locus classicus' of ennui in the anguish that sensitive poets faced, confronted by the unhappy prospects of living out their lives without promise or hope of change. The only recourse left open to them was to live passively in a kind of perpetual 'ivresse,' from pleasure to pleasure and sensation to

sensation, to a point where, as Dorat says further, those who follow this practice resemble slaves, condemned to endless pursuits in satisfying their sensuous needs:

> Nous ressemblons à des esclaves
> Que l'on condamne à s'amuser. . .
>
> (Steele xxix).

For such sensualists the immediate gratification of the 'instant sensible' tended to become identified with the moment of love. But, for love too there were restrictions that demanded constancy, loyalty, and passion, leaving the poet once again to look for other ways to expand the sensation that eventually required the admission of a language more highly attuned to sentiment and sentimentalism.

The 'art d'aimer,' however, was only one of the many interacting and overlapping themes that collectively characterized French poetry after the 1760s. Many of them related to the revival of nature that would become the genuine vehicle in its affects on the 'homme sensible,' in the presence of natural scenes of 'tristes et mélancoliques' (Steele xxx). Much of the sentimental charm and simplicity required of descriptive verse was already familiar to French poets their contact with it in the 'littérature du nord,' and in the idealized pastorals of the Swiss poet, Gessner, and in particular in Thomson's Seasons (Van Tieghem 24). At home, the "back-to-nature" gospel of the 'maître des âmes sensibles,' Jean-Jacques Rousseau, further encouraged poets to develop a descriptive verse that was to find its fullest expression in the poetry of nature, but only after the fad of nature was firmly in place and acceptable to the nation's temperament. In this period of transition from an Age of Reason to Romanticism, the

change is in the attitude toward nature, and in the attitudes in men's feelings that seemed to be shifting on a broad basis: how this nature perception would be understood and evolve in the eighteenth century, would be told in the poetry of Romanticism.

It is difficult to say how far French poetry and the feeling for nature would have advanced without the assistance of Thomson's poem and a few related poetic works from abroad. Daniel Mornet, the noted French scholar and critic, holds the view that even though Thomson's work had coincided with the more desired effects of Rousseau's prose, it still remains the one poem most instrumental in establishing in French poetry the landscape of nature, of itself a substantial feat (Van Tieghem 27). For many of the lesser as well as better poets coming after 1760 - Saint-Lambert, Fontanes, Roucher, Delille - the work remained the main source that fed their inspiration; all of them, directly or indirectly, were familiar with it, often using it as a temporary reinforcement after transforming the text with imitations of their own. Some found the descriptions of mountains gave them a direction by which to work out individual talents; others found Thomson's view of the solar system accommodating to their faith in the idea that imitative poetry would lead them to a poetry of the sciences. They were not content to accept the observations offered in the poem itself, which was able to reveal the physical world through one's immediate reality of it, or the simple descriptions of the wise observer. They wanted positive facts already verified, and the most recent hypotheses of the thinkers, all of which further deprived them of the use of their imagination and led to abstract definitions formulated into verse. In a society where in the years preceding the Revolution lit-

erary genres were still being used for everything except creative poetry, such a phenomenon is somewhat confusing, although not entirely incomprehensible (Cameron 133-34).

Brief fragments of James Thomson's The Seasons (last additions to the work were made in 1746), appeared in France in 1753, first in extracts, and then in a labor of love of a complete prose translation of the poem in 1759, published as Les Saisons, poème traduit de l'anglais de Thomson. Its translator, Mme. Marie Jeanne de Châtillon Bontems, had produced as faithfully as she could a literal translation of the work despite difficulties in interpreting language, culture, and landscape (Van Tieghem 26). Most important, however, was the fact that she had translated into French a work in which the principal interest lay in the realistic descriptions of the exterior world of nature. If the rebirth of the feeling for nature had already been evident about this time, that sentiment had yet to find its literary expression; to that extent, without a doubt, Mme. Bontems' translation went a long way in filling this need. But, while accounting for the fact that there was something new and fresh in the Seasons, she was not consciously aware of everything contained in the original text. She had neither the eye nor the ear to grasp the details of many of the rural Scottish scenes, or the distinct shadings which Thomson had chosen to describe the variables of his "beloved" landscape, in order to provide moments of harmony with moments of sadness (Cameron 16-17).

In the 'Avertissement' to the work, Mme. Bontems had taken the precaution of forewarning the critics of the errors in her translation, which she ascribed mainly to her not fully understanding the

essential details of English farming methods that the poet used in relating the various seasonal activities of the inhabitants, as for example, the harvesting in "Autumn" of strange fruits and herbs with which she was not familiar, or the detailed descriptions in the sheepwashing scenes in "Summer." Despite the pitfalls, however, she admired Thomson's lively imagination and the variety of ways he embellished everything his eye caught in its sight, as well as the full and colorful sweep of his verbal brush when rendering the spectacles of nature. She commended him for his generous show of tenderness and compassion for everything in nature that she found to be akin to that of her countrymen, including the peaceful delights of country life. Finally, it is "le sentiment qui est l'âme de toutes les belles productions, et qui seul laisse dans nôtre esprit des traces durable" - the feeling that is the very soul of all the artistic scenes, and that alone remains in our spirit as enduring impressions - that she found most admirable in the work (Bontems 1-4).

But in alleging that she was not familiar with the Scottish countryside, or the activities of its people, so different from that of her native country, she in fact furnished the inevitable truth that Saint-Lambert, the best of her imitators - (his poem Les Saisons was published in 1769) - was to discover even more than she that dealing with unfamiliar material would force them both either to omit such passages altogether or replace them with material of their own fancy, and the main reason why many of the critics found both their works strained, dull, and artificial. In fact, Saint-Lambert, in following Mme. Bontems' translation, and without access to the original, could do no more than she with Thomson's passages on Providence and philos-

ophy, or the invocations to Nature and Melancholy, formulated in a highly classical, ode-like, Miltonic tradition when addressing personifications of abstract ideas. Unfortunately, too, mistakes in interpretation were passed on to imitators and readers alike, compounded by a weakened impression of an object or scene that was usually its main value in the English text.

In defense of Mme. Bontems' efforts however - in addition to having introduced Thomson's seminal work to the French people - she never failed to come up with images that were still very close to the lover of nature, and so was successful from that vantage point. She was obviously enthralled with the subject and with the many ways that Thomson's poem revealed the different aspects of nature in its panoply of moods and seasons. The work that had taken seven years to accomplish, and was used so liberally by Saint-Lambert and read with such affection by Chateaubriand, Mme. de Staël, and others, enjoyed a readership well into the next century, with the last of Mme. Bontems' numerous editions reprinted in 1818. After the Revolution it was Chateaubriand's prose work that responded better than Thomson's work to the needs of the reading public in conveying the immensity and wildness of nature.

Although Mme. Bontems' translation is faithful to the original as far as it goes, only barely are Saint-Lambert's lines even similar to Thomson's original poem. The impetus and the images are plainly there, as well as a symbiotic attachment, but the reader of Thomson's poem would have to be very sharp to identify precise passages in Saint-Lambert's work that suggest themselves to their counterparts. The times of the year are more readily discernible when describing

various landscapes, or certain weather patterns that characteristically vary between the moods of winter and those of summer. On the whole, however, Saint-Lambert's poem engendered some brilliant lines that were written with elegance and a profound feeling for nature that cannot be ignored, especially since it was received as the creation of a new descriptive genre in poetry and was a forerunner of Romantic poetry (Cameron 31-41).

The paradox persists, however, that in a century spent in seeking an aesthetic formula for poetry and the arts, it remained strongly neoclassic to the very end, and that, despite the inconsistencies, it was a work of feeling that should have been so eagerly read and appreciated. Thomson's poem continued to spawn publications of new works dealing with nature that included Roucher's Les Mois (1779), Léonard's Idylles et Poèmes Champêtres (1782), and Delille's Les Jardins (1782), and works of minor poets. All of them were faithful to Thomson and to the concept of descriptive poetry, while searching for new ways to express old, worn-out imagery, in order to give their work more originality. Moreover, these forerunners served well the poets who were to come, to enhance even further the feelings and images of nature, and to expand their imaginative visions in ways never before attempted. And to the extent that the association of nature with the emotions of men exists nowhere more frequently than in elegiac and melancholy poetry, to that extent was Thomson's poem successful in passing on the themes of melancholy in nature to the French Romantic poets.

3. The Germans

The course of the German romantic movement in the eighteenth century, like that of the English and the French, would seem to have developed more by the reasoned inquiry of theory than by the 'faits accomplis' of practice. The German enlightenment which had reached Germany from England by way of France, had its share of intellectual advocates in such figures as the philosophers and essayists Lessing and Herder, as had the Augustan enlightenment in England and the 'siècle de lumière' in France. But none was strictly a writer of poetry, even though they produced ideas that influenced the Romantic poets later on. The merits of their efforts were constituted, instead, in upholding the concepts of the enlightenment, and in attempting to preserve the classical harmony and the ideals rooted in the traditions of the Renaissance; and this they did most effectively, and in great collaboration with one another. But, the heart had not yet relinquished its rights: the ideas put forward by the neoclassical concepts of the enlightenment that would subject the emotions and all human activity to the infallible control of reason (Closs 132), did not take into account the equally strong feelings of the German people who remained faithful to their Christian beliefs, and to the traditions, in hymn and prayer, that enthusiastically proclaimed the beauty and marvels of nature and the external world ruled over by a wise Creator.

Nevertheless, a paradoxical but happy solution was possible whereby the religious tendencies of the heart and the rational modes of the mind were able to resolve their differences. We refer, of course, to the continuing development of the German 'Lied,' and its strophic form which had sustained German poetry almost from the beginning,

i.e., from the medieval period onward, and certainly from the twelfth century on, when the courtly love lyrics of the well-known 'Minnesang' art form were in vogue (Goldsmith 502). For the rationalist poets and those deists among the men of letters who were committed to the intellectual aspects of German verse this meant dealing with concrete moral reality and abandoning baroque techniques for a matter-of-fact description of the object; for themselves, the German people reserved their right to continue the expression, in poetry and song, of the true mystical and emotional spirit, as well as the personal sentiments of the heart. Where the lyric was concerned with both, no sharp dividing line could be drawn between them, since reason itself must allow for a certain amount of emotional expression - 'Herzenssprache' - as the very basis of all poetry; even the verse of the so-called enlightened was not without some warmth of feeling (Closs 137).

However, the state of the lyric at the outset of the eighteenth century was in a far less favorable situation, primarily because of yet another dichotomy that existed in its use at the time. On the one hand it was playful, gracious, rationalist, in the prescribed form and style of the baroque lyric, and similar to the badinage and the 'gracieux' of the 'poésie légère' in French verse of that period; on the other it sentimentalized the religious strain carried over from the preceding century (Forster xxxiv).

The necessary combination of emotion with the sentiment of nature, so important to the poet in the expression of mood and melancholy - or better still - the love that poets experience when in intimate communion with nature that allows for a deeper, more inward contemplation of the self, ultimately to become 'verinnerlicht' as

in the poetry of the Romantics, was not yet a compelling factor in the poetry of the early eighteenth-century poets. For this transformation to take place however there had first to be a change in attitude of man's inner feelings in the presence of nature. It would fall to the poet under gradually changing philosophical and social attitudes and circumstances to bring these about in the course of the century, but only after he had begun to look at and to describe the natural objects around him in ways that would not only express the wonders of God's creations in this world, but would express his own 'müde Brust' and the complaints of his 'krankes Herz.'

For the time being, however, the direct expression of emotion, traditionally part of the lyric, was possible, but only within a framework of conventional practices in which the poet's actual feelings were not of immediate relevance. As for external nature, it is to religion that we must look as having been one of the principal ways by which the subject of nature acquired the right of being cited, and therefore of entering into literature. At first it was the spectacles of nature, made use of in the instruction of theology and morals, and in demonstrations of religious arguments, that the secular writers utilized. Consequently, a number of them - those especially who were acquainted with and loved nature - were able to enter into their descriptions and details of nature a sincerity and depth of feeling that not only inspired them but gave their works more precision and an authority which, without actually having been justified, had been excluded from serious literature (Van Tieghem 254-5). In contrast, the more restrained baroque poet hardly ever described or looked at natural objects for their own sake. The beauty of nature

was only a symbol of the greater beauty of the world to come; its transitory pleasures held little that were of interest to him (Prawer 31-2). It was these two distinct, but not entirely exclusive, aspects of the German lyric - the sentimental religious strain, and the formal baroque version - that were passed on to the enlightenment poet at the outset of the century. Of primary importance at this juncture is the use of the sentimental in conjunction with nature, since much of what is sentimental, and therefore melancholy in eighteenth-century German poetry found expression in nature poetry and in the display of feelings evoked in it.

And, in fact, a new kind of poetry in the form of the meditative-descriptive poem - a tradition with obvious roots in eighteenth-century England - began to take hold in German literature in the early years of the century. In 1721, Barthold Brockes (1680-1747), the intermediary of the sentimental religious genre of the lyric, published the first of his nine volumes of collected verse poems which he significantly entitled Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott, 1721-48 (Earthly Pleasure in God). Brockes' work was an important contribution to the development of the lyric in this transition period. Just as significant was his focus on nature which represented a shift in emphasis that counterbalanced the one traditionally maintained by the baroque poet. His aim, as the title of the work stressed, was to reveal the glory of God's natural world, not for the benefits of the world beyond, but for the here and now, and to provide the necessary moralistic data on which to base his arguments:

> Der beste Gottesdienst ist sonder Zweifel der
> Wenn man vergnüget schmeckt, recht fühlt, riecht, sieht, und hört

he declared -- The best way now to worship God is to experience, enjoy, and fully feel, smell, see, and hear the delights of God's earthly pleasures (Prawer 32).

Like a true empiricist of the enlightenment, Brockes entered into a closer intimacy with nature, noting the colors of an insect or the intricacies of a snowflake; he described in detail the structure of the nightingale's throat and laid stress on things perceived by the senses, on sights and sounds and colors (Price 84). And, like his English contemporary, Thomson, he taught his countrymen to go out of doors and study nature at first hand. Similarly, his poems followed the trend of the meditative-descriptive genre, characteristically alternating between natural descriptions and sentimental moral comments on the goodness of God. In the end, the reflections of both these poets - their theological and teleological points of view having authorized the fullness of their individual enterprises - perceived in the beautiful things of nature the grand moral, and made it the object of spiritual contemplation.

Any echo of Thomson's Seasons in Brockes' Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott is no mere coincidence. Brockes had begun to study the work as early as 1735 (five years after its first full publication; its last, substantially revised and altered, was in 1746), translating fragments, and then making a complete translation of the work that was published in 1745, the first in German, under the title Die Jahreszeiten. His general enthusiasm for the work finally resulted in his borrowing a number of ideas and even whole passages from it and incorporating them into several later volumes of his Irdisches Vergnügen. Other translations followed but none seemed as satisfying to interested German

poets, Kleist, for one, who found himself 'begeistert' by Brockes' rendition of the work. It was in fact Ewald von Kleist, with his poem "Der Frühling" (1749), who was the first German poet of importance to respond to Thomson's Seasons (Price 85-9). Once again, there were similarities in his work to the prototype, especially in the plan and in his way of observing and describing nature, a phenomenon new to the German poetic perspective that Kleist was able to glean from Brockes' translation, notwithstanding the fact that he was unable to read Thomson in the original and had to rely on Brockes' translation for his work (Price 87).

On the whole, Thomson's vogue in Germany, although notable, was not as impressive as the one it experienced - if not immediately, at least in retrospect - in France. Still, it produced an interesting episode in the development of German eighteenth-century aesthetics - which The Seasons shared with other English imports - Young's Night Thoughts, Macpherson's Ossian, and works by Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, and others - and in the development of descriptive nature poetry.

The key in Thomson's work, of course, was its emphasis on nature and the various impulses derived from it that seemed to convey emotional qualities on man capable of expressing mood and sentiment. In time the affinity between poet and nature would intensify into a kind of egocentric sentimentalism made more vivid by the poet's animation of nature, a device first employed by Hagedorn in his poem "Der Mai," where the poet's sensibility, receptive to the beauty around him, confers on the landscape and the seasons attributes of his own personality (Prawer 33). We recall the reluctance which French poets and critics had demonstrated, generally, in approaching the sub-

ject of nature in poetry, during this same mid-century period. In Germany however where the love of nature paralleled the English quite closely, the subject of nature in poetry was already appreciated and accepted in the tradition of religious sentiment which, after Brockes, became secularized in the poetry of Hagedorn, Kleist, Haller, and others. The role that Thomson's poem played in German literature, generally, was significant; but it was in the German lyric that the work had its most meaningful impact, in encouraging a greater expression of the imagination and leaving the way open for the entry of sentimentalism (Price 91).

There was, nevertheless, no such romantic development in German poetry equivalent to that of English melancholy poetry - shared between the genres of sensibility and sentimentalism - that spans the melancholy spectrum of Gray's more balanced, less mournful "Elegy," to Goldsmith's sentimentalized version of sensibility in "The Deserted Village," and the gloomier aspects of the 'memento mori' of Young's Night Thoughts. For the most part, German romanticism was an intellectual movement, more so than either the English or the French (Wellek 167), and therefore not especially melancholy. Although many of its poets and writers were attracted to and even influenced by the new emotion of sensibility coming out of English letters, they were not particularly interested in creating a literature based on an emotional nature or an awakened sensibility for the suffering of others. The phenomenon of melancholy in the eighteenth century was then - and still remains today - the English disease that is betrayed in its national disposition; in Germany, it was a question of influence, with sentimentalism representing the next shift in melancholy poetry at a

time when European poets were emulating the English. From there, it goes right into the nineteenth century and Romanticism.

Of the two genres of melancholy poetry - sensibility and sentimentalism - it was the poetry of sentimentalism, or 'Empfindsamkeit,' that had the more lasting effect on German poetry and on German readers. It was also the poetry that produced the 'Weltschmerz' syndrome at the end of the century which betrayed an outworn aristocracy and social order too weak to provide the necessary outlets for their young and spirited talents who, without money or social status, found themselves caught up in a personalized malady of weariness and fatigue, a condition later interiorized by Hölderlin, and demonstrated in the poetry of Nerval and Baudelaire. Without this feeling of sentimentality however there would not have been a Goethe or a Keats; with it, as Goethe confirms in his autobiography Dichtung und Wahrheit (1833), the youth of Germany would be sufficiently influenced to produce that "gloomy contemplation" which afflicted Werther and his prototypes (2: 206-10). An important segment of this youth were the poets of the 'Sturm und Drang' (1770-78) who in their diversified and revolutionary interests represented a short-lived but significant feature of German romantic poetry before the nineteenth century.

Characteristically, sentimentalism is an imitation of sensibility that lacks the latter's more restrained and lighter qualities of melancholy. The treatment of nature is also shifted in this poetry from a place more sensitive to the comfort and pleasure of the poet, to one where the poet now exploits nature in the interest of his own sentimental egotism. Its earliest strain in German poetry was rooted in a homespun pietist religiosity that effected a new kind of poetic expres-

sion in the mid-century, identified as "the unaffected language of the heart," and "the true voice of feeling" (Forster xxxiv).

The chief proponent and initiator of this poetry was Friedrich Klopstock who departed from this base of sentimental pietism by infusing language with feeling thereby creating a new poetic vision that was admired and later emulated by the young poets of the 'Göttinger Hainbund' (1772-6) - the Society of the Grove. Among its more talented members was the poet Ludwig Hölty, whose personalized melancholy - as illustrated in his poem "Die Mainacht" - marked his poetry with a bittersweet nostalgia that spoke of unattainable happiness here on earth, overshadowed by impending death. The conventional stock-in-trade objects of nature in the poem - nightingales, doves, moonlight, shrubbery - that had previously furnished a fitting background for the poet's sadness, no longer comfort him. Instead, a note of discontent and deep sadness has crept into the poet's vision that betrays his true feelings as he bares his complaints to nature. The sight of the 'lächelndes Bild' (happy image) of the birds burns through his soul as he imagines the happy scene to be an image of the ideal domestic joy he seeks for himself. But this joy is not forthcoming despite the yearning in his soul; and in a final effort to resolve this impasse, he asks the agonizing question:

Wann, o lächelndes Bild, welches wie Morgenrot
Durch die Seele mir strahlt, find' ich auf Erden dich?

/When, oh happy image, that burns through my soul like the dawn, shall I find you here on earth?/ The only reply that comes back to the poet, however, is the appearance of a single, lonely tear 'die einsame Träne / (that) Bebt mir heisser die Wang' herab!' /trembles bitterly down my

cheek7 (Prawer 43-7). The sentimentalism expressed in this poem is still within the bounds of a controlled sensibility that continues to preserve the poet's sense of objective reality, despite the rather painful display of his sorrows. It is to this earth after all - and especially to his beloved Maytime - that Hölty looks to realize his ideals, and not to any imagined world of escape or withdrawal from the present into which Novalis and Ludwig Tieck would be tempted to retreat - a state of mind that characterized a number of German Romantics.

The poem "Wehmut" by the Romantic poet Joseph von Eichendorff, represents a late example of the next shift in sentimental melancholy, in its ultimate progression towards 'Weltschmerz,' that continued to influence German poetry into the nineteenth century. In "Wehmut" the melancholy articulation of the poet, evoked in terms of 'ich,' or "I," indicates the poet's inner feelings in exaggerated complaint and self-indulgence in which the poet combines both an attitude of feeling sorry for himself with being conscious of his own woes:

Ich kann wohl manchmal singen,
Als ob ich fröhlich sei,
Doch heimlich Thränen dringen
Da wird das Herz mir frei.

The poet admits that he can sometimes be happy when he allows himself to sing, but excessive self-indulgence to his feelings gives vent only to tears which serve as a temporary easing of the pain. As in Hölty's poem "Die Mainacht," this poet too makes use of the traditional topos of the nightingale's song, which like his feelings expresses

a yearning for freedom and other things. However the sounds that come back to him this time from the vaulted bowers of the nightingales, in days when spring breezes play outdoors, appear to echo the unattainable yearnings of his own heart. The poet's melancholy in this poem has reached a point where those objects that were once a comfort and joy to him have now become devices which he can exploit for his own narcissistic pleasures; by externalizing the internal he can now expose his private feelings publicly:

So lassen Nachtigallen,
Spielt draussen Frühlingsluft,
Der Sehnsucht Lied erschallen
Aus ihres Käfigs Gruft.

Ironically, all hearts are gladdened, all except the poet's and the nightingales'; for those who listen cannot feel the pain and the deep sorrow in the song:

Da lauschen alle Herzen,
Und alles ist erfreut,
Doch keiner fühlt die Schmerzen,
Im Lied das tiefe Leid.

In the last three stanzas the drama intensifies as the poet interacts in a dialogue with his heart, the source of his 'Angst' and pain. Two questions frame the exchange, the first in the opening line: 'Sage mir, mein Herz, was willst du?' posed by the poet, and the second in the last line of the poem, asked by the heart: 'Ach, wer sprengt die müde Brust?' /Tell me my heart, what do you want? . . . O, who will burst open this tired heart?/. In the intervening lines the heart makes known that a 'tief Verlangen' has seized it,

which it describes as a joy 'viel andrer, beserer' than any it had ever before experienced; yet the joy it seeks is not to be attained since this heart has grown too tired to hear the sounds of that joy; weakened and disillusioned, it is now content to pass on to some hypothetical 'wer' the effort to make it burst open once more:

"Fasst mich erst recht tief Verlangen
Nach viel andrer, beserer Lust,
Die die Töne nicht erlangen --
Ach, wer sprengt die müde Brust?"

The themes of frustration and passivity inherent in the poem once again make evident the deep dissatisfaction that young intellectuals and poet in particular experienced living under an old and repressive social order which offered no hope or outlet for their talents. Life for them was useless in any social way, leaving the poet or writer little recourse other than to turn inward to become the misfit, the loner, the social outcast, to vent his innermost feelings in lyric poetry. The evident tearfulness and self-indulgence in this poem no longer represent a sensibility in balance, but a sentimentalism that is overreaching itself in exaggerated expression. It is Werther's "My heart is like a sick child. . ." that captured the essence of the hour at the same time that it proclaimed Werther the quintessential hero of a melancholy age. From here, this type of 'Empfindsamkeit' would find a comfortable niche with the kind of poet best exemplified in the posturing of a Byron. But with these excesses and self-analysis would also begin the interiorization of the self that would lead to neurosis and even madness, best illustrated in the last of Baudelaire's four "Spleen" poems: Comme le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme

un couvercle. . .

The poem "Das Grab" (1783), by the poet Johann Gaudens von Salis-Seewis, was influenced mainly by the English Gothic novelists and the poets of the "graveyard" school, Gray, Robert Blair, and Edward Young. It is the old 'memento mori' theme of Gray and Blair, joined with the darker, more "frightful" passages of Young, as Goethe described them, that especially attracted the serious-minded German. In these poems, the reader found such trappings as owls, "night's foul bird," and charnal houses, the "mansions of the dead" (Blair, "The Grave") rather than the more familiar sounds and sight suggested by nightingales and the 'Hügels Moos.' In German poetry it was the strophic form of the 'Volkslied' that traditionally dealt with the emotional and melancholy subjects of death, loss, and grief. It was also the form used in a considerable portion of German lyric poetry, including Goethe's early lyrics, and the major major works of some later Romantic poets, as Brentano, Eichendorff, and Heine (Lindenberger, Morgan 322). Although not a 'Volkslied,' "Das Grab" follows the typical folksong structure, in both its simplicity of rhyme and meter and in language that nevertheless come together to create a poem that is not only in harmony with its universal message, but in its thematic unity:

Das Grab is tief und stille
Und schauderhaft sein Rand;
Es deckt mit schwarzer Hülle
Ein unbekanntes Land.

Das Lied der Nachtigallen
Tönt nicht in seinem Schoss;

Der Freundschaft Rosen fallen
Nur auf des Hügels Moos.

Verlassne Bräute ringen
Umsonst die Hände wund;
Der Waise Klagen dringen
Nicht in der Tiefe Grund.

The poem begins with a description of the grave itself seen as deep and still, and held in place by a terrible rim, like a black shroud covering the entrance of an unknown land. The images that identify an unknown land beyond the grave open up a richness in meaning that come together to transform the open grave into a portal, or passageway, leading not to an end, as in death, but beyond to another land or lands, never before imagined. Also, there is in the openness of the grave the association of a door or passageway that carries with it the Janus-faced image, looking forward to what lies ahead, the unknown land, as well as backward to what has been left behind, seen in stanzas two and three. Here, too, in this first stanza, the cluster of metaphorical figures, coming together as they do, begin to unmask the poet's intent: Death is not made final, and the grave is merely a resting place, a way-station to a land we do not know, even perhaps to the promise of another beginning suggested by the word 'Schoss.'

Stanza two tells us <u>what</u> has been left behind. They are the traditional things, made universal and symbolic by habit and convention, that are associated with death and mourning: the song of the nightingale that does not reach down into the depths of the grave - 'Tönt nicht in seinem Schoss' - and the roses of friendship that,

like the nightingale's song, fall short of going into the unknown land, to remain visible only on the mossy-covered mound.

In the third stanza it is the who, the friends and family that are left behind: forsaken brides ringing their sore hands in vain:

Verlassne Bräute ringen
Umsonst die Hände wund;

and the laments of the orphaned that like the sounds of the nightingale's song, do not penetrate into the deep ground:

Der Waise Klagen dringen
Nicht in der Tiefe Grund.

Of particular significance - in terms of the first three stanzas - are the recurring negatives in 'tönt nicht,' and 'dringen nicht,' that clearly indicate how far the objects of this world can go with regard to the dead and the world beyond. One thing is made certain: the world that tries, in memory of the dead, to communicate some small measure of its sentiment, whether by roses or friendship, birds' songs or mourners' laments, must remain behind, on this side of the great divide. Verbally, these negatives also have the effect of telling us by way of their negativeness exactly what is there, and therefore possible, and what is not. In terms of understanding, they reinforce the conflict that comes with separation and death at the same time that they make death even more poignant and final, leaving the world all the more acutely distressed by the burden of its grief. The presence of negatives in a poem like "Das Grab" represents one of the techniques of melancholy and Romanticism - the aesthetic of negation - that has the power of saying more by negation and denial than could otherwise be said, artistically or poetically, in the poem.

Stanzas four and five bring the poem to its final resolution:

Doch, sonst an keinem Orte
Wohnt die ersehnte Ruh;
Nur durch die dunkle Pforte
Geht man der Heimat zu.

Das arme Herz, hienieden
Von manchem Sturm bewegt,
Erlangt des wahren Frieden
Nur, wo es nicht mehr schlägt.

Having come as far as it can the world now finds itself faced with a negative and a challenge: Since the peace man yearns for resides only in that place, the necessary consequences is to accept the challenge and go through the dark gate that takes one home. Here, death is seen as man's homeward journey, one of the universal images of world literature that is faithful to the spirit of death which poets, throughout time, have portrayed as the eternal "door" through which the shadow of death finds "her dim dwelling-place" (Shelley, "Adonais" 68).

Some of the images thus far encountered in the poem suggest a paradox despite their universality. The grave is portrayed as a portal, a door, or entrance evoked by the 'Rand' (the frame or edge bordering the grave) which also turns out to be an abyss where the poor heart below no longer beats (stanza five). Then, again, the open grave is transformed into a place ('Ort') that can just as well be a bed, a shroud, a covering; and the black soil ('schwarze Hülle') is also the rich soil of moss that grows a little greener over the grave, fertilized by the body below. And, finally, 'Heimat' is a term evok-

ing comfort and safe haven, and is generally associated with peace and rest. In this context, however, the image of home and safety robs death of some of its fearfulness, thereby diminishing even more the enigma and mystery of death.

In stanza five, the challenge is met and the dilemma resolved. The poor heart, moved by many a storm below, achieves its yearned for goal by finding true peace only where it beats no more. At the same time, the conflict which the living experience when confronted by the separation of death is also resolved, comforted by the thought that death is not made final until such time as memory and recollection can no longer preserve the image that keeps a person alive. In the end, the characteristically simple and straightforward language by which "Das Grab" makes clear its meaning, is already there in the message, in the realization of the futility of mourning and grief.

Chapter II - The Melancholy Imagination and the English Romantics

1. "Moods melancholy" in the English Poets

Many writers have tried to put into perspective the events - political, social, economic - that marked the years of revolutionary crisis at the end of the eighteenth century when the first generation of English Romantic poets came to maturity. They, no less than the rest of humanity, were swept up in the social and economic changes at home and in the tragic consequences of the French Revolution abroad, Wordsworth through direct, personal involvement, and Coleridge through a deepening frustration with himself and the world as he viewed it; Byron, Shelley, and Keats, the generation that followed, built out of the shattered hopes of the age illusory dreams of a visionary future of man's destiny shaped in the mythical figures of a Prometheus or Cain, or in the tenuous dreams of an Endymion or Alastor. They could neither avert the wave that engulfed them and their world, nor mend the pain, and their literature spills over with utterances of "in these times of fear, / This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown, . . . Of dereliction and dismay. . . For this uneasy heart of ours. . ." (Wordsworth, Prelude II, 89, 91).

The changes in attitudes and conceptions which are encountered once the "divide of 1789" is crossed - of which the element of melancholy is only one - are complex and varied. Assuredly, however, as Northrop Frye (vi) has described it, it is a "different kind of poetic world, darker in color than what has preceded it." For one thing,

poetry is no longer about other men but about the poet himself, centered squarely in the "I," and the vision of the object which had up to this time been viewed "out there," changes in perspective to an inward manifestation; for another, the emotional quality in poetry is more deeply intensified. The sense of nature that Thomson and the poets of Sensibilityhad recognized as a place for man to retire for meditation and repose becomes, as in Shelley's "Mont Blanc," more deeply drawn into the poet's subconscious. At last the "true solitary," he will interiorize what he sees and transform reality with his inner vision and imagination. The change in the poet's spatial perspective of nature and his role in it thus verges on the mystical, emptying out the romantic landscape to rid it of all man's traces (i.e. civilization and society). It is the culmination of that shift from viewing the world in a hierarchical arrangement to a pantheistic one that allows the poet, William Blake (585),

> To see the World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour. . .
>
> "Auguries of Innocence," 1-4 (1803)

And so it was that external nature continued to be present as an essential element in the poet's psyche, albeit with a view drastically changed of how he saw himself in it. In its more salutary moments, nature could still retain its favored and congenial setting, as a soothing ingredient

> . . . whose ministry it is
> To interpose the covert of your shades;

Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself
. . . and his own unquiet heart. . .

Wordsworth, Prelude, XII, 24-28 (1850)

In the same way, the themes of melancholy - mutability of things earthly, complaint of life, meditation on death, solitude, delight in ruins, and twilight - all commonplaces of eighteenth-century thought, passed into the general stream of Romantic poetry, sometimes as subject, sometimes as motif, and sometimes as a very intense, dark feeling that the poet expresses when meditating on the conditions of human suffering. In fact, the important Romantic poems are those which express the deepest of feelings about serious human problems; and where the elements of Romantic melancholy are not nearly as evident in poems not intended to be melancholy, they are nevertheless present in the scattered passages that reflect the poet's mood when seeking after new visions and new realities, out of the shattered dreams of the past. The poet's sensitivity to political events abroad, and to the effects of the new industrial order at home, is shown in themes that evoke an awareness of his own misery and despair, often bordering on hopelessness, beneath a more visible, determined optimism. Instinctively, the poet turns inward upon himself to become even more withdrawn, solitary, and alone. By the generation of Shelley and Byron, a desolation of spirit and a 'Weltschmerz' have deepened into disillusionment. We move slowly from a displacement of melancholy in its customary place in the heart to the more threatening and somber shades of Byron's world-weariness and Baudelaire's madness of the mind. So it is that the changing moods of melancholy have all

been pointing to a single direction first articulated by Wordsworth, in his Preface to the 1814 edition of The Excursion (Poetical Works 590), when he says (34-41):

> . . . Not Chaos, not
> The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
> Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
> By help of dreams--can breed such fear and awe
> As fall upon us often when we look
> Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man--
> My haunt, and the main region of my song.

Like Jaques, then, we can say that the Romantic poets courted a melancholy of their own, "compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects. . ." (Shakespeare 264). Yet, except for Byron, it would be a mistake to present them wholly as poets of disillusion. Unlike Jaques, they were not melancholic by design. They may often enough have expressed the mood and feeling in their work, but they did not do so consciously, except for poems such as Keats' "Ode on Melancholy," or as a means to an end. But neither are they poets of high optimism as some critics have claimed of Shelley, and in which category Wordsworth, and even Coleridge, may at times appear to belong. Keats' brand of optimism, and that of the Romantic poets, generally, lies in (Stillinger 75):

> . . . the great end
> Of Poesy, that it should be a friend
> To soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of man.
>
> "Sleep and Poetry," 245-7 (1817)

Our poets struggle time and again to rise out of their despair

and disillusionment despite the pain and suffering they undergo. They vacillate from hope and optimism to despair and fear, and their poetry reveals this vacillation in its preoccupation with time and death, disillusioned love, despair mingled with a strong faith in the betterment of mankind, and in the inevitability of the final triumph of good over evil. To that extent their poetry contains an underlying element of melancholy as well as a longing for peace and serenity, and a release from a too-burdensome world which afflicted them all. They recognized only too well the lethargy and indifference inherent in melancholy when carried to its farthest extremes. This they wished to avoid with an intensity that demonstrated a courage and a strength of mind almost beyond human ability: NOT TO GIVE IN, and not to fall within the bounds of that "sloth-jaundic'd all" (Coleridge, Poetical Works 77). The concept of death as a last resort beckoned to Shelley and Keats, and to Byron, but Coleridge demonstrated another kind of intransigency which refused to succumb to death as a release from his pain-ridden existence. His unwavering belief "that all I endure is full of blessings!" (Letters I, 649), expressed most poignantly his willingness to suffer the physical and mental agonies as a price well worth the gift of life. Consequently, death rarely entered into his diction, except when mourning the passing of another; it is never his own death that he seeks as an escape. Wordsworth, who from outward appearances seemed to have suffered less, parallels his friend's attitude in this respect.

Once again, we must not overlook the fact that when these poets arrived on the scene, 'Angst,' despair, and disillusionment were already evident as symptoms of their time, the so-called "Spirit of the Age," of which Hazlitt, Schiller, and others had spoken; and because

they were caught up in it, they could not help but respond in indignation and defiance of it. It is in the very nature of the time-spirit itself, marked by unprecedented events of failed revolutions abroad and unnatural industrial ravages at home, that nourished these melancholy states of mind, and prompted the sensitive observer to remark that:

> . . . in these times of fear,
> This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
> . . . 'mid indifference and apathy
> And wicked exultation, when good men,
> On every side fall off we know not how,
> To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
> Of peace, and quiet, and domestic love,
> Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers
> Of visionary minds; . . .
>
> Wordsworth, Prelude II, 432-440 (1850)

It is not altogether unnatural that with this continuous mood of darkness, which comprises "all that is at enmity with joy," these poets should have attempted to counterbalance it by precisely opposite means. Their hope, therefore, is positive in the light of all the negativism and despair they experienced.

Of main interest at this juncture is where the tradition of melancholy has taken us, or more accurately, how some of the melancholy themes of the late eighteenth century manifest themselves in the poetry of the Romantic period, transformed as they are from those in the poetry of Sensibility and Sentimentalism, in interaction with the political, social, and intellectual forces of this later period.

One theme - mutability - was favored by the melancholy poet with a philosophic bent in both the neoclassic and Romantic literary periods. Historically, it belongs in its neoclassic setting, to the tradition of the 'sic transit gloria mundi,' or death theme, when the poet meditates on unvanquished time and change and the inevitability of death, and to the gentler, more restrained forms of complaint of life, that derive from Milton's tempered treatment of melancholy in "Il Penseroso." In its late neoclassic period, immediately before it was altered by the Romantic poets into a personal anguish and 'Weltschmerz,' mutability had changed sufficiently to reflect some of the growing romantic tendencies evident in the literature of the time. On the extreme side, for instance, there was an interest in legends and romance, and a taste for nostalgic things of the past - mainly in prose - that writers of Gothic and legendary tales such as Sir Walter Scott, Horace Walpole, and Ann Radcliffe made use of: ruins, and crumbling castles, shrieking owls, and distraught heroines, in the midst of all sorts of mayhem. The ethos of the day that had attempted to cultivate a kind of "proper sensibility" for the man of feeling, had also released men's hearts and feelings into a flood of tears.

But the true value of mutability - and its related themes of complaint of life, death, time, and change - was its ability to take on, under the rubric of melancholy, the humane poetry of a Langhorne, a Cowper, and a Crabbe, that in turn would appeal to the Romantic poet when dealing with the more serious aspects of a pathetic melancholy of sorrow and human suffering. At the same time, the poetic landscapes that had traditionally turned men's feelings into expressions of sadness, continued to be exploited by the Romantic poet,

each in his own way, to extract statements of feeling that in Wordsworth would sometimes be oblique and understated, as in his poem "Michael," or in "Peter Bell," or in Shelley would be more blatantly open and tearful, as in his poem "Time," where he compares the "brackish" waters of the ocean with the "deep woe. . . of human tears," or again, as in Byron's men of feeling, where statements would become more desperate and diffuse in expressions of torpor, ennui, and general apathy.

Nevertheless, old habits die hard: alongside these later thematic developments, the favorite themes of death and mutability, haunts and churchyards, that were first set in motion by Gray's "Elegy" (1751), continued to appear in poetry obviously satisfying a taste in readers that still relished after lines such as "Each in his narrow cell for ever laid. . ." (15), and "The paths of glory lead but to the grave. . ." (36). In fact, Byron and Shelley, while in their early youth, each composed an imitation of the churchyard genre. Byron's poem "Lines written beneath an elm in the churchyard of Harrow" (1807), picks up the general theme of the burial ground as a place of solitude, as Gray had done, as well as the pensive ending which also marks this "melancholy" youth with a wish for final anonymity:

> Blest by the tongues that charm'd my youthful ear,
> Mourn'd by the few my soul acknowledged here,
> Deplored by those in early days allied,
> And unremember'd by the world beside.
>
> Byron, Poetical Works 47, 31-34.

Shelley's poem, "A Summer Evening Churchyard" (1815), concludes with ruminations on death, and the poet's suggestion that death's terrors

may well be lessened when challenged by life's most worthy pursuits:

> Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
> And terrorless as this serenest night:
> Here could I hope, like some inquiring child
> Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight
> That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.
>
> Shelley, Poetical Works 520, 25-30.

All these melancholy strands of mutability - meditation on death, time, and change, focused on past glories and human frailty - finally come together in the passages in Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1809-1817) that speak to these themes, and in Shelley's lyrics on Time, Death, and Mutability, and especially in his sonnet "Ozymandias," the poem preeminent in English poetry that expressed the 'sic transit' theme. However, in the hands of these two Romantics Gray's generalities are now made to speak for the personal side of the lonely poet, for whom time, change, and death turn out to be the expressions of his personal suffering and despair.

Keats' great "Ode to Melancholy" (1819) comes at a time when the neoclassical Miltonic tradition of writing odes on melancholy or any other subject is slowly dwindling out of fashion. Although the poem retains some of the effects of the Miltonic mode (and consciously so), with obvious allusions to "Proserpine," "yew-berries," "mournful Psyche," and the "downy owl," it owes little to Gray or to the late eighteenth-century tradition of melancholy where the emphasis was more on a willful exploitation of the related complaint of life theme, that allowed the poet to indulge his private feelings publicly. Rather, the "Ode" is an expression of a deeper, more profound melancholy in its

awareness of the paradoxes that lie at the very heart of existence: the joys of life mixed in with the knowledge of death. At the same time, Keats has linked his melancholy with the perception of beauty and the ephemeral, a quality that is also associated with joy and pleasure in the transiency of earthly things, and mutability; and it is in this sense that the poem suggests some resemblance with Gray's treatment of mutability on the brevity of life and the inevitability of death. We refer specifically to the lines in the "Ode":

> She dwells in Beauty -- Beauty that must die;
> And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu;
>
> Stillinger, 375, 21-23,

that recall the same fleeting concept in Gray's poem when he says:

> And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
> Await alike the inevitable hour.
>
> Lonsdale 35, 34-35.

And the sentiment lingers on, to reappear shortly in Thomas Hood's "Ode to Melancholy" (1827) where the same thoughts on death and mutability are paraphrased in questions such as:

> Why do buds ope, except to die?

that leave no recourse other than to

> . . . watch the roses wither,
> And think of our loves' cheeks;
> And oh, how quickly time doth fly
> To bring death's winter hither! . . .
>
> Clubbe, Thomas Hood 50, 39-43.

But this prolonged use of a neoclassic melancholy concept is not surprising when we consider the strong literary tradition of the English for both melancholy and philosophic thought; and the happy union of the two in subjects of life and death, change and time, have long since continued to satisfy this need as part of an old and well-established tradition of its poetry.

As for the "Ode on Melancholy" itself, Keats' awareness in the knowledge that where pleasure exists there also is pain - and vice versa - stems from no traditional source of melancholy other than the "amazed and disgusted perusal of his own heart," as Amy Lowell has suggested (John Keats, 2: 246). But while we are faced in the poem with the contradiction that Melancholy dwells with Beauty, and Beauty, like nature and all we love, must die, we are also aware that the poet has managed to find some recompense, some "aching pleasure," for joy and sorrow, in "the very temple of Delight" itself, where ironically (26-28):

> Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
> Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
> Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine.

There is a sardonic, bittersweet tone that Keats brings to the poem: even with the knowledge of the pain and loss to come, who would choose to refrain from tasting of that joy or pleasure? If the lover is sad, it is because he has been happy: he has "burst Joy's grape against his palate fine," perhaps the keenest of pleasures that there is in melancholy. Nevertheless, the final answer comes at the close of the poem in a cruel twist of fate - the brooding fate that always clouded Keats' joys with a shadow. The lover, and all who would per-

sist in seeking Joy's gift, must inevitably succumb to Melancholy's "might, / And be among her cloudy trophies hung" (29-30).

As is so often the case with seeming contradictions, we are reminded, however, that in Keats' philosophy Joy is found in Beauty, and Beauty in Truth--and Truth is found only through Knowledge, and Knowledge through Sorrow. Nevertheless, these intellectual ruminations led him into those ever-recurring contraries from which he seemed unable to escape: ". . .and I go on to say that 'Sorrow is Wisdom'--and further for aught we can know for certainty! 'Wisdom is folly'" (Letters 1: 279).

Byron's poetry, and "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" in particular, presents us with an even darker side of the Romantic melancholy when meditating on life, death, and change. His personalized vision is involved not so much with melancholy per se as it is with the entire 'mal du siècle'/'Weltschmerz' phenomenon which generates the literature of the early nineteenth century. It is the ennui and 'taedium vitae' coming together with melancholy as an added ingredient that distinguishes his poetry. Of all the Romantics, Byron lived his life not in reality but in accordance with the dictates of certain idealistic abstractions or principles of which he believed life should be composed: liberty, total freedom, and independence; and to these he devoted all his actions. The physical attainments of pleasure or gratification as an end in themselves had no interest for him; the idea was everything; the actuality he considered to be unequal to the effort expended (Poetical Works 199, Canto II, st. xxxv):

> When all is won that all desire to woo,
> The paltry prize is hardly worth the cost. . .

But as with Keats and his paradoxes, so with Byron and his: all subjects lead back finally to the central theme of his ennui and world-weariness. No matter who his surrogate is - Childe Harold, Cain, or Manfred - or where he may be found, whether among the ruins of Rome where he asks

> What are our woes and suffrance? Come and see
> The cypress--hear the owl. . .
>
> Canto IV, st. lxxviii, 237,

or amid "this place of skulls," at Waterloo (Canto III, st. xviii, 212), or as a victim of his own gloom

> To meditate amongst decay, and stand
> A ruin amidst ruins. . .
>
> Canto IV, st. xxv, 230,

or when he pauses under the arches of the Coliseum, or to think on time and the passing of all things now laid out where "Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower grown, / Matted and mass'd together," are heaped up like hillocks

> On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown
> In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescoes steep'd
> In subterranean damps, where the owl peep'd
> Deeming it midnight:--Temples, baths, or halls?
> Pronounce who can; for all that Learning reap'd
> From her research hath been, that these are walls--
> Behold the Imperial Mount! 'tis thus the mighty falls. . .
>
> Canto IV, st. cvii, 241,

he is sure to seek out the images of ruin and mutability to express his own discontent and inward sorrow. The terrible weariness and

disillusion with which Childe Harold looks upon his world is only one aspect of the "Byronic gloom." But it is also the terrifying look of a tortured soul, whose penetrating eye was able to capture its essence, and to make of it the most authentic account of the 'Weltschmerz' phenomenon that swept over Europe following the debacle of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars.

A great deal of Byron's poetry of personal suffering is written into his shorter lyric pieces - poems of various stanza lengths and metric lines that he admired in eighteenth-century poetry. In them he was better able to concentrate on his own personal griefs and regrets, and the melancholy that always oppressed him. A man of many contradictions, these shorter works were also a way for him to assuage his personal feelings of guilt and remorse in the hope, perhaps, of finding some retribution or atonement for his sins. If Wordsworth is the poet 'par excellence' of melancholy and human suffering that is focussed on his outward perception of Nature and Man, then Byron is the poet of melancholy and personal grief, who draws all his forces of sorrow and remorse inward into himself, in an effort to find some peace with his self-conscious guilt.

In one of several pieces entitled "Stanzas for Music" (1816) beginning: "They say that hope is happiness. . ." Byron speaks once more of love as the "prize of the past," and of memory, the power that "wakes the thoughts that bless: / They rose the first--they set the last; . . ." But his despair reaches its final realization in the knowledge that the promises which hope had once held out in expectation of love's fulfillment, were lost to him forever: they are melted back into memory, leaving little else in its place, except the

sense of deception or betrayal:

> Alas! it is delusion all:
>
> The future cheats us from afar,
>
> Nor can we be what we recall,
>
> Nor dare we think on what we are.

Poetical Works 100, 9-12.

Shelley certainly does not spare us with a slackening off in his verses in the use of the theme of mutability; in fact, there is little respite in them of some aspect of the topic (as a look at the titles of his poems will indicate), expecially in the lyrics and the fragments. Time past, death, change, and mutability itself - of which there are two titles - are subjects he rarely put aside, except when dealing more directly with topics of disillusioned love, evil, and corruption, or philosophizing on the "painted veil" of life. If it is not his own dejection he is concentrated on, it is the misery and suffering of mankind that concerns him and that he laments. The clouds, the "unfathomable sea," the birds, the nightly heavens, and his favorite symbol, the moon, are materials used to express his melancholy, seeing in them rather than in Byron's crumbling walls the images of his own personal and unhappy self.

So it is that Shelley seems to have appropriated, as had Byron, the theme of mutability (in one form or another) as an expression or abstraction of his own grief and loneliness. The distinction between them lies merely in the source of their material: Byron projects the misery of his remorse and unhappiness onto a landscape of ruin and decay, the crumbling effects of man-made artifacts; Shelley, on the other hand, externalizes his miseries onto nature's objects of universal grandeur, seeing in the endless, detached existence of the

oceans, heavens, and the moon personified symbols of loneliness and isolation, they from their cosmic kind and he from his human kind.

If Shelley was not by nature a melancholy person, it is difficult to determine this from his poetry. Yet we have evidence that he was not an unhappy man by choice, or that he sought loneliness for its own sake, but rather by reason of poor health and a sensitive nature. Mary Shelley maintains that much of his gloom arose mainly out of his ill health and constant physical pain from which he suffered inordinately and which he tried to hide from those nearest to him by keeping up, in their presence at least, an appearance of cheerfulness (Poetical Works 566-67). But when the pain became too severe, he escaped to solitude and his writings into which he poured the heavy "weight of melancholy thoughts" ("The Cenci" I, ii. 36, Poetical Works 280) of his thwarted feelings of love, or the wrongs he felt that were being put upon mankind by unjust and evil men, or his own complaints of life in the "Fragment: Alas! this is not":

> Alas! this is not what I thought life was.
> I knew that there were crimes and evil men,
> Misery and hate; nor did I hope to pass
> Untouched by suffering, through the rugged glen. . .
>
> Poetical Works 627, 1-4 (1820)

Whatever his temperament may have been and however those who loved and knew him as, Shelley nevertheless endowed his verses with some of the saddest, most gloomy lyrics on human existence in English poetry, in painful outcries of "O world! O life! O time! . . .No more--Oh, never more!" (Poetical Works 636, "A Lament"), which belie anything but the fact that he was a profoundly mournful and unhappy in-

dividual. In all fairness to Shelley, however, we also remember some of the more heroic pronouncements he made on life, couched in hope and optimism and painfully expressed time and again, almost in defiance of everything he knew to be contrary to them:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates. . .

"Prometheus Unbound" (1820) IV, 57-74, Poetical Works 264.

Wordsworth contibutes still another kind of emotional perception drawn from the theme of mutability and time past. Its special quality may best be described as a mood of pensive nostalgia or unfulfilled longing - even a sadness and regret for the faded ecstasies of youth and time - that comes over us when thinking of "The things which I have seen I now can see no more" ("Intimations Ode," 1802-1804, Poetical Works 460,9). In its romantic context it represents those poignant memories that languish in the mind only to return in moments of thoughtful tranquillity. In comparison, Shelley describes his yearning for "Time Long Past" (1820), as

. . . the ghost of a dear friend dead
Is Time long past.
A tone which is now forever fled,
A hope which is now forever past,
A love so sweet it could not last,
Was Time long past.

Shelley, Poetical Works 626, 1-6.

Byron, whose conception of it comes closer to Wordsworth's, speaks of

it as the ". . . Memory [that] wakes the thoughts that bless: / They rose the first - they set the last; . . ." (quoted above in lines cited from "Stanzas for Music," 3-4).

In Wordsworth's case, however, they are always the memories that recall the days of his childhood, or his departed youth and its juvenile delights, or the "dear remembrances" of a distant event or place whose fragile remnants become the formula and refrain of his inspiration, and the source of his poetry captured out of time and set into verse: ". . . These beauteous forms" (whether of memory or of nature), that "Through a long absence, have. . . / . . . oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din / Of towns and cities. . ." returned to him

> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
> And passing even into my purer mind,
> With tranquil restoration. . .
>
> "Tintern Abbey" (1798), 22-23, 25-30.

As a maker of verses, Wordsworth also knew that although things come into being, change, and pass away, and that

> . . . nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower. . .
>
> "Intimations Ode," 181-182,

he could reasonably resolve the dilemma for himself by consciously reconstructing some of the feelings and experiences of the past to include the memories of a "Tintern Abbey," or an "Intimations Ode," or The Prelude, selectively accounted for out of a lifetime of sense perceptions and observations coupled with intense thought. In them he

would speak of the "aching joys. . . / And all its dizzy raptures" ("Tintern Abbey" 84-85) of innocence and youth, to evoke the deepest emotions mixed from the ingredients of a romantic spirit and a "philosophic mind" ("Ode" 190). Added to this would be his enduring love of nature, never too remote from his thoughts, and the tribute he pays to her as

> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being. . .
>
> "Tintern Abbey" 109-111.

Yet despite the cheerful aspects he presents of nature, Wordsworth was not able to dispel entirely the traditional associations of nature and melancholy that had existed in poetry since Milton and Thomson; nor did his otherwise serious-minded temperament attempt to show us a different. In one of those rare passages in The Prelude, in which he alludes to the melancholic nature of his own character as "Moods melancholy, fits of spleen," he joins to it a disposition

> . . . that loved
> A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds
> The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring;
> A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice
> And inclination mainly, and the mere
> Redundancy of youth's contentedness. . .
>
> The Prelude, IV, 173-178, 530.

It was, in fact, from his early apprenticeship and intimacy in nature - in the presence of the "gloom of choice" - where he first learned to "see into the life of things," that other and deeper insights and

visions would arise to challenge and delight his spirit.

The themes of mutability in Coleridge's poetry do not spell themselves out in precisely the same way as they do in the poetry of Byron, Shelley, or Wordsworth. No discernible motifs of change, or longing for things past, or graves or ruins, or the relationship between joy and sorrow enter into his work in just those particular modes. Instead, the themes of human misery and social disillusion which do inform his poetry speak to us of man's suffering and oppression in the midst of evil, injustice, and war. They belong, of course, to his earlier poetry and to the Pantisocracy years of social and revolutionary fervor (1794-1796), which express his personal outrage and indignation at man's inhumanity and indifference. In such poems as the sonnet "The Outcast" (?1794), his anger against tyranny and evil erupts into frustrated outbursts of a helpless bystander:

> O! I could weep to think that there should be
> Cold-bosom'd lewd ones, who endure to place
> Foul offerings on the shrine of Misery,
> And force from Famine the caress of Love. . .
>
> Poetical Works 9-12, 71.

In "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" (1795), Coleridge scornfully denounces the hypocrites "Who sigh for Wretchedness, yet shun the Wretched" (106-108, 57), and in "Religious Musings" (1794-1796) offenses against man's dignity and honor exact from him the painful cry of

> . . . O ye numberless,
> Whom foul Oppression's ruffian gluttony
> Drives from Life's plenteous feast! . . .

O Aged Women! ye who weekly watch
The morsel tossed by law-forced charity,
And die so slowly, that none call it murder!

Poetical Works, 276-78, 287-89, 108-125.

Twenty years later, and in a more conciliatory and philosophic mood, when Coleridge's mind had long since left such notions for more abstract, metaphysical thoughts, we find him once again speaking to this subject of man's troubled lot, in his poem "Human Life on the Denial of Immortality" (?1815). But as the title indicates, Coleridge has removed the theme from the realm of mundane matters and placed it within the realm of both philosophy and theology, with the ultimate questions arising: What is life's meaning, its value, and its purpose? In it, human life is set up as a paradox, weighted on two sides: the "what is," and the "what happens to be," that is, life as a human experience, the 'cogito ergo sum,' with its meaning, purpose, and value grounded in Christian doctrine, and the happenstance of it as an unaccountable and purposeless event. To suit the intent of the poem, Coleridge presents it as a two-part supposition-conclusion exercise, each part consisting of a typical, fourteen-line sonnet, with a last line added on at the very end of the poem to furnish the culminating, final conclusion.

The first sonnet begins the exercise with a series of "if" propositions, conjecturing whether

If dead, we cease to be; if total gloom
Swallow up life's brief flash, . . .

forever; if life's activities are like the "summer-gusts, of sudden birth and doom," now here, now gone, "Whose sound and motion" are the

only evidence that declare "their whole of being! If the breath / Be Life itself," and not its function

. . . not its task and tent,

If even a soul like Milton's can know death;

then it must follow that Man is, indeed, a "vessel purposeless, unmeant," whose life is as meaningless as the "phantom purposes" which he observes coming from a bee-hive, a

Surplus of Nature's dread activity,
Which, as she gazed on some nigh-finished vase,
Retreating slow, with meditative pause,
She formed with restless hands unconsciously.
Blank accident! nothing's anomaly!

With these last few words begins for Coleridge the awesome dilemma that if we accept this premise to be true, if according to nature's laws this is the normal order of existence, then it must be that human life, as we perceive it, ceases at the point of death and with it any hope of immortality. The second sonnet-form of the poem carries this argument forward by stating the consequences of such a condition, should it be true:

If rootless thus, thus substanceless thy state,
Go, weight thy dreams, and be thy hopes, thy fears,
The counter-weights! Thy laughter and thy tears
Mean but themselves, each fittest to create
And to repay the other! Why rejoice
Thy heart with hollow joy for hollow good?

The poem continues to enlarge on the woes of life in its pretended refutation of the ways of God; there is no point to mourn or to

waste your sighs and lamenting voices that you were ever born and suffered the lot of man; it will avail you nothing, since these are only the "costless shadows of thy shadowy self." This being the case,

> Be sad! be glad! be neither! seek, or shun!
> Thou hast no reason why! Thou canst have none;

since

> Thy being's being is contradiction.

Poetical Works 425-26.

The complaint of life theme to which the argument in the poem adheres is a carry-over of the neoclassic theme of mutability, combined with the theme of human misery. In its eighteenth-century context it had been the favorite argument of poets concerned with the misery of men caught in the grips of industrial change, that provided solace to those whose life was full of woes, and the assurance of personal immortality in the assumption of life everlasting. With Romanticism, however, and the falling away of religious matters per se, the theme deepens into a form of pessimism as the poet's feelings of overwhelming anguish at man's situation in the world combine with his own personal weariness and frustration to become a true Romantic 'Weltschmerz' (Sickels 291, 295).

Nevertheless, this kind of nihilism in "Human Life" which suggests that existence has neither meaning nor value is rare in Coleridge, at least in the younger Coleridge for whom life without meaning, purpose, or worth - and, therefore, without "the sense of the Eternal" or the belief in man's immortality - would have been unthinkable. It is only in the older Coleridge - pressed down with metaphysical questionings and doubts of his own immortality (Muirhead 233), and in the

later autobiographical poems which no longer deal with pain and suffering, but are resigned to the hopelessness and emptiness of life - when the "spirit blest" no longer soared "beyond the storm with upright eye elate! . . .

> And the stern Fate transpierc'd with viewless dart
> The last pale Hope that shiver'd at my heart!

(in lines from his poem, "Monody on the Death of Chatterton," 1790-1834, 103, 113, 138-139) - that this phenomenon is apparent. To be sure, these moments of nothingness are present even in the earlier poems, if we discern that beneath the expressions of optimism lay the frustrated hopes and suffering which would bring him often to the point of despair and the "positive Negation" of which he speaks in "Limbo" (1817), and identifies as the "horror of blank Naught-at-all":

> The sole true Something--This! . . .
> . . . --where Time and weary Space
> Fettered from flight, with nightmare sense of fleeing,
> Strive for their last crepuscular half-being. . .
>
> Poetical Works 429-431, 1, 12-14.

In the formulation of the "positive Negation," we see also the unerring oneness of Coleridge's thinking as it unites the two distinctions of the positive and the negative into a single entity. In poetic terms, it expresses the 'Weltschmerz' that afflicted him and the other Romantic poets, aggravated in his situation by the contradictions that arose out of an aspiring, boundless nature capable of high effort, and a paralyzed will that lacked the power to "truly look into myself and to begin the serious work of self-amendment" (Notebooks II, 2091). Although he readily admits in his great autobiographical poem

"Dejection: An Ode" (1802) to turning away from his own true nature and "shaping spirit of Imagination" to "abstruse research," one speculates how much his involvement in the latter was not meant to fend off that lagging sensibility which he knew too well would impede that delight he sought to express through the power of his imagination. Such theological-philosophical probings, although meant to evoke a certain joyful response to divine grace and to offer some personal gratification, also bring with them a sense of anguish and guilt at one's failures and limitations.

2. Wordsworth's Melancholy Vision

Of the principal English Romantic poets under consideration in this study it can be said without hesitation that Wordsworth was the poet 'par excellence' of melancholy. Some of this melancholy, especially in his early poems, is traceable to the kind of poetry that was popular in his formative years - a combination of the schools of Sensibility and Sentimentalism that functioned alongside the steadily declining Augustan influence after the 1750s, to which critics today refer simply as sentimental verse. Primarily, it was of the same vintage as the gentle melancholy influenced by the poetry of Thomson and Dyer - two nature poets whom Wordsworth warmly admired - that had continued as part of the general poetry of the time, and that the young Wordsworth had appropriated and imitated, in his early descriptive verse (Havens, The Influence of Milton 186, 4n).

We are not surprised then to find that Wordsworth's early poems - "The Vale of Esthwaite" (1787), "An Evening Walk" (1793), "Descriptive Sketches" (1793), and others of his juvenilia, were all written

in the main current of the melancholy tradition. Nevertheless, this strong early attraction to the romantic and somber schools of poetry, and his more than passing familiarity with the poets and poetry of these schools, remained as a kind of lasting residue or quality of his poetry, unresolved by either time or maturity. Only the force of his personality, and the depth of his convictions kept him from being dominated by his immediate predecessors (Havens, Influence of 197). What remained of it, however, he tried to stave off where and when he could, evident in the fact that the purpose behind the writing of the 1800 Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, would appear to have been more than a "defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written," and an argument by which to justify the writing of the poems in the first place. By setting out these new guidelines of poetry for the public, was he not, at the same time, indirectly setting out "clear and coherent" statement for himself as a means of fending off those early melancholy tendencies which he feared, and to which he was prone?

Essentially, the claim of melancholy in Wordsworth's poetry is based on the fact that in feeling and temperament man can bring certain elements of human emotion to bear significantly on his creative activities, whatever they may be. In Wordsworth's case the claim of melancholy is grounded in the fact that his poetry is not only autobiographical in nature - that is to say, egocentered - but that feeling and temperament, both major factors in his personality, come together in such a way as to engender, first by way of feeling and thought, and then by a refined and poeticized process of the imagination, a poetry tinged with sadness and regret.

The fact is that Wordsworth wrote a lot of sad poems, and even

though he managed to divorce himself from the basic concepts of eighteenth-century poetry and from Sentimentalism - sometime early in the spring of 1797, when he was testing new philosophical ideas, and was for the first time going back into his childhood as a source of inspiration - it was not from melancholy that his poetry was severed. This element of sentiment and mood was far too deeply embedded in him and in his poetry to be put aside for something else, having been placed there from his first encounters with nature, when he allowed nature to become a part of his own ego, "The anchor of my purest thoughts," and the confidante and surrogate of the mother he lost when he was 8. And this Wordsworth corroborates for us, at the beginning of Book XIII, 1-3, 5-10 in, The Prelude, when he says:

> From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
> Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
> This is her glory; . . .
> Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange
> . . . finds in her
> His best and purest friend; from her receives
> That energy by which he seeks the truth,
> From her that happy stillness of the mind
> Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

To the extent that Wordsworth looked to nature as a source of his own emotional bearing - and more important - that he was successful in carrying over that feeling or emotion into his poetry - to that extent can we say that there is something in his poetry - call it the objective correlative - which can and does express melancholy, first through an awareness of it, and then through an awareness of our own response

to it. Melancholy as a convention was never a topic in which he indulged consciously or to which he alluded in any direct, personal terms, except in very rare instances. Nevertheless, it is there, more or less predominant, in all his poetry, in the quality, and tone, and atmosphere of its serious and highminded diction, and in the purity and sincerity of its message, the consequence of a thoughtful, pensive, contemplative writer. Whereas, the other Romantic poets transformed some of the eighteenth-century themes of melancholy to accommodate their own special needs, as Keats and Shelley and, particularly, Byron had done, Wordsworth's concerns - part environmental, part temperamental - were not purely justified by personal wants but confined more to the things he loved and felt most passionately about: the love of freedom which brought him into conflict with love of country and loyalty to personal convictions; his love of nature and the mountain district of his "dear Vale, / Beloved Grasmere." Later, he would turn these feelings to include his concern of man depicted in the sad narrative episodes in his poetry of human suffering, and in the human experiences he speaks about in his greatest poems. Most of all it is the generic human experience he speaks of, as the "I" representative, that other men and women are able to share: joy and sadness, strength of being and dignity, and what it means to grow up and grow old, and experience

> The pleasure that there is in life itself,

in "Tintern Abbey," the "Intimation Ode," "Resolution and Independence," and "Michael," who for all his pain and sadness, is supported more than all by the strength of his love for his erring son:

> There is a comfort in the strength of love;
> 'Twill make a thing endurable, which else

Would overset the brain, or break the heart.

From his first poems we detect in Wordsworth's efforts a poetry that tends not so much to morbidity, as de Selincourt (The Early Wordsworth 9) would have us believe, but to the more balanced melancholy that comes directly from "Il Penseroso," and the poetry of Thomson and Dyer. We see it at once in the fragmentary work entitled "The Vale of Esthwaite" (1787) - his first sustained poem, as Hartman tells us (65), and a poem already pointing to several directions that would occupy Wordsworth's course of thought in the years ahead. Already he seemed to be searching after what was to become one of the more immediate achievements of his poetry: a way to describe the infinite varieties he saw and felt in nature, hitherto "unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I am acquainted with them" (Stillinger 497), that would respond to the imagination of his particular genius and to his love of nature; another would treat of his humanitarian concerns for the poor, from whom he trusts "the Bard can never part / With Pity, Autumn of the heart! . . . For the long Winter of the poor" (de Selincourt, Poetical Works 1:273, 139-140, 152).

To be sure, Wordsworth's early poems followed the models of the sentimental poetry of the day, but that does not account entirely for the more than usual preoccupation with death in "The Vale of Esthwaite." There is another element to be considered in the poem that may be more attributable to Wordsworth's state of mind and the pity he was obviously feeling for himself at the time. He was still suffering from his double loss, orphaned at 13 and a mourning shared with his sister Dorothy, with whom he was recently reunited after a separation of 9

years. He tells us this, when he says that he must either "upraise the head / Else sinking to Death's joyless bed" (518-519). Instead, he turns to the "Sister, for whom I feel a love" (528), at the same time questioning the motives, since she can never replace "A tender parent's guardian care" (15). The only answers available are those he finds in his heart:

> Why does my heart so fondly lean?
> Why but because in you is given
> All, all, my soul would wish from Heaven?
> Why but because I fondly view
> All, all that Heav'n has claimed, in you?
>
> "The Vale of Esthwaite," (531-535).

The eclectic nature of this first extended poem, that draws its themes from a variety of sources, tells us much about the fanciful delights Wordsworth's imagination thrived on at the time, as well as the more somber ones. There are druids and ghosts, dungeons and sacrifices, and the "moaning owl," all the telltales of the sentimental machinery of the "dismal gloom" and the poetry of the graveyard poets. In between are passages that allude to the Miltonic influence in:

> Now holy Melancholy throws
> Soft o'er the soul a still repose,
> Save where we start as from a sleep
> Recoiling from a gloom too deep (121-125).

This is further substantiated by a rather gruesome passage where Wordsworth pictures his own death, embellished by a reference to the poetry of churchyards and the poet Gray:

A still Voice whispers to my breast
I soon shall be with them that rest. . .
Ah! may my weary body sleep
In peace beneath a green grass heap,
In Churchyard, such at death of day
As heard the pensive sighs of Gray;
(444-445, 456-459).

There is even a sampling - and most probably the first - of Wordsworth's resolve to capture in poetry the "infinite variety" of nature's appearances, which first came to him after he caught sight, at twilight, of the oak tree, standing in outline against the fading sky. From this image, though "feebly and imperfectly expressed," as Wordsworth noted in 1843 (Stillinger 497), and from many others that followed, we now recognize that is perhaps one of Wordsworth's great contributions: a power of description that enables the reader to see and to feel the very essence of a scene, not only in nature but in the many episodes he draws for us in his poems on human life. In "The Vale," it comes to us as:

While in the west the robe of day
Fades, slowly fades, from gold to gray,
The oak its boughs and foliage twines
Mark'd to the view in stronger lines,
Appears with foliage marked to view,
In lines of stronger browner hue,
While, every darkening leaf between,
The sky distinct and clear is seen (95-102).

Shortly afterwards, we encounter the scene once again in "An Evening

Walk":

> And, fronting the bright west, yon oak entwines
> Its darkening boughs and leaves, in stronger lines;
> (214-215).

By the time Wordsworth completed "An Evening Walk" (1787-89), and "Descriptive Sketches" (1791-92), however, the gothic elements and the sentimental references to personal grief and state of mind have been dropped; but the melancholy essence in the poems remains, and akin to it the romantic gloom, nature's insistent attribute which affects this solitary walker when wandering through his own "dear native regions" or over the Swiss Alps.

Not much more emerges from these poems, however, to enlight us further on Wordsworth's state of being, or to indicate the nature of his next melancholy subject - the poetry of human suffering - which would appear shortly in "Guilt and Sorrow," followed by "The Ruined Cottage." In these troublesome years, Wordsworth is literally at a crossroads - intellectually and poetically - straddled as it were, between two cultures, one dying, the other at its threshold, which not only ran parallel with his own life, but also determined the direction of his moral and social thinking, and consequently of his poetry. Young and inexperienced, and uncertain where to go next, he in fact seemed to have given way, for the moment, to the poetic fashion of the day by reverting in these early poems to an already staid and outmoded prosody. The octosyllabic couplets used in the original model of "The Vale of Esthwaite" - a carry-over from Milton's "Il Penseroso" - were replaced in "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches" by the more formal and restrictive heroic couplet, with all its apparent ab-

stractions and forced constructions, which Wordsworth would later warn against in the famous Preface. This was corrected, however, in the style of his next poem, "Guilt and Sorrow," composed in Spenserian stanzas, where both language and constructions are on the whole simple and straightforward (de Selincourt, The Early W. 16).

Strange as it may seem, these three early works are the first and last of Wordsworth's long poems, composed in one continuous and uninterrupted verse form, that deal primarily with the subject of descriptions in nature. His later long poems, written in a sequence of "sonnets all, or almost all," belong to the poet's excursions abroad in his mid-years, and represent the memoirs and highlights of an observant tourist; they deal with a variety of themes, from cathedrals and old churches to monuments and ruins, but little of nature for its own sake. "The White Doe of Rylstone" was one of the few longer narratives that he adapted from a local legend.

A this juncture, it is well to reaffirm the two basic sources of melancholy that provided Wordsworth's imagination with a focusing image through which he could channel his emotional state of mind. The first, as we have seen, comprises the objects in nature which had caught his fancy in childhood, and which he was to formulate even more intensely in his major lyrics and in The Prelude; the second, which makes up his poetry of human suffering, reflects the keen awareness and sympathy he felt for the poorer and humbler members of society generally and for the pitiful figures, victims of war and cast-offs of society, that appear throughout his early narrative poetry.

In the early version of "Guilt and Sorrow; or, Incidents upon Salisbury Plain," fragments of which were composed at the same time

as "Descriptive Sketches," in 1791-92, we have a poem that is not only new and different in its versification; we also have the first sampling of a change in subject-matter: the shift from nature to man. It is, however, in the subsequent texts of the poem that Wordsworth was better able to express his ideas on the effects of war and the guilt of society which appeared to him, at the time, responsible for the crimes of individuals. Later he would temper his ideas, placing the responsibility of evil more on man's nature than on social forms (Legouis, "William Wordsworth," 97-99).

The mental and political climate in which Wordsworth composed his 1793-94 version of "Guilt and Sorrow" was one of the most distressful periods in his life. Events in revolutionary France, where he had spent a prolonged period of time as recently as the year before, witnessing firsthand the spirit prevailing in that country, were compounded for him when, in February 1793, his beloved country declared war against France. It was also during that visit in France which had to do with his love for Annette Vallon and the child she bore him. Distressed and uncertain as to his future prospects, and more than usually depressed, these events had come together in quick succession, affecting him morally and spiritually; and they were to grow even more desperate, causing him much pain when some eighteen months later, in August 1794, the French Revolution passed into a state of Terror, betraying its beliefs in universal freedom and brotherhood to become, in turn, the aggressors. Later, in The Prelude, he would describe his suffering as

> Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
> Were my day-thoughts,--my nights were miserable;

Through months, through years, long after the last beat
Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts. . .
(X, 397-401).

Even more dreadful was the awful truth which confronted him, that in the process of finding new beginnings and new certainties, his "heart. . .had been turned aside / From Nature's way by outward accidents," and "reasonings false" (XI, 290-291, 288), and that in seeking "formal proof" (301) of moral certainty, he had found only that

. . . in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral question in despair.

"This," he tells us,

. . . was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
Deeming our blessed reason of least use
Where wanted most:
(XI, 302-309).

It is not until the spring of 1797, when he was modifying his early poem, "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yewtree," begun in 1787, that we begin to detect signs of Wordsworth's recovery from this terrible period. The poem, as a whole, as de Selincourt points out (Poetical Works 1:329; The Early W. 22-3), represents Wordsworth's "revulsion from the intellectual arrogance and self-sufficiency of Godwinism," which he had embraced when his ideas were still faithful to the Revolution, but shed once France had failed him. But it is only in the closing lines

of the poem, where the revulsion takes the form of a warning against the dangers of morbid introspection - inherent in the Godwinian philosophy, generally, and more specifically, in its exalted faith in the power of Reason as a cure-all for the evils of the world - that the true Wordsworth begins to emerge:

> . . . O, be wiser thou!
> Instructed that true knowledge leads to love,
> True dignity abides with him alone,
> Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
> Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
> In lowliness of heart.
>
> (Brett and Jones, Lyrical Ballads 40, 55-60).

It is in lines like these that we find an example of Wordsworth's power and depth of mind to express ideas in ways that not only speak to us of the spirit of man, but also engage our own. In the next year or so, ideas such as these would be formulated and argued in any number of works, spawned by new philosophical ideas, and the resolve to go back into his childhood as a source of inspiration. More precisely, Wordsworth's poetic genius took off in 1798 lasting, if we allow a generous limit, for fifteen years (Darbishire 16).

"Guilt and Sorrow; or, Incidents upon Salisbury Plain" (1842), is the first poem in which Wordsworth seriously contends with the plight of the poor and disenfranchised, brought on by a corrupt social system and the consequences of an ill-fated war in America. As compared with the early '91-'92 version of the poem, which arose purely out of his own humanitarianism and passion for justice while still under the influence of Godwinism, this rendition - comprising the

'93-'94 dates - was composed as a result of experiences he had while wandering over Salisbury Plain in the late summer of 1793. He had just come from the Isle of Wight, where he had spend the month of July, in view of the ships off Portsmouth preparing for war with France. The had brought back bitter thoughts of the aggressive action by his native country, the outcome of which he foresaw with prophetic clarity as "beyond all possible calculation." For him, at least, it was an act tantamount to a betrayal of its age-old love of liberty. Full of "melancholy forebodings," and after a failed rendezvous with a friend, he found himself a few days later wandering on foot over the Plain, no doubt feeling much like the low-spirited figures he encountered there, and that he would portray in his poem. The entire two-day "ramble," as he later related, "had left on my mind imaginative impressions, the force of which I have felt to this day. . ." (I.F. Note 1843, qtd. in Owen 130-31). The kind of story Wordsworth recounts in "Guilt and Sorrow," of the sailor turned murderer after his return from the war in America, and the half-crazed female vagrant, who had lost both husband and children through the war, was fairly common in those days, and generally familiar to the populace. This particular account was made to Wordsworth by a friend "who had been subjected to the same trials and affected in the same way. . ." (Owen 130).

The poem that Coleridge encountered in 1795, is the first of three versions that materialized directly from this short excursion, the one dated 1793-94. Unhappy with his treatment of the male character, Wordsworth composed two more readings, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" (1795-99), from which he extracted the thirty stanzas of "The Female Vagrant" story for inclusion in the 1798 edition of Lyrical Ballads, and the last and definitive text, known as "Guilt and Sor-

row; or, Incidents upon Salisbury Plain," that Wordsworth finally published in 1842 (Gill xv). Coleridge's praise of the poem was most enthusiastic, and he urged Wordsworth to publish it, two factors, together with the subsequent friendship which developed between them that, perhaps, more than anything else at the time had helped to restore his mind to health. His life's course had been temporatily diverted from its true nature and direction; but now with the praise and encouragement from Coleridge and others, his work took on new energy and hope. He had broken with all misguided philosophies - especially those which did not emanate directly from his own inward spirit - and with the gloomy spells of the past.

Coleridge evidently felt that his first impressions of "Guilt and Sorrow" were significant enough to warrant inclusion in his Biographia Literaria (1817), and it is to this account that we now refer. Not only do the remarks remain in themselves a vibrant and sensitive analysis of the poem; they also seem to imply the existence of an aesthetic quality or mood that runs through much of Wordsworth's poetry, especially in those poignant passages which tell of sad narrative episodes that evoke an emotion of sympathetic pity; melancholy is always there, arising from the pity, or compassion, frequently brought on by digressions on war, personal tragedies, or social tyranny. Speaking directly of the poem itself, he says: ". . .It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, cus-

tom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.' He continues, following immediately with an insert from The Friend, in which he characterizes Wordsworth's mind as the kind "'. . . that feels the riddle of the world, and may help to unravel it,'" explaining that "' To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances, which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar:

> With sun and moon and stars throughout the year,
> And man and woman;

this is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talent. . . so to represent familiar objects as to awaken in the minds of others a kindred feeling concerning them and that freshness of sensation which is the constant accompaniment of mental, no less than of bodily, convalescence.'" It was this excellence of mind, disclosed in Wordsworth's writings, that Coleridge identified as constituting the character of a mind that "I no sooner felt, than I sought to understand. . ." (1: 59-60).

With "The Ruined Cottage," we come to Wordsworth's first mature poem; and like its model "Guilt and Sorrow," it too has as its purpose a passionately humanitarian theme that not only continues his efforts towards defining the sympathies of man to man; it is also an attempt to rectify men's feelings by giving them "new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent" (Ltr. to John Wilson, June 1802, qtd. in Perkins 351).

Begun in the spring of 1797, and subsequently completed a year later as an independent poem - afterwards revised as the first book

of The Excursion (1814) - the poem's tragic tale of Margaret's last years and death narrated by the philosophic Pedlar, turned Wanderer, has long found consensus among noted critics with the opinion first voiced of it by Coleridge as "one of the most beautiful poems in the language" (from Specimens of the Table Talk, qtd. in Butler ix). more recently critics such as F. R. Leavis, Herbert Read, Jonathan Wordsworth, and Mark Reed have also endorsed this view.

A wholly convincing narrative, the circumstances surrounding this simple tale do not arise directly from any given experience such as Salisbury Plain; rather, they belong to characters and incidents from early childhood and youth which Wordsworth drew on in his encounters with the country people of Grasmere district, incidents and situations which were key to what mattered most to him in his life as poet, thinker, and as human being (Darbishire 19). Primarily, it is the intensity and sincerity with which he gave his mind and heart to those observations of his sensibility, that makes this narrative, and the narratives in Lyrical Ballads, The Prelude, and other poems, a unique feature of his poetic art. The characters of Margaret and the Pedlar are only two of the many Wordsworth singled out for inclusion in his poetry, crazed widows and mad mothers, lost children and idiot boys, abandoned women and old beggars, shepherds and Leech-gatherers, who had gained his sympathy and admiration, by their show of personal strength and dignity of living, and who in turn would teach him the difficult task of what it means to live and survive with tragedy and sorrow. Eventually, Wordsworth's observations of these simple country people would lead him to make the equation, expounded more fully in Book VIII, of The Prelude, that was also the cardinal premise and theme of his

poetry: that love of Nature leads to love of Man.

But for now, in the spring of 1798, we find only early signs of this materializing in Wordsworth's evolving thoughts on the subject. One of these is in an unused passage of MS. B to "The Ruined Cottage," which already expresses a strong conviction in the faith that men, once schooled to love nature, could not do otherwise than to feel, in turn, a kindred love for their fellow human beings:

> . . . Not useless do I deem
> These quiet sympathies with things that hold
> An inarticulate language, for the man
> Once taught to love such objects as excite
> No morbid passions, no disquietude,
> No vengeance and no hatreds, needs must feel
> The joy of that pure principle of love
> So deeply that unsatisfied with aught
> Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
> But seek for objects of a kindred love
> In fellow-natures and a kindred joy. . .
>
> (qtd. in Wordsworth, Jonathan, The Music of Humanity 269, 1-11).

In the Lyrical Ballads (1798, 1800), Wordsworth continues with his themes of pathetic melancholy - sorrow and sadness, pathos and suffering - which he had first explored for humanitarian purposes in "Guilt and Sorrow" and the story of Margaret in "The Ruined Cottage." Clearly, from these poems and from almost all of Wordsworth's subsequent work where the pathetic element of melancholy comes into play, Romantic thought had altered the neoclassic topos of the complaint of

life theme - which expressed the tragic circumstances of life and death in more conciliatory and didactic ways - to take on the serious motifs of a pathetic melancholy of sorrow and human suffering. In its extreme, this treatment of a heightened pathos in English Romantic poetry is best illustrated in Shelley's laments of "O world! O life! O time!" or Byron's mystery of life, mingled with personal weariness and satiety that is more in keeping with the entire 'mal du siecle'/'Weltschmerz' experience which generated the literature of the nineteenth century. For the time being, however, Wordsworth's more tempered treatment of the emotions never quite reach such elevated poignancy: his poetry may leave us with our hearts moved, but never deluged in tears.

Nevertheless, there was ample evidence from the late 1750s on, in the growing internal dissolution, socially and economically, of the country to warrant such a drastic shift in a literary mode, conditions we might say that were able to determine the attitudes of sensitive, observant poets such as Goldsmith, Cowper, or Crabbe, and through them and their contemporaries, towards an awareness for the poor which in turn affected how they felt, and thought, and wrote. In the case of Wordsworth, times were already of a more serious nature when he was growing up; and the tales he was to write about as a young poet were already about, making him anxious for his own well-being:

> The times, too sage, perhaps too proud, have dropped
> These lighter graces; and the rural ways
> And manners which my childhood looked upon
> Were the unluxuriant produce of a life
> Intent on little but substantial needs. . .
> Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms;

Of this I heard and saw enough to make
Imagination restless; . . .

Prelude, VIII, 158-162, 165-167 (1850)

In short, England was undergoing a kind of metamorphosis, perhaps unprecedented in history - as was all of Europe - in the wake of the war in America and in the tightening grasp of the Industrial Revolution, altering the domestic economy of the nation, and literally transforming the topography of the countryside. The middle classes with their insatiable energy pushed on relentlessly, leaving the peasantry - the "humbler classes of society" - to fend for themselves, or left to eat a pauper's crust or die in poorhouses (Sickels 296-97). Early on, Wordsworth was accustomed to the sight of discharged soldiers and sailors, stragglers from the war abroad, and beggars, vagrants - both men and women - the displaced victims of the economic and social upheaval at home, travelling the byways of the countryside. Later, as poet and individual, Wordsworth would declare his strong sympathies for the poor and the working classes in whom he found many of the elementary attributes and passions which he admired most in human beings: the love of mother for child, and the theme of some of his most moving poems in Lyrical Ballads - "The Idiot Boy," "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," "The Mad Mother," and the story of Margaret in "The Ruined Cottage." In "Resolution and Independence" (1808), it is the endurance, independence, and serenity of the country people in withstanding hardship and suffering, epitomized in the figure of the old Leech-gatherer, that won Wordsworth's admiration. For the troubled young Poet in the poem, plagued by uncertainties and doubts, the very sight of the old Man, plying the chores of his difficult trade

in quiet resignation, had the power "To give me human strength," once he became aware "by apt admonishment," of the dangers inherent in thoughts that bring "the fear that kills; / And hope that is unwilling to be fed, . . . and all fleshly ills," that had marked the graves of "mighty Poets in their misery dead." By contrast, the sheer positiveness of the old Man, "Wandering about alone and silently," was enough to gladden my heart in distress. For the young Poet, it could elicit nothing higher than sublime awe, mingled with a sense of relief and inward peace, expressed in the joyful words:

> I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
> In that decrepit Man, so firm a mind. . . (137-139).

He had been enriched by the experience with a profound and wonderful recognition and appreciation of what life is all about.

Human life in any form was precious to Wordsworth, and whenever he saw it in action, in a definitive way, that is to say, whenever he sensed the human elements of passion and compassion inherent in an action, his mind and heart felt pressed to reconstruct the action, rendered in a language that would give it meaning, truth, and permanence. In "The Old Cumberland Beggar" (1800) we have not only a case in point of such an action; we have also an example of another kind of durability which Wordsworth found admirable in the inhabitants of his native district, illustrated in the figure of the old country Beggar making his dubious rounds, year after year, in silence and solitude. Aside from his genuine concern for the poor and homeless, Wordsworth's choice of this poetic character for his poem constituted still another purpose: to draw the attention of the nation's statesmen - to whom the poem is addressed - to the problem of penury

and suffering which changing times and growing indifference had wreaked on the very old and penniless among the poor. This particular old Man - whom the Poet remembers as having been old even in his childhood - depends on the generosity and largess of the villagers for his daily subsistence, an old and tried method which the community had practiced in handling such needs. Of late, however, this burden had fallen to the impersonal judgments of the "restless. . .wisdom" of legislators and their laws to decide the fate of these unfortunates, rather than, as Wordsworth reminds them, looking to "Nature's law," which stipulates that "Man is dear to Man" (147), for the single cause "That we have all of us one human heart" (153), thereby setting in place tenets of a universal law which guarantee

> That none, the meanest of created things,
> Of forms created the most vile and brute,
> The dullest or most noxious, should exist
> Divorced from good -- a spirit and pulse of good,
> A life and soul, to every mode of being
> Inseparably linked. . . (74-79).

But there is yet another factor which Wordsworth suggests to the statesmen they consider: the ingredient that is already inherent and fixed in the figure of the old Beggar himself, and in all indigents the world over "Where want and sorrow were" (116). Rather than regarding them as "useless. . .nuisances," or "A burden of the earth" (73), Wordsworth proposes that they see them for what they really are, just as the villagers have always done, a kind of living emblem, and a constant reminder among them, rendering in return a boon of charity of their own, if not in kind, then certainly in degree, in acting as "A

silent monitor," (123) and

> . . . a record which together binds
> Past deeds and offices of charity,
> Else unremembered, and so keeps alive
> The kindly mood in hearts which lapse of years,
> And that half-wisdom half-experience gives,
> Make slow to feel, and by sure steps resign
> To selfishness and cold oblivious cares. . . (89-95).

For men the world over, those who are able to respond at the sight of such persons, not with fear or abhorrence, but with compassion and sympathy, they are the beneficiaries of their own benevolence, compelled by acts of love that come naturally from the knowledge and wonder they feel in the sublimity of life itself. Habit of nature and reason do the rest, Wordsworth tells the law-makers, rewarded by the thought of the "after-joy / Which reason cherishes," sweetened by the "taste of pleasure unpursued," that becomes "insensibly disposed / To virtue and true goodness" (101-105).

The dozen or so poems in Lyrical Ballads which carry the themes of love and the human heart, whether in "Michael" or "The Brothers," "We Are Seven," "Ruth," or "The Mad Mother," "Lucy Gray," or "The Idiot Boy," "The Female Vagrant," or the captain's tale of the deserted woman in "The Thorn," all pay tribute to the simple men and women whose love, and independence, and capacity for long suffering was borne in silence and solitude. They also constituted the humble life from which Wordsworth was able to select that element of

> Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;
> And miserable love, that is not pain

To hear of, for the glory that redounds
Therefrom to human kind, and what we are

Prelude XIII, 246-249 (1850)

Nor can we overlook or neglect to observe, insofar as this study is concerned, that when we take the trouble to read each poem, word by word, and line by line, we may see how each of the themes catches on to objects that in turn evoke a melancholy - which all experience has shown is one of sadness - contextually interwoven into the poem itself. It is because of this quality or mood in the work that we find Wordsworth to be the poet 'par excellence' of the human heart and of poetic melancholy.

Chapter III - The French Romantics and the 'Mal du siècle'

The direction or driving force which would finally bring about the 'épanouissement' of French Romanticism in poetry and, at the same time, contain the necessary ingredients of a heartfelt sensibility, and the modes and themes to express these emotions, would come ironically not from any great poetical works of the past, but from the feelings and ideas of the times prevalent in the major literary works of the French, Germans, and English - in both poetry and prose - in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Essentially, the literary themes of nature and melancholy would also be in place in this literature which ominously carried with it the signs of a society in moral distress.

For a better understanding of the spirit of the time we go back to J.-J. Rousseau's last work, Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire (1782) that was able, along with certain passages in his novels La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761) and Émile (1762), to fix some of the basic characteristics of melancholy poetry that would re-surface later in the poetry of the French Romantics.

The view that Rousseau had projected of himself in his Rêveries, as the self-appointed eccentric who chose to seclude himself in the beautiful surroundings of nature, away from the so-called harmful influences of society, did more perhaps than any other work of the time to preach his message of abandonment and innocence, lost as he was in the emotional reveries of happiness of happiness and peace, in a state

of total bliss. To ascertain this, we have only to resort to Rousseau's account of one of these experiences in the Fifth Promenade of Les Rêveries, which enabled him through the force of his imagination, to escape the mundane, narrow limits of this human world, to lose himself in an aura of mystical union with nature and the elements that surrounded him. In essence, it is a description which embraces one of those moments which the French have termed as 'extase panthéiste,' or pantheistic ecstasy, which presupposes laying the intellect to sleep, or else, abdicating it, and allowing the corporeal to feel intensely, and to absorb nature.

The passage that introduces the event begins its account by setting it at the approach of evening, when Rousseau would find himself sitting at the edge of the lake on the gravel in some hidden retreat from where he could hear the noises of the waves and the movement of the water. There, he would sit until a self-imposed hypnotic spell overcame him, plunging his mind into delicious reveries where night often overtook him without his having been aware of it. "The ebb and flow of the water, its continuous noise, swelling at intervals, striking my ears and filling my eyes with the internal movements that the reverie appeased in me--all these were sufficient for me to feel with pleasure my existence, without taking the pains to think. . . What joy is there in such a situation? Nothing exists outside the self, nothing except oneself and its self-sufficiency. As long as this state endures, one is as sufficient unto himself, as God is. The emotions of existence are deprived of all other affections; instead, there is a precious feeling of contentment and peace which alone would suffice to make this existence welcome and

pleasant and, in turn, would know how to ward off from oneself all sensual and earthly passions that distract and trouble the peace that is here below. . . Such was the state where I found myself often when on the Île de Saint-Pierre, in my solitary reveries, whether lying in my boat that I let drift at the mercy of the waters, or sitting on the banks of the moving lake, or else seated beside a lovely stream or brook whispering on the gravel. . ." (Rousseau 40-43).

Nevertheless, the reveries were not to last. Already inherent in these expressions of a sensitive, feeling solitary, were the vaguely defined aspirations of a society in crisis that contained the telltale symptoms, more apparent than real, by the end of the century, that strange state of mind called simply 'le mal' or 'la maladie du siècle.' This same 'mal' would affect future Romantic poets and writers, and those who followed them, all to be fed from that same seemingly harmless and self-serving exercise of a free-willed individual yearning to reach his highest abandon. In time, however, these yearnings and dreams would sour into a 'mal de Rousseau,' to be superseded only, as Sainte-Beuve noted, by Chateaubriand's 'mal de René'; and if the inference may be carried further, to be superseded by what can be dubbed 'le mal de Vigny,' and Nerval, Hugo, Musset, and so on to Baudelaire and others, and finally to 'le mal de Rimbaud.'

The problem, however, in these waning years of the eighteenth century, was not the lack of poets, or the quantity of poems that conveniently contained their share of emotional enthusiasm and impassioned rhetoric in the manner of Chénier's poetry, but the need for another type of poetry in which feelings and expressions come closer to an intimate malaise in the expression of a personal anguish.

We look in vain for some comparable sentiment of human suffering and discontent that pervaded some of the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge in this same period, or for the deep understanding they derived from their relationship with nature and with things external and internal as regards human existence. As sincere as the poems of Fontanes, Millevoye, and Legouvé - better known poets of this period - may have been, the melancholy they projected had become too anemic to satisfy the needs of an anguished public no longer charmed by the trivialities of the forest's shades, or the setting sun, or the signs of autumn that their poetry offered.

In one of the better poems on the subject, we have a sampling of this genre in Legouvé's poem entitled appropriately "La Mélancolie," that appeared in 1798. Here, in the last seven lines of the fragment, he paints a sympathetic picture of Melancholy in the traditional manner of Durer's masterpiece, of a dreaming virgin, seated under a shade, lost in vague longings, and a sadness full of allurements, nourished by the noise of the streams. At the same time, we glimpse the sensuous tears under her wet gaze as she timidly raises her eyelids, and delights in the sighs that rise from her heart, a cypress tree (the symbol of death) before her, and a copy of Werther (a symbol of suicide), in her hand (Allem, Anthologie Poétique au XVIIIe siècle 490):

> . . . une vierge assise sous l'ombrage,
> Qui, rêveuse, et livrée à de vagues regrets,
> Nourrit, au bruit des flots, un chagrin plein d'attraits,
> Laisse voir, en ouvrant ses paupières timides,
> Et se plaît aux soupirs qui soulèvant mon sein,
> Un cyprès devant elle, et Werther à la main.

This is pretty much the limit which the expression of melancholy poetry reached in this bleak period of French history. For the most part it represented a sentimental ennui in the manner of the English and German sentimentalists of the period of Young, Salis-Seewis, and Matthisson, though less pronounced in expressions of self-indulgence or morbid introspection. Although it retained a number of literary themes of melancholy, as sadness and nature, love of solitude and reverie, ennui, and an incurable scepticism sometimes pushed to the brink of suicide, this kind of poetry would not be sufficient for the Romantics, who would be looking instead for a more ardent individualism in the expressions of their lyrical melancholy. For melancholy to show itself as a poetic emotion at this time, in advance of Romanticism, it was necessary for readers either to consult the works that were less poetic in form but more sympathetic in feeling, such as the prose writings of Mme. de Staël, Chateaubriand, Constant, Sénancour, and others, or be content with whatever works reached them from abroad. In this case, in the second decade of the nineteenth century, it was unmistakably the writings of Byron, the master of melancholy and despair, and the one poet whose Childe Harold, especially, spoke to them in language and feeling they could identify with in their hour of misery.

In this climate, and five years after Waterloo, Alphonse de Lamartine's (1790-1869) little book of twenty-four poems entitled Méditations Poétiques, was published in 1820. It was an immediate success, and the first book in poetry to break through in this new period; at the same time, it signaled the advent of French Romanticism. In the longer view, it proved to be the beginning of an unprecedented reviv-

al in poetry that has continued unabated through several important movements to this day, centered in its quest for a new power of directness in poetic language (Ireson 116).

Written in a simple, yet emotional language that Lamartine maintained all through the several volumes of 'méditations' that followed in the next nineteen years, these first samplings by an unknown poet of thirty, whose one volume was said to have "reinvented poetry" (Brereton 100), expressed a vigor and depth of feeling that was new to French poetry. It was not, however, in the "poetic" language, or in the traditional and rhetorical practices that Lamartine had retained from the models of his favorite neoclassic poets - Parny, Delille, Chênedollé - that made his poetry so popular, but in his ability to express personal emotions with a sincerity and directness of language which brought poem and reader into an immediate, more intimate relationship. The audience of a generation ago that had been so reluctant in accepting what they might have termed banal or artificial, now enthusiastically embraced it as the language of their sentiments, and one they could finally call their own. At the same time, this new literature which was bound by intimate connections to the 'maladie du siècle,' absorbed and passed on to subsequent periods some of the darker themes born of that 'mal,' preoccupied mainly by a morbid obsession with self and death, and the yearnings for the Infinite, still to be spelled out in starker, more sinister terms of a black melancholy as the nineteenth century moved forward.

In France there was no recognized tradition of melancholy in poetry before 1820, and therefore little precedent given to themes of modes of melancholy developed out of a love of nature, despite the

growing acceptance of it is society, and in literature - prose as well as poetry - since Rousseau. Had this been the case, the sentiments derived from nature would have produced a meditative-descriptive language of its own, in advance of Romanticism. But of course one must not forget that French sentiments were not those of the English, making it all the more remarkable that Lamartine's little book was able to succeed with a nature poetry of its own.

On closer scrutiny we recognize in these first Méditations - almost without exception - the type of gentle sentimental melancholy that had pervaded the works of his favorite predecessors as well as those that had reached France from abroad - Ossian, especially, and the works of Goethe and Byron. It is the sort of poetry that first requires the poet to experience nature as a plausible, emotional element - the kind that would allow him, in the guise of a 'promeneur solitaire,' to get in touch with his inner self in nature's midst. There, pressed in by the peaceful surroundings, thoughts would enter the mind to become pensive and with them an inner contemplation that often gives rise to questionings of self and to self-introspection. Foreign trends and fashions - even moods and feelings - had been useful in the aftermath of war and turmoil; now, at home, the best hope for nature poetry lay in the emergence of a new sensibility and a craving for sentiment and beauty, not only in poetry but in all the arts.

With all this now beginning to fall into place, Lamartine was able to carry off - with great feeling and even with a certain amount of panache - a twilight walk along a lakeside or a view from a mountaintop in "Le Lac" and "Tristesse," where he succeeds in imposing a mood of melancholy as well as an underlying nostalgia for things past,

that he managed to interject, among other related themes of melancholy, in the poems of his Méditations. In "Tristesse" (1823) we have an example of Lamartine's recourse to memory, and to the process of retrospect that became for him the main source of his inspiration. Here, by means of a meditation on the happy events of a bygone amorous episode, he aspires to recapture the memory of Graziella, the young Neapolitan girl of that affair and the inspiration of this and other poems, as well as of his novel Graziella (1852).

The composition of thirty-six lines - all carefully constructed within a framework of neatly designed rhyming alexandrines - divides itself into two parts, and into two apparent time levels, past and present, splitting the poem in half; the first nineteen lines are involved primarily with a look back to the happier memories of the past, and the last seventeen lines with the realities of the present. The poem itself starts off, innocently enough, with an urgent call from the poet to return to the girl he had loved and to see once more the enchanted countryside where he had been happy (Méditations 177-178, 1-9):

> Ramenez-moi, disais-je, au fortuné rivage
> Où Naples réfléchit dans une mer d'azur
> Ses palais, ses coteaux, ses astres sans nuage,
> Où l'oranger fleurit sous un ciel toujours pur.
> Que tardez-vous? Partons! Je veux revoir encore
> Le Vésuve enflammé sortant du sein des eaux;
> Je veux de ses hauteurs voir se lever l'aurore;
> Je veux, guidant les pas de celle que j'adore,
> Redescendre en rêvant, de ces riants coteaux.

/Take me back, I said, to the happy shores / Where Naples reflects in a blue sea / Its palaces, its hillsides, and its cloudless stars, / Where the orange-tree blooms under a sky that is always clear. / Why do you delay? Let us go! I want to see once more flaming Vesuvius rising from the depths of the waters; / I want to see the dawn rise from its heights; / I want to come down those laughing slopes once more in a dream, / Guiding the steps of her whom I adore./

If ever there had been a more direct and personal display of unrestrained joy of youthful love and life that was expressed and since lost in French verse up to this time, it is here recovered once again in these beginning lines of "Tristesse." The effect is as if the lid had been removed from French poetry to reveal the presence of another distinctive type of poetic language which allowed for the novelty of deep feeling and sentiment - untainted by outright sentimentalism or enthusiasm - that at the same time linked it up with Romanticism. What we have here, however, in this seemingly innocent recall of time past is pure and simple nostalgia, an attribute of melancholy, and a technique and theme which Lamartine shared with many of the Romantic poets, and which he first encountered in the elegies of Parny and the sentimentalists.

With Lamartine, however, this recourse to time and time past amounted in essence to an obsession with memory and the past; and it was the one method available to him by which to reclaim those elements of happiness that otherwise made existence seem empty and destitute. Ironically, at the same time that it shows Lamartine still tied to eighteenth-century poetry, which he had unconsciously absorbed and used in his own work, it also helped him to keep his poetry pure and free of those psychological effects of the 'mal du siècle' which made the works of Vigny, Nerval, Musset, and Baudelaire so disturbing.

The urgency expressed in the first words - 'Ramenez-moi, disais-

je' "Take me back, I said," and the identity of the person or entity addressed, whether real or imaginary, remains for the moment unsolved as we proceed with the next ten lines of the first half of the poem, where the time is still set in the past (10-19):

Suis-moi dans les détours de ce golfe tranquille:
Retournons sur ces bords à nos pas si connus,
Aux jardins de Cynthie, au tombeau de Virgile,
Près des débris épars du temple de Vénus:
Là, sous les orangers, sous la vigne fleurie
Dont le pampre flexible au myrte se marie
Et tresse sur ta tête une voûte de fleurs,
Aux doux bruit de la vague ou du vent qui murmure,
Seuls avec notre amour, seuls avec la nature,
La vie et la lumière auront plus de douceurs.

/Follow me through the windings of this calm bay: / Let us return to those shores so well known to our footsteps, / To the gardens of Cynthia, to Virgil's tomb, / Near the scattered ruins of the temple of Venus: There, beneath the orange trees, beneath the flowering vine / Whose bending stem is joined to the myrtle / And weaves above your head a vault of flowers, / With the gentle noise of the waves or of the murmuring winds, / Alone with our love, alone with nature, / Where life and light will have more sweetness./

The happy mood of the first nine lines is still in evidence here, where we find the poet already in the place of his dream. With him is his beloved, and together, alone with their love, alone with nature, they retrace the familiar footpaths of the hillsides that lead to Cynthia's gardens, Virgil's tomb, and the scattered ruins of Venus' ancient temple. Here, too, the gentle exhortations of 'Suis-moi,' "Follow me," and 'Retournons,' "Let us return," in lines 10 and 11, continue. Also, whatever doubts may have existed concerning the identity of the person addressed in the first part of the poem, are

now dispelled, as the personal references of "our footsteps," "your head," and "our love" fall into place. With these words we find ourselves plunged into an atmosphere dominated by the presence of some imaginary girl, in the poet's efforts to open up and reawaken the sleeping memories of a bygone experience. References to the ancient places and tombs of the dead still evident in the environs of Naple's hillsides, are not allusions to anything other than actual places associated with the beauty of the city. Nevertheless, one might draw some connection between the "flowering vine / Whose bending stem is joined to the myrtle / And weaves above your head a vault of flowers" (14-16), and Graziella's own death. It is a well established fact, however, that Lamartine had composed the poem before May 1816, when he learned of Graziella's death (Méditations 774). There is for all that a disquieting, uncanny feeling which reason, nonetheless, dictates is more coincidental than prescient.

In any case, Lamartine's melancholy is not symbolizing here; rather, it is more a question of movement and tension where language and words merge together in the image of a dream-sequence, set in the landscape of the past as a point of departure. It is the melancholy of recollection, an interweaving of vision and reality of a dream of what was, but never really was, that is highly subjective and, at the same time, deceptive. If anything, it is more the vision-making of a wishful, idealized picture, where a peculiar kind of tension exists between the landscape of the dream and that of nature itself.

In the next lines, and for the remainder of the poem, we take leave of the past and return to the present (20-27):

De mes jours pâlissants le flambeau se consume,
Il s'éteint par degrés au souffle du malheur,
Ou s'il jette parfois une faible lueur,
C'est quand ton souvenir dans mon sein le rallume.
Je ne sais si les dieux me permettront enfin
D'achever ici-bas ma pénible journée:
Mon horizon se borne, et mon oeil incertain
Ose l'étendre à peine au delà d'une année.

/The flame of my waning days consumes itself, / It burns itself out gradually at the breath of unhappiness, / Or, if sometimes it casts a feeble light, / It is when your memory rekindles it in my heart. / I do not know if the gods will permit me finally / To complete my painful day here below: / My horizon is limited, and my uncertain eye / Hardly dares to stretch it beyond a year./7

With these lines we come to the second part of the poem, set in time present, which bring with them new and different imagery, as well as a new and different set of problems that, nevertheless, begin the process of resolving the disparities inherent in the poem itself. Up to this point, the poet has been open to the outside forces of nature, caught up in a dream-vision of the young girl he had once loved, that is both subjective and intimate. Only a single brief reference is made to her in this passage; the rest is given over to the poet's state of mind and his fate. The overall mood of joy that prevails in the first part, though sincere, nevertheless betrays a hint of uneasiness - even apprehension - which runs counter to the reality of the situation, placed there from the start in the title of the poem.

In sharp contrast to this, we find the poet alone, without his love and the surrounding landscapes of his favorite Naples, engaged in an internal struggle where the only dream realizable to him is

the foreordained conclusion of an early death. Relief comes to him only when the memory of his beloved is once again rekindled in his breast (23). It is not, however, the loss of his beloved, or the memories of Naples that haunts the poet now; rather, it is the loss of his inspiration that he laments, equated here to the fleeting memories of his beloved, and the experience felt long ago in a moment of youthful abandon. But to do so, that is, to attempt to bring back the ecstasy of a past experience, is to yield to the forces of nostalgia and sentiment from which the past is never retrievable. As we see, melancholy has come in dragging with it a lot of its eighteenth-century baggage, which now in the nineteenth century is transformed by the magical visions of Romanticism, where death is seen in life as dark and threatening. It is once again what Northrop Frye calls "a datum of literary experience. . . darker in color than what has preceded it, in which the feeling of difference remains, that is more emotional, more sense of nature, and the like" (Frye vi).

With Lamartine, as with Wordsworth and other Romantic poets, the link with reality is never lost, and the associations of the mental images, while free, are still rigidly controlled. In this sense, the transformation of the Romantic vision is a 'tour de force' at the same time that, as in this instance, it becomes a vision of death.

The image of the 'flambeau' - "flame" - gradually consuming itself, along with his waning days, expressed in line 20: 'De mes jours pâlissants le flambeau se consume' - holds the key to this passage and to the balance of the poem. The reference to the flame in this context represents nothing less than the source of the poet's inspiration, seen here as burning itself out, that simultaneously refers to

the diminishing days of his life. By extension, the image opens up other metaphorical images of power, fire, and energy, the very essence of the Poet's poetic world. Without the guiding force of inspiration, a state of mental and physical lethargy begins to set in, as the poet contemplates his future destiny. At this point, he resigns his fate to the gods, another recurrent concept or convention we have encountered in the fragment of Chaulieu's work (in Chapter I) and will meet again in Hugo's poetry and that of other Romantic poets.

The remaining lines (28-36) continue to follow the same train of thought:

Mais s'il faut périr au matin,
S'il faut, sur une terre au bonheur destinée,
Laisser échapper de ma main
Cette coupe que le destin
Semblait avoir pour moi de roses couronnée,
Je ne demande aux dieux que me guider mes pas
Jusqu'aux bords qu'embellit ta mémoire chérie,
De saluer de loin ces fortunés climats,
Et de mourir aux lieux où j'ai goûté la vie!

/But if I must die in the morning, / If, in a land destined for happiness, / I must let escape from my hand / This cup which destiny / Seemed to have crowned with roses for me, / I only ask the gods to guide my steps / To shores beautified by your cherished memory, / To greet from afar those happy climes, / And to die in the places where I have tasted life./

The chalice (31) is also a conventional or public symbol that, in this instance, signifies the container holding the food and drink of the poet's inspiration and consequently his poetic powers. For this poet the cup is a sign of gratitude that has been bestowed on him by a higher deity; the reference to the gods (33) - already mentioned in

line 24 - whom he here addresses in the form of a prayer, underlines the pagan character of the poem, an influence Lamartine acquired as the disciple of Parny and his elegiac Latin verses. Should the gods choose to take this gift from him, the prayer he sends is a request to return and to die in the surroundings where he had once tasted life (36). The concept also embodies the Italian proverb: 'Vedi Napoli, e poi muori!' - "See Naples, and then die!" - which symbolizes the admiration of the inhabitants of that peninsula for the unique beauty of their city and its bay. If this wish to return had not been fulfilled when Lamartine wrote "Tristesse," he would find his way back in a happiness as great as that which he had known nine years earlier, which was for him a second trip and the occasion of new inspirations (Méditations 777).

Two years after the appearance of Lamartine's little book, Méditations Poétiques in 1820 - which nominally ushered in the Romantic movement that began the great revival of French poetry in the nineteenth century - two other first volumes of verse, by Hugo and Vigny, followed in 1822. Victor Hugo (1802-1885), whose immense creative power and energy enabled him to produce work in any number of literary forms, established himself early in his career as the leading spirit of this new movement.

The occasion which prompted Victor Hugo to write the poem "Paroles sur la dune" (Les Contemplations, 1856), on 5 August 1854 - the date affixed to it - was the anniversary of his arrival two years before on the Channel Island of Jersey, where he and his family had settled, following a government decree early in 1852, banishing him from France. During the nineteen years he spent in exile (1851-1870), Hugo turned out some of his best-known works, and this despite his

periodic bouts with depression as a victim of melancholy - 'en proie du spleen' - and the sudden whims and shifts of disposition to which he was prone. In his weaker moments, the poet in doubt overruled the poet as believer, leaving him vulnerable to all sorts of unwarranted fears, including the loss of his creative energies. His faith in God, which in the best of times was never very solid, was in such moments incapable of protecting him from these attacks on his spirit.

Banishment did not come easy to Hugo, especially in the beginning years when the pain of separation from his beloved Paris, and from Villequier, the village where his daughter, Léopoldine, was buried, following a fatal accident by drowning on 4 September 1843. In these years Hugo continued to be haunted by her death, and it is the grief of a loving father for his child and the sorrow he endured that is gathered up in elegy and verse as a testament to her memory in the two volumes of Les Contemplations, 'Autrefois,' the time before her death, and 'Aujourd'hui,' the present time. Between these two periods, Hugo tells us at the end of his Preface, 'Un abîme les sépare, le tombeau.'

At the beginning of this new affliction, Hugo's immediate turn of mind and his obvious state of depression, inevitably linked to Villequier as the annual event of the mishap drew closer, had brought him back to thoughts that disturbed him of late, thoughts concerning the meaning of death, and the eternal questionings on God, life, and the infinite, all mixed in with the need to know more about the mystery of the soul and that of the world. In the main, these thoughts represented Hugo's desperate desire to believe in something, and the

driving conviction that there had to be some meaning that lay beyond the boundaries of human life (Peyre, Victor Hugo 9-10).

On this day in August 1854, we find Hugo wandering alone on the dunes of Jersey, a practice he no doubt repeated many times during his stay on the island. The time in the poem is late afternoon, early evening, the period when day prepares to descend into night. Questions inevitably arise as the reader asks: Is he there by accident at this particular hour, or by design? Has he instinctively set the scene for his poem in such a way as to induce the "words on the dune" to reveal the secrets of the world, which for the moment stress only the anguish and confusion of a profound echo that has been awakened in him? Eventually, the poem itself will provide the answers. Convenient for the reader, in the meantime, is the fact that on closer scrutiny we find that Hugo has composed this crisis poem of thirteen, 4-line alternate rhyming stanzas, with a definite pattern in mind. Picking up the themes clustered into four distinct groups, we note that the first group, stanzas 1, 2, and 3, reflect back to Villequier, and account for the weariness and doubt of the poet's mood at its lowest point; stanzas 4, 5, and 6, the second group, with a possible inclusion of stanza 7, as the pivotal stanza between the first half of the poem and the second, places the poet in the midst of nature where he hopes to find the answers to his troubling thoughts. In group three, stanzas 8, 9, 10, and 11, the poet awaits the answers to the questions that he poses; and stanzas 12 and 13, the fourth and final group, end the poem on a note of resignation and hope that while there is life, tomorrow at least may bring, in more proleptic, human terms, the little joys that contribute to much to it.

Lines 1-12 - in stanzas 1, 2, and 3 - begin:

(1) Maintenant que mon temps décroît comme un flambeau,
Que mes tâches sont terminées;
Maintenant que voice que je touche au tombeau
Par les deuils et par les années,

(2) Et qu'au fond de ce ciel que mon essor rêva,
Je vois fuir, vers l'onbre entraînées,
Comme le tourbillon du passé qui s'en va,
Tant de belles heures sonnées;

(3) Maintenant que je dis : -- Un jour, nous triomphons;
Le lendemain, tout est mensonge!
Je suis triste, et je marche au bord des flots profonds,
Courbé comme celui qui songe.

/Now that my time flickers down like a flame, / And my tasks are ended; / Now that here when I feel death / Brought on by sorrows and old age, // And that at the depths of the sky where my spirit dreams, / I see fleeing, carried away towards the shadow, / Like the whirlwind of the past that are gone, / So much of the fine hours sounded; // Now when I say: -- One day, we triumph, / Tomorrow, everything is a lie! / I am sad, and I walk by the edge of the deep waves, Bent like someone who dreams./

The words in this initial statement, ending appropriately in a periodic sentence, speak simply to us and tell in commonplace terms what the poet, the "I" of the poem, is feeling and thinking. His thoughts are of the present, in which time and memory have returned him to the annual rhythms that now regulate his life, going from date to date, that sink inevitably into the same, repeated pattern of remembering, remorse, resignation, and suffering. The words 'tombeau,' 'deuils,' 'l'ombre,' and 'songe,' set in motion many meanings relating to death and memory; and because there is death and mourning, there

also is the theme of melancholy, arising from the way we sense or feel the emotions of pity or compassion. Poems such as "Paroles sur la dune" have the habit of establishing their own tone by way of their accumulated effect of language, mood, and texture; they will be melancholy in spite of themselves.

If we look closely at the three or more entry words beginning "Now that. . . And that," in these first three stanzas, we are aware that each is a part of a progression of thought that announces different things and moods reflected in the poet's mind: We move from the emptiness and nearness of death in the first stanza, to the aspirations and dreams that seem to have forsaken the poet - an element of death itself creeping within him, that has resulted in the lethargy and doubt - in the second stanza. By the third stanza resignation - to which he has now succumbed - confronts him as well with the changes in life: the days in which we triumph when all is well, and the days that bring disappointment and remorse when the very things we have allowed ourselves to believe in, are turned to lies the next day, the 'vanitas vanitatis' of life itself, and the futility of self-pride, a fault from which Hugo suffered inordinately, and of which he is now remorsefully aware. All this he can now say, as he reflects on his present state, walking along the edge of the deep waves that threaten his vulnerable conceit, bent as he is like one who is deep in thought.

Stanzas 4, 5, and 6 continue with the saga (13-24):

(4) Je regarde, au-dessus du mont et du vallon,
Et des mers sans fin remuées,
S'envoler sous le bec du vautour aquilon,
Toute la toison des nuées;

(5) J'entends le vent dans l'air, la mer sur le récif,
L'homme liant la gerbe mûre;
J'écoute, et je confronte en mon esprit pensif
Ce qui parle à ce qui murmure;

(6) Et je reste parfois couché sans me lever
Sur l'herbe rare de la dune,
Jusqu'à l'heure où l'on voit apparaître et rêver
Les yeux sinistres de la lune.

/I gaze above the mountain and the valley, / And the seas endlessly moved / Stealing away under the vultured beak of the north wind, / All the fleeces of the clouds; // I hear the wind in the air, the sea on the rocks, / The man binding the harvested sheaves; / I hear, and I confront in my pensive spirit / That which speaks to that which murmurs; // And sometimes I remain lying without getting up / On the thin grass of the dune, / Until the hour when one can watch it appearing and dream of / The sinister eyes of the dune./

Stanzas 4, 5, and 6 remain basically within the frame of mind that Hugo has reached in the last two lines of stanza 3, where he begins to build up the language of his environment in order to become melancholy and to arrive at that mood in the poem. Here it is the melancholy of recollection which the landscape helps to evoke. In this sense, it is very much in the tradition of melancholy derived from Rousseau's Fifth Promenade, of the Reveries of a Solitary Walker, that Hugo and those of his generation, Lamartine and Vigny, used in their poetry. What is really Romantic in French poetry comes after the 1830s, where it is made more intensive. The great exaggeration that typifies Romantic expression is in the post-Romantic and not in Romanticism.

Nature, then, in this second group of stanzas plays a unique role. God may be there, constant and ever-present, but for the poet it is not at the moment of conscious presence. Rather, it is the

tension in these stanzas that begins to make itself felt more deeply when he introduces, in stanza 4, the concrete metaphor of the "vultured beak" of the north wind, stealing away the sheep-like forms of the clouds, in lines 15 and 16. Also, there is a correspondence between this imagery and that of the one in lines 6 and 7, in stanza 2, where instead of the sheep-like forms of the clouds being stolen away, it is the poet's creative spirit, his 'essor,' which is felt to be disappearing like some whirlwind of the past. Both wrench at something deep in the soul to reveal some of the conflict already referred to in the first stanza. Sight is the principal source of perception in stanza 4, whereas, in stanza 5, it is hearing; between them they pull together into one integrated abstract whole all the concrete imagery of his landscape - mountains and valleys, seas and north winds, and stolen clouds. The unusual and unexpected image of a rapacious 'bec' that subsists on carrion, gives an ominous turn to the already disturbing elements in the poem. But the sounds of nature and the external busy world reach him in his pensiveness, the wind in the air, the sea lashing against the rocks, and somewhere in the near distance, the sounds of the gathering and binding of sheaves. Aware that nature and the world have the power to penetrate his being, he confronts his melancholy spirit with the thought that differentiates them: 'Ce qui parle' comes from humanity while 'ce qui murmure' comes from nature (Contemplations 668, n.11). But the idea gives him the courage to face the harrowing questionings that continue to plague him. In the meanwhile, the encounter he has been waiting for has now arrived: his confrontation with the moon; stanza 7 helps him pass over the peak from where his thoughts were to where they have now brought him (25-28):

(7) Elle monte, elle jette un long rayon dormant
À l'espace, au mystère, au gouffre;
Et nous nous regardons tous les deux fixement,
Elle qui brille et moi qui souffre.

/It rises, it casts a long sleepy beam of oight / Into space, into mystery, into the abyss; / And we look at each other fixedly, / The moon that gleams and I that suffers./

The poem reaches its high point in the closing stanzas 8 through 13, where the poet comes to grips with the hard questions tormenting him. In them he will try to resolve the conflict between himself and the harsh terms that nature has set as its part of the bargain of existence. At the same time he will listen to the words the dune whispers to him in the hope that it may render some plausible meaning to these eternal questions on time and old age, love and mourning and lost energies, death and immortality. We begin the rundown with the third group of stanzas 8 through 11 (29-44):

(8) Où donc s'en sont allés mes jours évanouis?
Est-il quelqu'un qui me connaisse?
Ai-je encor quelque chose en mes yeux éblouis,
De la clarté de ma jeunesse?

(9) Tout s'est-il envolé? Je suis seul, je suis las;
J'appelle sans qu'on me réponde;
O vents! ô flots! ne suis-je aussi qu'un souffle, hélas!
Hélas! ne suis-je aussi qu'une onde?

(10) Ne verrai-je plus rien de tout de que j'aimais?
Au dedans de moi le soir tombe.
O terre, dont la brume efface les sommets,

Suis-je le spectre, et toi la tombe?

(11) Ai-je donc vidé tout, vie, amour, joie, espoir?

J'attends, je demande, j'implore;

Je penche tour à tour mes urnes pour avoir

De chacune une goutte encore.

/Where then have they gone my vanished days? / Is there anyone who knows me? / Do I still have something that dazzles in my eyes, / Of the light of my youth? // Has everything flown away? I am alone, I am weary; / I call out without anyone replying; O winds! O waves! Am I, too, only a breath, alas! / Alas, am I, too, only a wave? // Shall I never again see all that I loved? / Within me night falls. / O earth, whose mist obliterates the summits, / Am I the spectre, and you the tomb? // Have I then emptied everything, life, love, joy, hope? / I wait, I demand, I implore; / One by one I tilt my urns for yet another drop from each./

Now begins the outpouring of questions that literally bombards these four stanzas, relieved only by an occasional exclamation point to indicate the force of the poet's feelings. Stanza 8 returns us to the passage of time and the transcience of things which obsessed all the great Romantic poets from Lamartine to Hugo, and from Wordsworth, to Shelley, to Keats - and consequently with it, immortality and death. Here, the question: Where have they gone my vanished days? states once again the eternal 'ubi sunt' theme that attacks the poet 'en proie du spleen,' in moments of deep nostalgia. It is also part of the Romantic context of 'évanoissement' - the evanescence of the passing of time, inevitably intertwined with melancholy. This is also sadness, grief, and longing, carefully built up in the melancholy of the landscape and the poet's mood. In this stanza 8, the poet is basically concerned with his genius, and the role he feels he has been called upon, as poet, to reveal by the magic of the word, the mystery of the world. Now, at 52, he wants to know whether there is anything

left of his dreams; whether they are still visible in the brilliance of his eyes that foretold the same promise for his future as they were when he was young.

His doubts continue in stanza 9, but where the previous stanza appears to be addressing some being "out there," this stanza now directs the questions to himself. And the interiorization continues. But when he asks: Has everything really flown away? he becomes even more depressed when winds, and waves, and earth suggest nothing in return except the terrible thought that perhaps he, too, is nothing more than they, an unconscious, unfeeling wave, lacking mind, will, and feeling, that goes through a prescribed process of existence with nothing more to show for itself than the fact that it rolls endlessly around as one of a series of such movements passing along the surface of the of the oceans. His communings with nature have only made him wearier and more downhearted.

Stanza 10 finds him at his lowest point. Fatigue and doubt have now touched him so deeply as to make him feel ready to join Léopoldine. The signs in nature have become even more obscure and indecipherable: he realizes that the meanings he has been searching for are like the mist that blots out the mountain peaks. Finally, the poet asks the most terrifying of his queries: Is he already the spectre of his existence, and is earth already his resting place?

Stanza 11 draws up the last of his plaints. He cannot comprehend that everything worthwhile in his life may have been used up: life, love, joy, hope, and he waits, he demands, no, he implores some sign or assurance that this is not the case, and that his gifts and creative impulses, the joys and loves, are not yet ended. The image of

the tilted urns, holding the remnants of his past joys, being drained off for still another drop of life, is a vivid, yet painful picture that nevertheless offers in striking, concrete terms, the abstractions of thoughts present in the poet's mind.

We are now at stanzas 12 and 13, the last of the groupings in this highly organized poem that has been put together by the poet like some brilliant mosaic (45-52):

(12) Comme la souvenir est voisin du remord!
Comme à pleurer tout nous ramène!
Et que je te sens froide en te touchant, ô mort,
Noir verrou de la porte humaine!

(13) Et je pense, écoutant gémir le vent amer,
Et l'onde aux plis infranchissables;
L'été rit, et l'on voit sur le bord de la mer
Fleurir le chardon bleu des sables.

[How memory is a neighbor of remorse! / How by weeping everything comes back to us! / And how I feel your coldness when touching you, O death, / The black bolt of the human door! / And I think, listening to the bitter wind moan, / And the wave in insurmountable folds; / Summer laughs, and one can see on the edge of the seashore / The blue thistle blossoming in the sands.]

In stanza 12, the image of the 'noir verrou,' the black bolt of human existence, comes as a voluntary echo in the cold presence of death, that memory and grief have conjured up out of remorse and suffering the poet has felt since his daughter's passing. It is one way for a father to remember and to mourn, all coming together in the silent tears; and nature, though seemingly indifferent to the poet's troubled thoughts, nevertheless has a salutary effect on the mournful father. In stanza 13, he finds solace and hope in the thought that

like Descartes and every good Frenchman since, he can think, and as long as he is able to perform this function for himself he is able to shift the mind from 'noir verrou' to 'l'été rit,' enabling him also to envision 'sur la bord de la mer, / Fleurir le chardon bleu des sables.' With the return of his strength and vitality his dilemma is resolved in the happy conviction that in the magic of his poetry he may still be able to carry out the searchings of his dreams after the destiny of man.

Aside from underscoring one of the saddest periods in Hugo's otherwise more positive life, "Paroles" is also about time and human existence, a literal 'recherche du temps perdu.' In this sense, the poem is very much within the context of contemporary Romantic thinking in which his generation of poets was engaged; and because it is about time and the past, nostalgia and the mystery of life - themes which speak to the more serious questions of human existence - it is also very much in keeping with those elements of Romantic melancholy which reveal the influence of the spirit of the time.

Once we enter the world of Alfred de Vigny's (1797-1863) poetry, we find a state of unrelieved disillusionment, even gloom, where Lamartine's generally hopeful optimism for happiness in the future and Hugo's overall constructive view of man's hopes and prospects have been replaced by bitterness and condemnation. The themes and sub-themes of melancholy which up to now have been the expression of late eighteenth-century modes and sentiments are beginning to show themselves in more darkening shades of gray as the changing climates of political upheaval and social unrest continue to plague society. We speak of course of a different sort of melancholy which has been

taking hold in the literature of continental Europe since the beginning of the century, one that will reflect increasingly the nihilism, ennui, and despair in the changing spirit of the time. In essence, it is the doubt, or anguish, that will be seen hardening into despair as the century moves on.

Vigny's stoic mistrust of life in general, his pessimistic belief that mankind are the victims of an inescapable fatality, that unhappiness is their normal lot, and that the only answer man can give to the malignity or indifference of the powers that oppress him - whether Fate, God, or Nature - is a contemptuous silence, are early signs of this lack of faith in life (Brereton 114). Already, echoes of a black melancholy may be heard - the next and final step in our spectrum of melancholy shades from white to gray to black - in the passionate madness of Musset's "child of the century" autobiography, La Confession d'un enfant du siècle (1836), Nerval's 'soleil noir de la Mélancolie' in "El Desdichado" and Aurélia, and Baudelaire's "Spleen" poems and the poems of his Les Fleurs du mal (1857).

Vigny's best poetic work is in Les Destinées (1864), eleven philosophical poems in which he argues for the need to understand the relationship of man and nature in the struggle that is the human condition. Like Wordsworth and his concern for the victims of war and old age, Vigny's interest extends to a concern for man's power to control his life and the forces confronting him in the world. But Vigny's subjects have changed from the human aspects of a Margaret or a Leeth-gatherer, obliterated by a haze in which man and nature seem merely abstractions of the things themselves. Vigny's aims have gone beyond the concrete object to an image that is subsequently de-

veloped - according to the imagination - into a philosophical ideal. This shift in the treatment of objects from image to ideal, in the second stage of the Romantic period is already present in the ideas worked out by Shelley in "Prometheus Unbound." The image of a larger-than-life mythic character epitomizes what Shelley declares in his Preface to the work (Reiman 133), as "the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends."

In one of Vigny's strongest indictments of divine justice is the postscript which he added to "Le Mont des Oliviers" (1864) - one of the poems of Les Destinées - in the year before his death:

S'il est vrai qu'au Jardin sacré des Écritures,
Le Fils de l'homme ait dit ce qu'on voit rapporté;
Muet, aveugle et sourd au cri des créatures,
Si le Ciel nous laissa comme un monde avorté,
Le juste opposera le dédain à l'absence
Et ne répondra plus que par un froid silence
Au silence éternel de la Divinité.

Oeuvres complètes I, 156, 143-149.

/If it is true that in the sacred Garden of the Scriptures, / The Son of man had said would come about; / Dumb, blind, and deaf to the cry of human beings, / If Heaven abandoned us like an aborted world, / The just will oppose the scorn to the absence / And will no longer respond except by a cold silence / To the eternal silence of the Divinity./

Earlier in the poem Christ is depicted as a victim of ennui, where on the way to Gethsemane he is described as 'Triste jusqu'à la mort, l'oeil sombre et tenebreux' (6); it is an ennui which is resigned to despair at the 'silence éternel de la Divinité' (149). Later, Vigny's bored Christ describes ennui as a sickness of the spirit in the same

way as fever is a sickness to the blood: both undermine the body and destroy the pleasures of life. And he asks of God (107-110):

Et pourquoi nul sentier entre deux large voies
Entre l'ennui du calme et des paisibles joies
Et la rage sans fin des vagues passions,
Entre la lethargie et les convulsions?

/And why is there no path between these two broad emotions, / Between the ennui of calm and of peaceful joys / And the endless rage of vague passions, / Between lethargy and convulsions?/

Always seeking ways of ridding mankind of their frustrations, Vigny in "L'Ésprit pur" (1863), the last of the poems of Les Destinées, stresses the role of the mind that is to take over in the world of the future from the disorderly conflict of an age of wars. Poetry would be the catalyst as the upholder of an ideal of nobility, in which the written word would remain the repository of the values of a civilization (Ireson 154). Vigny's concern for poetry, which in the 1840s was declining in prestige, and for the future, is best expressed in a passage from this work. The reference in the first line to the "Sole and last ring of two broken chains," is to Vigny himself and the fact that he was the last remaining survivor of two great families in France:

Seul et dernier anneau de deux chaînes brisées,
Je reste. Et je soutiens encor dans les hauteurs,
Parmi les maîtres purs de nos savants musées,
L'IDÉAL du poète et des graves penseurs.

Oeuvres complètes I, 172.

/Sole and last ring of two broken chains, / I remain. And still I bear up on the heights, / Amid the pure masters of our learned museums, / The poet's and the serious thinkers' IDEAL./

The best of Vigny's works in prose is represented in his diary, Journal d'un poète, recorded from 1823 to 1863, the year of his death, and consisting of thoughts and comments on life and literature. One such entry is worth noticing here because of its appropriateness to our civilization today: "The day when there will no longer be inspiration, love, adoration, devotion, let us hollow out the earth to its core, let us put five hundred million casks of powder, and blow it up into pieces, like a bomb, in the middle of the firmament" (1834). Another example from the Journal (1835) is his statement that 'L'ennui est la maladie de la vie : pour la guerir, il suffit de peu de chose: aimer, ou vouloir. . .' On the surface one would think that Vigny is talking about the ennui of everyday life, the kind more easily identified with the milder form of 'désoeuvrement.' Coming so quickly after Lamartine's more promising views of the future, Vigny's poetry requires a reassessment within the spectrum of melancholy themes ranging in shades from white to gray to black, laid down early in this study, themes we must remember were inherited by the French Romantics from the moods and fashions in the literature of the previous century.

With Vigny's poetry we enter into a different perspective where the poet's emotional state of being has stretched beyond the limits of less threatening forms of melancholy generally practiced by poets engaged in this subject. In actuality, Vigny's pessimism draws the line between what moods of melancholy have gone before and what is to be anticipated in the poetry of the future. With Vigny, and Nerval, and Baudelaire we go into the darker, more foreboding regions where ennui, among other feelings of sadness, expresses the deep spiritual

distress of profound sorrow. And the more we read Vigny and anticipate Baudelaire the more we witness the shift of melancholy from its accustomed place in the heart to the dreaded madness of the head, where it will remain for the rest of the century and into the next, wavering between nihilism and skepticism, eroticism and terror, seduced by false hopes in the beauty of life itself. Except for Musset, melancholy has weakened as a means of grasping the Romantic vision in poetry.

Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) is generally classed with Hugo, Lamartine, and Vigny as one of the four great figures of the Romantic movement; and he communicates, even more directly than his three contemporaries his self (the 'moi' of the Romantics) and his sufferings in his poetry. As an individual, he was prone to suffering from "wounds" largely inflected by himself, so that by the time he was thirty he was practically burnt out. Ten good years of productive work, interrupted by the unfortunate consequences of his liaison with George Sand that ended in 1834, was all that he had. After that his life declined into a growing lethargy, caused by ill health, alcoholism, and a disgust with life. Out of his unfortunate affair with Sand, however, for which he was labeled as the poet 'des grandes douleurs,' materialized a body of inspired work, collectively entitled Les Nuits (1835-37), and "Souvenir" (1841), the best of his lyric poetry, on which his claim, along with the prose autobiography, La Confession d'un enfant du siècle (1836) to greatness rests.

As a poet of deep suffering, Musset understood only too well that the source of true lyricism came from the transports of the heart; but it was to the 'grande douleur' which suffering provided

that he owed the full development of his genius. Without this emotional and sensual excitement he had no sensation of living and no stimulus for writing, an inescapable dilemma for which there seemed no remedy. Nothing suggests better the consequence of such an impasse than the melancholy sonnet Musset wrote 'pour lui-même' in 1840, and published later under the title of "Tristesse." The sonnet also represents one of the last true melancholy lyric poems in the tradition reaching back to Ronsard, Chaulieu, Parny, and Lamartine:

J'ai perdu ma force et ma vie,
Et mes amis et ma gaîté;
J'ai perdu jusqu'à la fierté
Qui faisait croire à mon génie.

Quand j'ai connu la Vérité,
J'ai cru que c'était une amie;
Quand je l'ai comprise et sentie,
J'en étais déjà dégoûté.

Et pourtant elle est éternelle,
Et ceux qui se sont passés d'elle
Ici-bas ont tout ignoré.

Dieu parle, il faut qu'on lui réponde.
-- Le seul bien qui me reste au monde
Est d'avoir quelquefois pleuré.

Poésies complètes 402.

/I have lost my strength and my life, / And my friends and my humor; / I have even lost my pride / Which believed in my genius // When I knew the Truth, / I believed that it was a friend; / When I understood and felt it, / I was already disgusted with it. // And nevertheless it is

eternel, / And those who have themselves passed it by / Here below are all unknown. / God speaks, one should answer him. / The only good left to me in the world / Is to have cried somtimes./

"Tristesse" is another of those crisis poems in which the poet can only hint at the depths of his emotional being and the terrible thoughts that have brought him to this predicament in his life. Here in the first eight lines of the sonnet the poet lays bare - 'le coeur mis à nu' of Baudelaire - the complaints of his heart: not only does he fear the loss of the source and inspiration of his poetry - 'ma force et ma vie' - but the loss of the very energies and interest which make living possible - 'mes amis et ma gaïté' - . Even the confidence of his pride which had believed in his genius, ceased to exist once he understood clearly the 'Vérité' of his situation. But truth alone was too unsettling a condition to befriend for long and some other inducement or excitement had to be found to revitalize his dimining powers. More dreaded, however, than either the loss of faith in himself as a poet or the uncertainty of his creative genius was his fear of the onslaught of ennui, that same awful monster and prototype of the 'mal du siècle,' which had been the torment of so many Romantic poets.

In the sestet of the poem we find the poet searching for some sort of philosophical or religious resolution to his plight. The poet may have no answer, but God requires of him a reckoning and he must respond. Painful as the truth has been, the poet is calmed by his newly found wisdom: he now understands that the one good remaining to him in this world is the knowledge that he had found the compassion of tears, not only for others but also for his own imperfect self.

Were we not so far advanced into French Romantic tastes we might almost feel in "Tristesse" the lingering influence of late neoclassic sentimental melancholy where the poet's 'moi' combines with self-pity to betray exaggerated complaints of the heart. But this is far less the sentimental remnants Musset admired and even imitated in Lamartine's poetry than it is the more serious signs of darkening shades in our spectrum of the emotions of the heart fading off into total somberness, the next and last stage of Nerval's 'ténébreux,' and Baudelaire's "Spleen" poetry. In fact there is more than a casual resemblance between Musset and Baudelaire, his junior by eleven years, both in temperament and in the circumstance of their destiny. Both lived dangerously close to the edge at all times, tempting fate and death, and driven by sensual excitement, stimulants and opiates; both also seemed to view suffering not only as a condition of poetry but as a condition of all humanity (Brereton 152-3). In "Tristesse" we have just what the poet meant it to be: a personal statement, expressed in simple, uncomplicated, straightforward language, representing the poet's coming to grips with himself and his fate after a life of debauchery and deep suffering. At the same time, it is for this 'poete dechu' as it may be for all the poets of his generation, a fitting epitaph as the last literary work and inspiration of the Romantic melancholy that speaks for all Romantic poets, not merely for the French, afflicted by the same disease of the 'mal du siècle.'

Chapter IV - The German Romantics and 'Weltschmerz'

German Romanticism on the whole is not especially melancholy; the real melancholy does not come to its fullest until the post-Romanticism in the nineteen century and in the 'Weltschmerz' poetry of the late Romantic, Nikolaus Lenau. Literary melancholy, on the other hand, is a literary tradition of a nation that need not betray its national characteristics, or the soul and the spirit of the psyche of the poet himself. To be present in the literature of a nation, a literary state of mind has first to be developed that would be conducive to it. In England, Milton's tradition of "Il Penseroso" was the beginning along with the element of nature that found its way as a theme into their literature, both for its own sake and as a place of retirement and seclusion. In France, the tradition grew out of the effects of Rousseau's prose in Rêveries du promeneur solitaire (1782), and its influence on the novels of Chateaubriand, Constant, and Sénancour. If literary melancholy looks different from each side of the spectrum, one fact is apparent: whatever differences there may exist among the English, French, and Germans in the development of this literary mode, they are basically the same in their perception of it in Romanticism where they merge the mystical with the visual as a parallel process, as a means of withdrawal into oneself. We see this in the way they describe scenes and objects and in the "new" language they give to the inner experiences, whether in the poetry of Novalis, Hugo, or Keats.

As for German Romantic melancholy, it still maintained a viability derived from a variety of melancholy themes that had appeared in

the poetry of Klopstock and Hölty, and in the later sentimentalists of 'Empfindsamkeit,' that carried over into German Romanticism. To accommodate the lyric form, best suited for sentimental poetry, additional genres were reinstituted, such as the strophic form of the 'Volkslied' and the ballad. Although not a 'Volkslied' in itself, we recall from our treatment of Salis-Seewis' "Das Grab," how well the 'Volkslied' form traditionally works with the emotional and melancholy subjects of death, loss, and grief. It was the form used in Goethe's early lyric poems, and in the major works of some later Romantic poets as Brentano, Eichendorff, and Heine.

Important to early German Romantic melancholy is the fact that poets like Novalis (and later Eichendorff and Heine) inherited the last strains of the late eighteenth-century theme of 'Empfindsamkeit,' or sentimentalism, which in its deepest mood of sentimental sadness the Germans themselves named 'Weltschmerz.' Essentially it is the vision of a world-weary Romantic who identifies the flaws of the world with his own disillusion and self-weariness. It is both an outward and an inward view of the complaining poet; it is also the disease that had flawed Werther in his love-sickness for Lotte, and had made of him the victim of melancholy and suicide. In English poetry, we have only to recall Childe Harold's weariness and disillusion with the world to remember how pervasive this phenomenon was during the years of social and political upheaval of that period. Once 'Empfindsamkeit' had run its course in the years following Werther, the convention passed into German Romantic poetry in the dark feelings that the poet expressed when dwelling on his own sufferings and pain in themes of 'Sehnsucht,' or longing, ennui, wander-

ing, night, and death.

As with Rousseau and his Rêveries, we go back to Goethe and Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774) for a better grasp of nineteenth-century German Romantic melancholy. We might ask ourselves from the start: Why was Werther so important? Why had this emotion-stricken age all come together in Werther? Besides the sentimentality that was already there in the spirit of the time, there were also social revolutionary forces at work. In Germany in the 1770s there were no outlets by which the young energies could release their frustrations other than in the company of student organizations which only aroused the suspicions and mistrust of the authorities. In the face of an iron-fisted rule of an old aristocracy, the young had lost hope for themselves and the future. Werther represented the young who could not represent themselves in the exaggerated gaucheries of the aristocrats, a situation which only worsened when the middle class citizen, without money or social status, wanted to get ahead. This was also the time of suicides among the young - we have only to recall the fate of the young Chatterton - that amounted to a Werther epidemic. As a result the novel started a mode, a fashion in terms of cultural history that also expressed the malady and the fatigue of 'Weltschmerz.' Fictionally speaking, Werther is the great melancholy figure of the age, a true barometer in whom Goethe had presented the total crisis of the moment.

Although the work was later embarrassing to him and he wanted to disown Werther, Goethe the Classicist, the scientist, and the Sage of his time was, nevertheless, also a true Romantic from the very beginning. What this means is that for Germans, generally, Classicism was

seen as an aspect of Romanticism which they preferred to call Classicism because of its many and remarkable affinities with that tradition. In a very real way, German Classicism had always been a derivative one, reconstructed as it was out of the elements of classical antiquity but one not adhered to in any practical way, resulting in a kind of playing at being Classical without it really being Classicism. For Goethe and Schiller, however, this more recent phenomenon of Classicism soon became a definition of a program which they used to promote their particular sort of Classicism in German literature. It also came to represent for them and for German literature, generally, a new state of mind and a new kind of sensibility that had come in to supplant the neoclassicism of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

It was unfortunate for Novalis (the pseudonym of the Romantic poet, Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801) and for the poets of his generation, that the same Wertherian world which had plagued their predecessors confronted them as well, a world still in turmoil of social change, and still dominated by a class that cared little or nothing for poetry or literature. At the same time, the less dire solutions which had been available to their earlier counterparts as a remedy for their frustrations, were still in place for them, namely, to ply their creative talents away from the everyday experiences of the world and to spend their lives as social outcasts inspired only by the world of literature. Like Romantics generally Novalis had hoped that by retiring into his own world he would be able to transform his dreams into a world of poetry in pursuit of that elusive "blue flower," the one ideal symbol which held the secrets of the mystery of life, but which

as in all dreams remained just beyond the poet's grasp. Nostalgia, the element or theme of Romantic melancholy that represents a yearning for the infinite, and an indefatigable search for the one beyond the many for some insight into the mystery that touches us all, became for Novalis and the Romantics a poetry of longing shaped out of the elements of strong feeling, introspection, and the imagination, that "wondrous faculty," as Novalis called it, "which can replace all our senses." For Novalis, in particular, this faith in the imagination gave him the license to go off into the infinite to dream his dreams and to give passion to his feelings in ways never before encountered in German poetry up to that time.

Death and longing are the two main themes of "Hymnen an die Nacht" - "Hymns on Night" - one of Novalis' best known works which he wrote in 1799 and published the following year. The poem was written in what might be termed an 'éclat' of energy or rapture in poetic response to the emotional crisis Novalis had undergone in 1797 by the death of his fiancée Sophie von Kühn. It also represents one of the great efforts by a poet to explore in idealistic yet intimate and personal terms the spiritual reunion of the lover and his beloved in an eternal afterlife of peace and sensual bliss.

The structure of the poem, a song of praise, had been developed by Klopstock and used by a number of poets, including Goethe, many of whose early poems are regarded as belonging to the genre. A work in six hymns of varying lengths, "Hymnen an die Nacht" has both poetry and prose in its composition. The first three hymns, written in prose, and the fourth ending with a poetic coda, make up one part of the work. Together they relate in symbolistic language the poet's initiation

into the mysteries of the night-world and his experience of spiritual regeneration through knowledge of the night, the symbol of sleep and death where the spiritual union of the poet-lover with his lost bride will take place. The fifth hymn which has several poetic sections stands with the sixth and last hymn, a strophic poem in rhyming verse entitled "Sehnsucht nach dem Tode" - "Longing for Death" - to make up the remainder of the work. In contrast to the events in the first four hymns where the themes of light and night, and the vision of the beloved depict an esoteric imagery of the poet's inn er world, these last two hymns focus on the imagery of the poet's outer, real world. The fifth hymn which treats mainly with the life of Christ, begins the historical development with an account of the gods at the time when they are said to be old and vanishing from the earth and the coming of Christ is anticipated as a springtime of hope and promise. The opening lines of the fifth hymn speak of the "iron fate" and "silent might" which the ancient gods had wielded over mankind everywhere, an image that the poet likens to a dark and oppressive bond lying unendingly on the anxious soul of men for as long as gods had remained:

> Über der Menschen weitverbreitete Stämme herrschte vorzeiten ein eisernes Schicksal mit stummer Gewalt. Eine dunkle, schwere Binde lag um ihre bange Seele--unendlich war die Erde--der Götter Aufenthalt und ihre Heimat.

/Over the far-flung races of men there reigned in ages past an iron fate with silent might. A dark, oppressive bond lay upon the anxious soul of man--Infinite was the earth--the sojourn of the gods, and their home./ Trans. by R.M. Browning (v. Bibliography, Browning, Robert M., ed. German Poetry from 1750-1900, 117.)

Nor is it difficult to deduce from these words an implied reference to the old aristocratic order in the poet's own time that, although also

coming to a close, still maintained sufficient force to cause much anguish on the minds and spirits of the young for as long as it remained in power.

The sixth and final hymn - "Longing for Death" - brings us to the contemporary world of the poet in this work of imaginative and poetic reckoning with death, loss, and redemption. Here in this world the poet contemplates the fate of all men, past and present, as one of eternal loneliness and sorrow, plagued by 'Angst' and 'Schmerz' where, like strangers in a godless and hostile world, they remain condemned while among the living. Christ too in days gone by had suffered the same fate when he took it on himself to walk among men:

Die Vorzeit, wo in Jugendglut
Gott selbst sich kundgegeben
Und frühem Tod in Liebesmut
Geweiht sein süsses Leben.

Although Christ had not been able to drive off the fear and pain while he was on earth, his presence nevertheless had left men with an eternal longing for death, to return to that time when he had come among them so that their lot might be the "dearer gain":

Und Angst und Schmerz nicht von sich trieb,
Damit er uns nur teuer blieb.

The process of initiation by which the poet would find his way back into the supernatural world that leads to God and to his spiritual union with his beloved bride, had already been set in motion in the first four hymns of the poem. Now with the fifth hymn and the presence of Christ providing the impetus for mankind's initiation and return to night and death, and the sixth suggesting that the way back

to God's heavenly home is through the womb of the earth, mankind's longing for death and darkness is almost complete:

Hinunter in der Erde Schoss,
Weg aus des Lichtes Reichen,
Der Schmerzen Wut und wilder Stoss
Ist froher Abfahrt Zeichen.

Once the bold command to go "Down into the earth's womb, / Away from the kinddom of light" is accepted, little remains for the poet or for mankind here in this world. Only the memories of 'Die Vorzeit,' when mankind was sound of sense and sight, that is to say, when God walked on earth among men, and mind and heart could still discern God's presence, stir them now with nostalgia:

Die Vorzeit, wo die Sinne licht
In hohen Flammen brannten,
Des Vaters Hand und Angesicht
Die Menschen noch erkannten.
Und hohen Sinns, einfältiglich
Noch mancher seinem Urbild glich.

Loved ones who have already passed on to the other world call to them hastening their departure; the longing for union exists in both worlds. With nothing further to detain them in this kingdom of light, the poet's - and by extension, mankind's - initiation into the secrets of the night, are finally completed. For the poet it is to go down to the blessed bride, and for mankind it is to descend to Jesus, the beloved, where the two, the bride and Christ, symbolize eternal love:

Hinunter zu der süssen Braut,
Zu Jesus, dem Geliebten--

All is accomplished, as the poet tells us at the very end of "Longing for Death," when the final dream dreamt in death will break the chains of life and lead mankind to God:

Ein Traum bricht unsre Banden los
Und senkt uns in des Vaters Schoss.

Notwithstanding the personal and tragic circumstances which inspired Novalis to write the work in the first place, "Hymnen an die Nacht" belongs to that kind of nostalgic Romantic sentiment favored by poets who sought their distractions from reality in the escape dreams of their own making. As a poem that deals almost exclusively with darkness and death, "Hymnen an die Nacht" presents somewhat of a problem in its emphasis on the negative, even pathological, yearning for death, a difficult condition for the mind to accept under any circumstance. In its own right, however, the work is a highly imaginative and erotic vision of the poet's efforts to come to terms with love and loss once death has intervened to separate the lover from his beloved bride. As such, it remains as an affirmation of love beyond death that expresses the poet's belief that true love does not die with death but may be reclaimed in the joys and pleasures of illusory worlds where dreams become reality, and life like sleep, renews itself in the darkness of the night - Novalis' symbol of death.

The sentimentality that affected Novalis' generation - if not him directly - and before that Goethe, who had discovered all over again the deep-rooted elements of 'Empfindsamkeit' and world-weariness in the eighteenth century, also claimed the poet Clemens Maria Brentano (1778-1842), but to a lesser degree. Not intent in seeking out a path to the inner life for some measure of freedom, or in

yearning for an escape from the prison of earthly existence into an eternity of the life hereafter, as had Novalis, Brentano was content in searching for his world in the world of real people: huntsmen and soldiers, tramps and outcasts, and depicting them in some familiar setting as he does in the poem "Der Spinnerin Lied" - "The Spinstress' Song" - that on a larger canvas also represents the melancholy mood of a generation lost in its frustrations and passivity. The image of this lonely spinner, sitting in the moonlight and dreaming of a lost happiness, catches this overall mood of lassitude.

"Der Spinnerin Lied" (1802) - one of Brentano's most popular poems - is made up of six 4-line stanzas of which the first three will suffice to demonstrate the content of the poem as well as the qualities of its musicality and rhythm that the poet, as a Romantic, believed would enhance the feeling he wished to convey in the work:

Es sang vor langen Jahren
Wohl auch die Nachtigall,
Das war wohl süsser Schall,
Da wir zusammen waren.

Ich sing' und kann nicht weinen
Und spinne so allein
Den Faden, klar und rein,
So lang der Mond wird scheinen.

Da wir zusammen waren,
Da sang die Nachtigall,
Nun mahnet mich ihr Schall,
Dass du von mir gefahren.

/Of long gone years / The Nightingale sang sweetly, / We heard the echo sound, / We were there together. // I sing and cannot weep / And spin here all alone / The clean, pure thread, / As long as the moon will shine. // We were there together, / While the Nightingale sang, / Now the sounds remind me, / That you are gone from me./

Once again we have a poem in the style of the folk song that accommodates so well the emotional and melancholy themes of loneliness and longing, as well as the familiar themes of the nightingale, moonlight, and lament which we have since encountered in poems of 'Empfindsamkeit.' But what at first appears as a simple poetic monologue, nonetheless conceals an elaborate metrical structure in which a few rhymes and assonances, based on the 'a' and 'ei' vowel sounds grouped in alternate stanzas, illustrate Brentano's conscious effort to establish a musicality that at the same time also conveys a mood of longing and lament, dominated by the lonely figure of the spinner silently brooding in the moonlight and dreaming of a happiness long ago. Also, the repetitive quality of the vowel sounds illustrate both the spinner's repetitive work and her cyclical thought processes. At best, we can say that a close correspondence exists between the musical quality and the content of the poem that generally speaking fit the mood and feeling of the text.

Although this little poem shows, in design and treatment, the influence of the German folk song for which Brentano had done so much - since it is to him and his friend Arnim von Achim that Germany owes its best-loved collection of 'Volkslieder,' Des Knaben Wunderhorn (1805-8) - "Der Spinnerin Lied" is not in the strict sense of the word a folk song; rather, it is a 'Kunstlied' or art song that came into vogue in Germany in the mid-eighteenth century out of a renewed interest in traditional folk songs of the Middle Ages, and a need to

revitalize German poetry and bring its rhetoric into line with popular feeling. The period when Herder in 1773 first coined the term 'Volkslied,' was a difficult one for poetry. It was also a time when, because of its popularity, the German folk song was identified with German song itself, the reason no doubt why poets preferred to think of their poems as folk songs rather than as 'Kunstlieder.' Only in recent times have there been attempts to de-mythologize the folk song by differentiating the distinctions between them. The term now is applied to a work that is the product of the masses and developed in the oral traditions of its people; the 'Kunstlied,' on the other hand, is a highly conventional poem written by an individual which commonly shares certain features derived from the traditional folk song. Nevertheless, the term 'folk song' persists and will no doubt survive, if only because it is now widely used, and there seems to be no readily acceptable alternative (Durrani 119).

One of the features and strengths of the folk song that we find in "Der Spinnerin Lied," lies in its power to convey emotion with poignant directness in language that is both simple and devoid of bombast. An example of this may be seen in lines where we find the abandoned and unhappy spinner lamenting her fate: "Ich sing' und kann nicht weinen / Und spinne so allein" (5, 6), or dreaming of a lost happiness long gone: "Nun mahnet mich ihr Schall, / Dass du von mir gefahren" (11, 12). Another important feature which links this 'Kunstlied' to the folk song tradition is the use of repetition in words and phrases which is meant to suggest and therefore to understate the rational content in the poem in favor of the musical one. At the same time, the use of repetition makes it possible to move

words and phrases about, almost at random, without seemingly affecting the mood, or feeling, or content of the poem itself. In fact, the only line of verse in "Der Spinnerin Lied" not affected by this treatment of repetition is the first: "Es sang vor langen Jahren," which recalls the melancholy themes of time past and longing that this weary toiler at least may recall but not recover. In the end, the fact that "God may (if he so wishes) join us" repeated intact in lines 16 and 21, as "Gotte wolle uns vereinen," suggests a fulfillment of the spinner's wishes that also implies a return to harmony through death and the union of the two lovers that recalls Novalis' resolution to the problems he posited in "Hymnen an die Nacht." The complex structure of the poem however illustrates Brentano's ingenious artistry in his use of endless repetition of vowels, sounds, and words as a principle of composition.

And finally, there is in this poem a connection with the traditional "alba" or dawn song, a particular type of folk song, of which "Der Spinnerin Lied" is an excellent example. Its origins may be traced to the troubadour poetry found in the Poitou district of southern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Chaytor 8-9). They were current among the country people and represented a trusted friend watching near the meeting-place of a lover and his lady to give due warning of the approach of dawn or any other danger. Both this 'Kunstlied' and the model from which it is derived express the sadness of pain and loss that comes with the departure of the beloved and theend to the happiness they shared.

Another of Brentano's poems that demonstrates the poet's obvious attention to the music of language in poetry is the two-stanza work

"Abendständchen" - "Evening Serenage" - where we find the same principles that were operating in "Der Spinnerin Lied" at work here as well:

Hör', es klagt die Flöte wieder
Und die kühlen Brunnen rauschen,
Golden weh'n die Töne nieder;
Stille, stille, lass' uns lauschen!

Holdes Bitten, mild Verlangen,
Wie es süss zum Herzen spricht!
Durch die Nacht, die mich umfangen
Blickt zu mir der Töne Licht.

/Listen, the flute laments again / And the cool fountains rustle, / The golden notes descend; / Quiet, quiet, let us listen! // Gentle pleading, mildly yearning, / How sweetly it speaks to the heart! / Through the night which holds me embraced, / The light of the notes shines towards me./

In itself, "Abendständchen" is a simple yet totally complete and satisfying work whose meaning and purpose, if it has one, appears as a poetic instrument that invites the reader to enter into a musical happening, touched by feelings and moods created through the words and suggested by the sounds they convey. The initiation begins with the word 'Hör' and the flute sounds lamenting, accompanied by the rustling noises of the cool fountains that come together speaking sweet things to the heart. To grasp the full effect, listeners are asked to be quiet: "Stille, stille lass' uns lauschen!" and to take in the golden notes as they descend into silence, simultaneously dissolving reality into a sensation of sights and sounds while only one sense is being stimulated, in what has been suggested as a 'blühende Synästhesien' (Schöne 2: 18). From the sounds and the tactile images

of "cool" fountains, and the night that holds one "embraced," we move into images of sight, the "golden notes descending" and the "Light of sounds shining." While the first stanza devotes itself to the description of images that create the sounds and tones perceptibly felt and heard by the sensitive listener, the second stanza speaks more directly of the effects of these sensations on him. This time the poet's imagination has compared and transformed the images and sights out there to resemble the sad laments of flutes and the gentle noises of rustling water-fountains that speak to him in his suffering. What he is seeking is the comforting reassurance of darkness and night to hold him in its embrace, bringing with it temporary relief or escape from worldly cares that glance back at him from the fading day only to return in the tomorrow that lies just beyond.

Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857) is generally considered to be the best of the second generation of German Romantic poets. Mainly a writer of lyric poetry, invariably structured in the strophic form of the folk song, he manages to bring together the simplicity of the folk song with an attitude of natural piety. An example of this poetry has already appeared here in Chapter I, where the poem "Wehmut" was used to illustrate the melancholy sentimentalism practiced by German poets at the end of the eighteenth century. A melancholy poet himself, Eichendorff loved to spend long hours in the landscape of his native countryside absorbing and absorbed by the scenes around him that were to reappear in enthusiastically described passages, as in the poem "Abschied" - "Farewell" - inspired only by affection and devotion:

O Täler weit, o Höhen,
O schöner, grüner Wald,
Du meiner Lust und Wehen
Andächt'ger Aufenthalt!
Da draussen, stets betrogen,
Saust die geschäft'ge Welt;
Schlag noch einmal die Bogen
Um mich, du grünes Zelt!

/O broad valleys, O hills, / O beautiful green forest, / You pious refuge of my joys and sorrows / Out there, forever deluded, / The busy world rushes; / Raise your arches once more, / Around me, you green tent!/

Also in "Abschied" - of which only the first of the four 8-line stanzas in the poem appears here - we recognize the same idiomatic reference to nature as a retreat from the busy world that was encountered in Brentano's "Abendständchen," a recurring theme of many of the Romantic poets that comes across as a critical response to the predicament of modern man in the face of apprehension and ungratified yearning. In the context of this poem on leave-taking, the real world appears flawed, "forever deluded," to the poet, where man is all too often denied the safe haven and refuge he seeks as his fundamental and legitimate right. However idyllic the scenes of nature may appear to him, and genuine the joy at being in this wonderful spot - punctuated in the text by the three "O"s - the experience also brings with it the sad awareness that man's one activity is to say his farewells - as he tells us in the last stanza - and to go a stranger in a strange world, resigned to watching the pageantry of life played out in its busy thoroughfares, in its own superficially happy existence. The one consolation left to the poet at least is

that he will have the memories of nature's beauty to strengthen and renew him in his solitude, reinforced by his faith in God even in the middle of deceit and corruption.

A poem of deeper pathos and sadness is Eichendorff's work "Auf meines Kindes Tod" - "On the Death of my Child" - for which he once again uses the familiar form of the folk song to tell this simple narrative on the death of a child in the simplest possible way. It also demonstrates Eichendorff's high sensitivity in handling a poem of this delicacy and quiet serenity that at the same time attempts to grapple with the deeply felt emotions of those most closely affected by the death:

Von fern die Uhren schlagen,
Es ist schon tiefe Nacht,
Die Lampe brennt so düster,
Dein Bettlein ist gemacht.

Die Winde nur noch gehen
Wehklagend um das Haus,
Wir sitzen einsam drinne
Und lauschen oft hinaus.

Es ist, als müsstest leise
Du klopfen an die Tür,
Du hättst dich nur verirret,
Und kämst nun müd zürück.

Wir armen, armen Toren!
Wir irren ja im Graus

Des Dunkels noch verloren -

Du fandst dich längst nach Haus.

/The hours strike from far away, / It is already into deep night, / The lamp burns dimly, / Your little cot is made. // Only the winds still go / Lamenting round the house, / We sit lonely inside / And listen often beyond. // It is as though you were gently / Tapping at the door, / As if you had only lost your way, / And were coming back tired. // We poor, foolish people! / It is we who are still wandering, / Lost in the horror of darkness - / You have long ago found your way home./

But even the poem's title which forewarned the reader of its subject matter has not dispeled a sense of apprehension, even anxiety gradually discerned as the details unfold. First, there are the echoes of distant clocks sending signals of the hour's lateness, as if to warn the reader that all is not well. Then, there is the empty cot as if waiting patiently in its little corner for its occupant to come, followed by the rattling of the winds at the door, suggesting someone trying to enter. Ears are strained by those awaiting the child for some friendly sound of life from beyond, until at least reality intervenes to put things in their proper perspective, with the poet chiding himself for imagining the child was lost when all along it is he who has been wandering, lost in the horror of darkness. The child in the meantime has long since found its way home, supposedly in that heaven of God's love.

The more we read of Eichendorff's works, the more we come to realize the strong influence of his religious faith that is reflected in the way his poems work out their message. Here, in a short poem entitled "Wünschelrute" - "Diving Rod" - we have an example of Eichendorff's powers of perception and ability to be simple and compact, in structure and meaning, which leaves the reader with more to think about than is actually there in the words themselves. In this poem

we must not forget the analogy which the poet is trying to make between the content and the title:

Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen,
Die da träumen fort und fort,
Und die Welt hebt an zu singen,
Triffst du nur das Zauberwort.

/A song slumbers in everything, / Where all things continually dream, / and the world begins to sing, / If only you find the magic word./

One of Eichendorff's fundamental experiences where his strong religious faith plays a lesser role, is in his nature poetry that reveals an intimate association with nature and the landscape that remained with him from his early years. As a poet, he favored evening and night scenes, and especially a landscape shaded in darkness, except for the moon which eliminated, at least temporarily, the intrusion of light and day, and with it a happy relief from the noises and bustle of the world out there. Two poems, "Der Abend" - "Evening" - and "Mondnacht" - "Moonlit Night" - offer us images of Eichendorff's world of night. "Der Abend" begins with the poet comparing the silence of evening, with the intrusion of men once that has been left behind:

Schweigt der Menschen laute Lust:
Rauscht die Erde wie in Träumen
Wunderbar mit allen Bäumen,
Was dem Herzen kaum bewusst,
Alte Zeiten, linde Trauer,
Und es schweifen leise Schauer
Wetterleuchtend durch die Brust.

/When the loud fun-making of men is silenced, / The earth rustles miraculously as in a dream, / With all her trees, / What the heart is hardly conscious of, / Old times, gentle sadness, / And quiet tremors sweep like / Summer lightning through my breast./

The poem "Mondnacht" which almost naturally seems to follow the scene laid out in "Der Abend," begins:

Es war, als hätt' der Himmel
Die Erde still geküsst,
Dass sie im Blütenschimmer
Von ihm nun träumen müsst'.

Die Luft ging durch die Felder,
Die Ähren wogten sacht,
Es rauschten leis de Wälder,
So sternklar war die Nacht.

Und meine Seele spannte
Weit ihre Flügel aus,
Flog durch die stillen Lande,
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

/It was as though the sky / Had quietly kissed the earth, / That in its shimmering blossoms / Had now to dream of it. // The breeze swept over the fields, / The ears of corn waved gently, / The woods rustled softly, / The night so starry clear. // And my soul stretched / Its wings out wide, / Flew through the tranquil lands, / As though it were flying home./

The poet in this rather serene and melodious lyric, appears content in his paradise on earth, secure in its delights in God's external world. But, if we look more closely at all these nature poems on night, we will detect a melancholy thread that runs through all of them: Nature's beauty as a pensive refuge for his joys, also contain his sorrows, juxtaposed as they are against a hostile world beyond.

In this poem we see the use of the animated - the pathetic fallacy of an emotional nature imposing its psychological presence on the poet in its midst. It is nevertheless a far cry from the 'Weltschmerz' of Eichendorff's poem "Wehmut," that more directly treats this condition of Romantic melancholy in German literature (see pages 40-42, above).

A final example of Eichendorff's work that comes closer to expressing the mood in "Wehmut," is the poem "Nachts" - "Nocturne" - that leads off in two stanzas of six lines each, in overall octosyllabics, with two interloping lines of trimeters in the fourth and fifth lines:

Ich wandre durch die stille Nacht,
Da schleicht der Mond so heimlich sacht
Oft aus der dunklen Wolkenhülle,
Und hin und her im Tal
Erwacht die Nachtigall,
Dann wieder alles grau und stille.

O wunderbarer Nachtgesang:
Von fern im Land der Ströme Gang,
Leis Schauern in den dunklen Bäumen --
Wirrst die Gedanken mir,
Mein irres Singen hier
Ist wie ein Rufen nur aus Träumen.

/I wander through the silent night, / The moon slips furtively, softly / From out its darkening clouded cover, / And to and fro along the vale / Awakens the nightingale, / Till once again all is gray and still. // O wonderfilled nocturnal song: / From far off in the land of running streams, / Quietly shiver in the darkening trees -- / Disturb me in my thoughts, / My wandering song is gone / That's like a summons only out of dreams./

When compared with "Wehmut," a poem more in line with 'Empfindsamkeit' or sentimentalism, this poem "Nachts" finds the poet more subdues and seemingly resigned to his fate of passivity and isolation, that comes across as a growing disillusionment, and even disenchantment with everything that up to then had delighted him. Here, the images and sounds that reach the poet from far away places - the moon furtively glancing from beneath its clouded cover, the running streams deep in the environment, and the trembling trees in the darkness - have served him as a balm in his melancholy 'Einkehr' and inner contemplation. Now, however, something has come to disturb him in his tranquillity; the moon, the trees, even the nightingale - have lost their charm as he sinks more deeply into his solitude. The pleasures of nature are there no longer to console him in that moment when the heart needs to break out in song, to make the world bright again. Feelings lead to utterances that must be unburdened; but should this not happen and the words not flow spontaneously, they will turn back on themselves, to disturb the poet even more distressingly than before. For the poet in this poem, however, things have not yet come to that impasse; but the danger is there now that an added feeling of uneasiness has been introduced, brought about almost imperceptibly in the quiet shiver in the darkening trees (9), that has disturbed his song sufficiently to make it wander off. Fear has come to trouble this poet and his ability in the future to write more songs by returning him once again to his dreams.

We move now to the last of the German Romantic poets, Heinrich Heine (1798-1856) whose more immediate contribution to the Romantic melancholy tradition of German poetry is prominently represented in

his lyric verses. In the main, it is the sentimental 'Weltschmerz' in his early poems in Buch der Lieder (1827), and the poems in Neue Gedichte (1844) that Heine's personalized malady of the rejected loner and outsider are best expressed. His later poetry, written in exile in Paris, developed into a type of melancholy-satiric verse, that Heine published in two books on Germany, Atta Troll, that appeared in 1843 (revised 1847), and Deutschland, Ein Wintermärchen (1844) - Germany, A Winter's Tale. Both books offer an interesting parallel to Byron's Vision of Judgment (1822) and Don Juan (1819-24), where each poet lashes out in satiric verse in vindication and redress of grievances each has suffered, in a love-hate relationship with his native country which unfortunately for both remained unresolved to the end of their lives.

From his earliest poems Heine saw himself in the dual role of the Doppelganger, an outsider and at the same time a representative and observer of his world that he expressed in his writings from the point of view of an individual. As may be expected, many of the poems in Buch der Lieder reveal this aspect of the poet's personality. We start off with two of them, "Die Welt ist dumm, die Welt ist blind" - and "Du bist wie eine Blume" - that represent this concept, but from different perspectives. The first reads:

Die Welt ist dumm, die Welt ist blind,
Wird täglich abgeschmackter!
Sie spricht von dir, mein schönes Kind,
Du hast keinen guten Charackter.

Die Welt ist dumm, die Welt ist blind,
Und dich wird sie immer verkennen;

Sie weiss nicht, wie süss deine Küsse sind,

Und wie sie beseligend brennen.

[The world is dumb, the world is blind, / Daily growing worse! / It tells you, my beautiful child, / That you have no good character. // The world is dumb, the world is blind, / And you they will forever misjudge; / They don't know, how sweet your kisses are, / And how they burn with bliss.]

The message in the poem - punctuated by its tone of mockery, defiance, and wry wit - nevertheless does not hide the mental distress suffered by the poet remarkably contained within the explicit assertions of the words, on the one hand, and the ironic implications, on the other, that remain the basis of the poem. The Doppelgänger image here is present in the poet's assumed role of observer and reporter, betrayed by the 'du' and 'deine' references. In "Du bist wie eine Blume" we encounter a slightly different approach to the problem but only in the sense that there is less resentment, produced by the Doppelganger's changed perception of himself from the rejected pariah and outcast to that of a rejected lover, effectively modified by a change in metaphorical language:

Du bist wie eine Blume,

So hold und schön und rein;

Ich schau' dich an, und Wehmut

Schleicht mir ins Herz hinein.

Mir ist, als ob ich die Hände

Aufs Haupt dir legen sollt'

Betend, dass Gott dich erhalte

So rein und schon und hold.

[You are like a flower, / So gracious and beautiful and pure. / I look at you, and melancholy / Steals into my heart. // I feel as

though my hands, / Ought to lay on your head, / Asking that God keep you / So pure and beautiful and gracious./

To venture more deeply into the implications of the whys and wherefores of the poet's feelings at this early stage of his life would unfortunately take us off into areas that neither time nor space allows. Nevertheless, we cannot escape for any length of time in Heine's work the themes of longing and isolation and the tone of bitter sadness that followed him even to his death. Structually, Heine's continued use of the 4-line stanza of the folk song, which suited his style of lyrical writing, also helped to sustain the harmony of the message with the thematic unity and 'Ganzheit' of the poem.

With "Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam" - we have another variant of the poet's expression of displacement that remained for him unresolved to the end:

Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam
Im Norden auf kahler Höh'.
Ihn schläfert; mit weisse Decke
Umhüllen ihn Eis und Schnee.

Er träumt von einer Palme,
Die fern im Morgenland
Einsam und schweigend trauert
Auf brennender Felsenwand.

/A fir tree stands alone / On a barren height in the north. / It drowses; ice and snow / Wrap it in a blanket of white. // It dreams of a palm tree, / Far off in the east / That languishes lonely and silent / On its scorching rocky cliff./

The inevitable question arises: Is it of the poet's eastern homeland that he dreams where he would find as Byron had before him his fateful end in a strange and distant land, and the desired freedom

denied him in the land of his birth? One cannot say for sure, but along with this spirit of freedom Heine shared with Byron, he also shared his satiric and mordant pen, that would have permitted each to perceive, in his own way, the irony and sadness of his particular predicament.

At the time Heine wrote "In der Fremde," he was already living in Paris, the cosmopolitan city that appealed to his openness of thinking and to his temperament. At the same time, however, his eyes were turned interminably toward his native land, that he seemed never to stop loving with that true passion of a cast-off lover unjustly wronged:

Ich hatte einst ein schönes Vaterland.
Der Eichenbaum
Wuchs dort so hoch, die Veilchen nickten sanft.
Er war ein Traum.

Das küsste mich auf deutsch und sprach auf deutsch
(Man glaubt es kaum,
Wie gut es klang) das Wort: "Ich liebe dich!"
Es war ein Traum.

/Once I had a beautiful land. / The oak tree / Grew so tall there, the violets nodded gently. / It was a dream. / It kissed me in German and said in German / (It's hard to believe / How good it sounded) the words: "I love you!" / It was a dream./

There is not much to be added to this poem, "In der Fremde," except to say that like most of Heine's early poetry, it too was fashioned out of the Romantic 'Weltschmerz' of sensibility and sentimental melancholy from which it came. Here, as in his other poems, it falls into that category in which the poet's expressions of complaints

and longing that border precariously on solipsism to combine an attitude of self-pity with an awareness of his own suffering. In Heine's later poems, the Romantic 'Weltschmerz' will involve an imaginative realization of the suffering contemplated in others. Feelings will have shifted once again, in the intervening changing moods and themes where, in Heine, the Romantic attempt to transcend those limitations which could not be transcended in real life, would end in ironical and rebellious acceptance.

Heine left Germany for Paris, in May 1831, one of its more beautiful months in the year, where he soon reveled in the life of the boulevards and theaters, and in the freedom from the stigma of the Jew. By the time his poem, "Anno 1839" was written, however, the initial charm of the city had worn off, and his thoughts and yearnings were once again with Germany, that 'ferne Liebe' of his birth, that only from afar was so enticing and delightful when compared with his daily encounters with the people of Paris. His vision of Germany was described in glowing, romantic terms where the bitterness and anger was not only gone, but was transferred to the French themselves! It is nevertheless an interesting, though tongue-in-cheek appraisal of the two nationalities as well as an example of Heine's whimsical humor as well as irony. Of the seven stanzas comprising the poem only the first and last two are cited, primarily for the amusing exaggerations in the first part that present a unique contrast when juxtaposed against the last pair of stanzas, effected by the shift in tone which the poet has now assumed - that questions its sincerity - when dreaming reverently of his beloved Germany:

(1) O, Deutschland, meine ferne Liebe,
Gedenk ich deiner, wein ich fast!
Das munter Frankreich scheint mir trübe,
Das leichte Volk wird mir zur Last.

(2) Nur der Verstand, so kalt und trocken,
Herrscht in dem witzigen Paris --
O, Narrheitsglöcklein, Glaubensglocken,
Wie klingelt ihr daheim so süss!

[Germany, distant love of mine! When I remember you, I pine! / Lively France is dull--this cheerful folk / Sadden my spirit like a weight. // Only reason, so cold and dull, / Prevails in witty Paris -- / O, foolish bells, bells of faith, / How sweet you sound at home!]

In these two stanzas we are given some insight to Heine's intense dislike against the French and the general condition of his melancholy and malaise which no doubt brought on these over-exaggerated pronouncements on both countries that he harbored in this year 1839.

Omitting the three middle stanzas, we come to the last two in which he recalls the various sounds of his native land:

(6) Mir ist, als hört ich fern erklingen
Nachtwächterhörner, sanft und traut;
Nachtwächterlieder hör ich singen,
Dazwischen Nachtigallenlaut.

(7) Dem Dichter war so wohl daheime,
In Schildas teurem Eichenhain!
Dort wob ich meine zarten Reime
Aus Veilchenduft und Mondenschein.

[I seem to hear from far away / The night watchman's bugles, soft and clear; / I hear singing the night watchman's songs, / Between them,

the nightingales' sound. // The poet thrived so well at home, / In Schilda's oak grove / There, I wove my tender rhymes, / Of violet scent and moonlight.//

Conventional themes of lethargy and frustration that had pervaded the poetry of the early years of the Romantic 'Weltschmerz' to force a poet like Novalis to look inward for the sake of his own salvation, as demonstrated in "Hymnen an die Nacht," no longer have the same effect on a poet like Heine. In these later years when the phenomenon of the Romantic world-weariness has shifted to themes of satiety and resigned acceptance, to which many German Romantic poets living in the Biedermeier period of the 1820s and 30s were willing to defer by consciously accepting something other than the Romantic ideal they had hankered for, Heine would have none of it. Despite his faltering health, his feelings of rancor and indignation against those he regarded as having wronged or injured him merely sharpened his pen with barbs and sarcasm. From his previous attacks against old enemies, he turned his attention to new ones: the entrenched aristocracy, religious hypocrites, slave traders, and all other reactionaries that conspired to make life miserable for the poor, the unwanted, and the oppressed (Heine xix). But it had heightened his melancholy laments that turned to downright betrayal in the nearness of death apparent in his last poems, many of which are too long for inclusion here. Nevertheless, extracts from a number of shorter, individualized poems show that even with his pain and increasing blindness, his efforts in defense of freedom and justice never lagged.

In the poem "Adam der Erste" - Heine once again assumed the role of the Doppelganger. In the figure of Adam, the poet comes to God not to plead for mercy or forgiveness, but to berate him, as a wrongly

accused victim, and for having "driven me out of Paradise, / With neither justice nor pity" - "Und jagtest mich aus dem Paradies, / Ganz ohne Recht und Erbarmen!" in the first stanza. In the last two stanzas, of this six-stanza poem - constructed in folk song quatrains of three and four-stress lines - the poet expresses his proud, but stubborn vindictiveness by belittling God's Paradise, and accepting his own fate, though resignedly, that at the same time, had imperiled his soul's existence, namely, freedom. These two stanzas read:

Vermissen werde ich nimmermehr
Die paradiesischen Räume;
Das war kein wahres Paradies --
Es gab dort verbotene Bäume.

Ich will mein volles Freiheitsrecht!
Find ich die gringste Beschränknis,
Verwandelt sich mir das Paradies
Im Hölle und Gefängnis.

/I will never again miss Paradise / Its heavenly expanses; / Were no true Paradise -- / That yonder yielded forbidden trees. / I want my freedom's rights complete! / If I should find the slightest bounds, / Change for me -- Heaven would be / A hell and a prison./

In his last poems, Heine's thoughts turn once more on himself and his human condition, thereby making them more autobiographical. In that sense, he remains deeply committed to the sentimental attitudes that link his poetry to the melancholy moods which possessed him in his early works. The poem "Enfant perdu" not only demonstrates this retrospective attempt of viewing himself over a span of years; it also presents an interesting follow-up to the underlying theme of freedom in his poem "Adam der Erste." Again, from "Enfant perdu" only the

first and last of its six stanzas are extracted, which together as beginning and end, give a fairly synoptic account of the whole poem.

In stanza one, the poet identifies himself as a lost child, and a fighter at his post of battle, defending what he calls "freedom's struggle," 'Freiheitskriege,' in what he knows beforehand will never be won:

(1) Verlorner Posten in dem Freiheitskriege,
Hielt ich seit dreissig Jahren treulich aus.
Ich kämpfte ohne Hoffnung, dass ich siege,
Ich wusste, nie komm ich gesund nach Haus.

/In freedom's struggle a losing battle, / I faithfully held firm for thirty years. / I fought devoid of hope that I could win, / I knew, I never would come home able-bodied and well./

In the four stanzas that follow, the image of the embattled soldier-poet standing firmly at his post, is carried forward in such a way as to not only imply but to exploit the metaphor of the soldier-image that only a poet of Heine's caliber could successfully achieve. In the interim, too, we can sense a note of melancholy; fatigue, perhaps, however subtle, has crept into the poem, in its sad tone mixed with irony that becomes more apparent in the last stanza:

(6) Ein Posten ist vakant! -- Die Wunden klaffen--
Der eine fallt, die andern rücken nach--
Doch fall ich unbesiegt, und meine Waffen
Sinn nicht gebrochen -- Nur mein Herze brach.

/One post is vacant!--the wounds are open-- / As one falls, another takes his place-- / But though I fall unconquered, and my weapons / Are not broken--Only my heart is broken./

As it turns out, Heine's gift for writing ironic-humorous verse accompanies him even to the grave. In one of his last poems, "Wo?" -

"Where?" - of which the first stanza remains inscribed on the monument that marks his grave in the Cimetière Montmartre, in Paris - the poet playfully runs through a number of possible places where he might be buried:

Wo wird einst des Wandermüden
Letzte Ruhestätte sein?
Unter Palmen in dem Süden?
Unter Linden an dem Rhein?

Werd' ich wo in einer Wüste
Eingescharrt von fremder Hand?
Oder ruh' ich an der Küste
Eines Meeres in dem Sand?

Immerhin! Mich wird umgeben
Gotteshimmel, dort wie hier,
Und als Totenlampen schweben
Nachts die Sterne über mir.

/Where, when I am tired from my wanderings / Will my last resting place be? / Under palms in the south? / Under lime trees on the Rhine? // Will it be in a desert? / Buried by a stranger's hand / Or shall I rest on the seashore / In the sand by the sea? //What does it matter? / God's sky will be around me, there as here,-/ And like funeral lamps hanging down / Night's stars will be over me./

But Heine the wanderer and cast-off has also become a stoic in his remaining years, resigned to his bitter fate and to the fact that in the end, the best he can hope for as a final resting place, will be the usual fare of all common men. And, in the manner of a seasoned veteran of life, that is reminiscent of Baudelaire's last lines of "Le Voyage," this poet too accepts the inevitable "qu-importe?" that the German term 'immerhin' furnishes, as long as God's sky will be turning around him, and the stars will be hanging down, like funeral lamps at night.

Chapter V - The End-of-the-Liners: Nikolaus Lenau, Thomas Hood, and Charles Baudelaire

With Heine we come to the end of the Romantic period in German, French, and English poetry, which in its larger revolutionary context, gives emphasis to the imagination and emotions that includes as well a strong predilection for melancholy. But for Romantic poetry this is no end, as such, but only a terminus that marks the point at which other and different modes and themes of poetry emerge, as a consequence of the poet's constant searchings after new and different ways to express his thoughts and feelings, affected as he is by the daily events and changes of his time.

Melancholy, as a literary device and theme, however, moves on in the poetry that follows, where it will once again flare up as an expression of bourgeois society in the nineteenth century after slackening off a bit during the last years of Romanticism. It is here in this later period that the excesses will once again be found, to rival its strongest period, the years literally from the 1760s on, leading up to Romanticism, when nature showed itself as a vital theme in the poetry of melancholy. Themes of melancholy in this latest period will once again concern themselves with the passage of time with which nineteenth century Europeans were obsessed. It is mainly from about 1830 to 1870, the period of Victorian literature and bourgeois Realism, and of Theodor Storm's (1817-1888) sense of the passing of time in the immediacy of the moment, that must willingly be accepted as part of human existence. Hugo is of this generation, which the poetry of his second period of productivity will show, as he moves away from Roman-

tic forms and values; Lamartine, too, indicates the same kind of distancing in two of his finest poems, "La Vigne et la Maison," and "Le Désert, ou l'immatérialité de Dieu," published in 1856. As for the English Romantics, all the poets of the second generation were gone by 1830; the only active member of the first generation - Coleridge had died in 1834 - was Wordsworth, and he was occupied mainly with revisions on his last great work, The Prelude, published in 1850, three months after his death.

Literature often finds its best examples in the culminations and exaggerations of literary movements seen in retrospect, after the main event, so to speak. What is really Romantic, especially for German Romanticism at least, is the culminating work that comes in the nineteenth century, when the best representative of Romantic melancholy poetry was written. In German literature, it is the poetry of Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850), a late Romantic and an excessively melancholy poet both in private life and in poetry. He is also the most melancholy of the three: Hood, Baudelaire, and Lenau, selected for what is termed here as poets on the fringe, or end-of-the-liners, who managed to get escape the immediate impact of Romanticism, but not its literary melancholy.

Lenau's poetry reflects a deeply disturbed and emotional personality that underscores an indefinable yearning, not so much for death as for escape to an all-embracing mother which protects and comforts us from the uncertainties of the world. In some respects Lenau's unhappy existence - he could never come to terms with the women he loved because of his devotion to poetry - mirrors that of fateful poet Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855). Both were searching for the irre-

trievable comfort of the lost mother in the image of woman that eventually led them to madness, which ended tragically in Nerval's suicide.

An example of Lenau's world of darkness and night is his poem, "Bitte" (1830-32) - "Plea" - written in the 'Volkeslied' strophe:

Weil' auf mir, du dunkles Auge,
Übe deine ganze Macht,
Ernste, milde, träumerische,
Unergründlich süsse Nacht!

Nimm mit deinem Zauberdunkel
Diese Welt von hinnen mir,
Dass du über meinem Leben
Einsam schwebest für und für.

/Rest on me, you dark eye, / Apply all your might, / Solemn, gentle, dreamy, / Unfathomably sweet night! // Take this world away from me / With your magic darkness, / That you alone hover over my life / For ever and ever./

At first the verse suggests itself as a poem of death, but there is nothing threatening or enigmatic here. Instead, the image of the 'dunkles Auge,' the dark eye, addressed by the poet as a personification of night, makes this more a traditional night poem than one of death. Novalis' poem "Hymnen an die Nacht" belongs to this literary tradition as does the poetry of the English poets of the 1740s - Parnell, Blair, and Young, and the more morbid elements of Gray's "Elegy" - that started off this trend of meditative verse, to culminate in the 'memento mori' and the graveyard school of poetry in the 1790s. But Lenau's "Bitte," as a plea for comfort, is something new in the way night is visualized. The association of night of the eighteenth-century genre of ghosts and screeching owls - "night's

foul bird" - is no longer here. What is new in Lenau's little poem is the Romantic view of night seen as the all-embracing mother and a return to the ultimate protective spirit of childhood, a surrogate home when getting away from 'Diese Welt' (6), the world of day, activity, and reality. In essence, however, it is traditional Romantic nostalgia in its simpler form, a wish to escape from the mystery of the present and find a refuge in the 'ünergrundliche, süsse Nacht' - unfathomably sweet night - where the world of day is rejected in favor of the powerful lure of night, that same magical night which had been the subject of Novalis' longings. An intriguing element in the poem is the poet's imaginative transformation of landscape and night that makes it his own. Here, night and nature are the 'Zauberdunkel,' the magic darkness with its 'dunkles Auge,' which have taken possession of him and where he longs to stay forever and ever.

Lenau's poem "Nebel" - "Mist" - presents an interesting comparison with "Bitte" - written in two quatrains of alternating four- and three-stress lines:

Du trüber Nebel, hüllest mir
Das Tal mit seinem Fluss,
Den Berg mit seinem Waldrevier
Und jeden Sonnengruss.

Nimm fort in deine graue Nacht
Die Erde weit und breit!
Nimm fort, was mich so traurig macht,
Auch die Vergangenheit!

/Gloomy mist, you conceal from me / The valley with its streams, / The mountain with its preserves / And every sunny greeting. / Take away your gray night / The whole world, far and wide! / Take away, what makes me so mournful, / Even the Past./

In "Nebel," the image of the fog or mist hovers over nature and the wide world like a dismal, gray covering or blanket, to suggest another variation of the all-embracing image that the darkness of night offers in "Bitte." But what was perfectly comforting to the poet in "Bitte," is no longer the case for the poet in "Nebel." In fact, it is just the reverse. In this poem the poet has made the fog the source of his complaint, which he claims is making him mournful, rather than finding in it the comfort and pleasure which the 'unergründlich süsse Nacht' of "Bitte," had offered him. There is more pretense than substance here, which is quickly resolved however, in the last line of the poem, where the poet finally identifies the real source of his pain: it is not the gray fog, 'die graue Nacht,' that makes him so mournful, but his own state of mind, brought on by memories and nostalgia of the Past - 'die Vergangenheit' - and the cause of his melancholy.

In "Bitte" and in "Nebel" there is nothing to disturb us or our emotions; both poems are generic, which is a common trait of German Romantic poetry; the expression 'Die Erde weit und breit' - the whole world, far and wide, for instance, is a typical feature of late German Romanticism, which represents the more extreme expression of being lost in the infinitude of nature, or time, or space. It is not the essence of infinitude that goes in search of something more beyond that point, as does Shelley in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," or of some comprehensive insight into the mystery that touches us all, as Coleridge and Hugo and Novalis had attempted to do.

A work that offers some relief from this poet's excessive concern, in poem after poem, with his melancholy, is "Herbstklage" - "Lament for Autumn" - that also is written in the 'Volkeslied' form. The first two stanzas read:

Holder Lenz, du bist dahin!
Nirgends, nirgends darfst du bleiben!
Wo ich sah dein frohes Blühn,
Braust des Herbstes banges Treiben.

Wie der Wind so traurig fuhr
Durch den Strauch, als ob er weine;
Sterbeseufzer der Natur
Schauern durch die welken Haine.

/Lovely Spring, your day is gone! / Nowhere, nowhere, can you stay! / Where I saw your merry blossoms, / The winds of Autumn rush angrily. // How the wind sighs so mournfully / Through the shrubs, as if it were weeping; / Its last dying breath to nature / Shuddering through the withered groves./

As is usual in Lenau's poetry nature is his reference point; in this poem however it creates for him the dilemmas of his darkening moods that bring on the melancholy theme in the work. A seemingly simple poem on first reading, "Herbstklage" involves itself not only in its treatment of the passing of time and the use of the old familiar theme of the 'ubi sunt' motif, for which Tennyson's memorable phrase, "O Death in Life, the days that are no more!" (Norton 114); it also treats of the 'memento mori' theme that underlies the message of the poem, serving as a reminder to the poet of his own death, suggested in the imagery of two stages of life, spring and autumn, that become the metaphors for youth and mortality. In the final two

stanzas the poet sets up a dialogue between himself and the anthropomorphized voice of the forest, seeking to find some credible answer to his thoughts:

Wieder ist, wie bald! wie bald!
Mir ein Jahr dahingeschwunden.
Fragend rauscht es aus dem Wald:
"Hat dein Herz sein Gluck gefunden?"

Waldesrauschen, wunderbar
Hast du mir das Herz getroffen!
Treulich bringt ein jedes Jahr
Welkes Laub und welkes Hoffen.

/Is it again, so soon! so soon! / A year for me has flown away. / Questions reach me from out the noisy forest: / "Has your heart found its happiness?" //Rustling forests, wondrously magic / Have you encountered my heart! Faithfully bringing it every year / The withered leaves and withered hopes./

On the one hand, the favorite method of the complaint of life theme that is obviously at work here, is to enlarge on the woes of life for public exhibition. On the other hand, the underlying lethargy that has crept into the poem contains a warning of the continuing impasse to be expected in the future. The poem, in short, borders on despair and a rejection of life that presages nil and pessimism.

Despite the fact that Lenau's poetry sometimes reflects the sentimental feelings of the late eighteenth-century poets, it represents the achievement of a late Romantic melancholy poetry that continued to express the object out there as a mirror of the poet's feelings. In every way, Lenau was an active Romantic, using its methods and techniques, by subjectifying the object with a special animated emotion that, in its more formal sense, is anthropomorphic that we see

for instance in the personification of the forest in the above poem. The movement then is from the internal to the external, from internal reality to the external merging of the extra-poetic reality of the poet's vision, that unifies the literal and the metaphorical, in his treatment of Romantic melancholy.

More than any poet so far, Thomas Hood (1799-1845) was to devote the power of his pen in behalf of the poor and unfortunate by bringing attention to their conditions that, by the early 1840s, had become a social disease deeply disturbing to English society (Brander 43). England's Industrial Revolution had come of age! and the reason why Hood's work can justly be said to have been more important to his own time, and to the 'Zeitgeist' of his own generation, than it could have been to any future period. But that was also his greatness as a poet, preserved for posterity in his comic-moral verse, and especially in his last public poems, which allowed him to find his own voice and, at the same time, to get out from under the spell of Romanticism.

When we look at the dates that bounded Hood's short life - and the even shorter period, from 1815 to 1845, left to him to fully develop his many talents as poet and prose writer - we realize what a huge task he had, trying to span the bridge linking him to each of the three distinct literary periods of his time - the neoclassic, the Romantic, and his own, the Victorian age. Thomas Hood was only four years younger than John Keats, and it is this proximity to the younger Romantics - he knew Lamb, and De Quincey, and Hazlitt at various times in his life, and his wife, Jane, was the sister of John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats' friend (Clubbe 1, 6) that is strongly reflected in depth of feeling throughout all his poetry. It extends even to

the best of his public poems, "The Bridge of Sighs," written a year before his death, in which the predicament of an unfortunate victim driven to suicide - is detailed in romantic sentiment that does not hide an inherent melancholy. The first two stanzas read (Clubbe 317, 1-8):

One more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!

We return, however, to Hood's early poems that with few exceptions fall into the type of writing recognized as Romantic poetry - and the reason for his inclusion here as a Romantic on the fringe. They are mainly the poems he wrote from about 1815 to 1825, which represent his early attempts at writing lyric verse in the manner of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, and consist of odes, sonnets, narrative verse, shorter and longer poems, in varying stanzaic structures, modelled after their work. At the same time, he was perfecting his craft that was later to bear fruit in the versatility he displayed in line and form and that was to become more obvious in the poetry after 1830. Hood was very much a poet of his time, which required a faster-paced poetry of shorter lines and varying meters to accommodate his poems of social protest. He rarely returned to the more lumbering line of the iambic pentameter, and preferred instead the octosyllabics or the ballad stanza in alternate four- and three-stress iambic lines that we see, for instance, in the ballad form of "The Bridge of Sighs" cited above. For the most part, Hood's borrowings were never exploited as such, but a show of his extreme admiration for the Romantic poets, whose turn of phrase or beauty of line he found too delicious to be left in their

original place. Nevertheless, the general consensus of critics, then and now, has not changed in their overall opinion of his first volume of collected "Romantic" verse, The Plea of the Midnight Fairies, published in 1827; they continue to consider the volume as nothing more than imitative and, therefore, very minor poetry. But they are quick to add that his "genuine" poetry would be forthcoming in his later poems (Clubbe 8; Brander 16).

Of these first poems, our interest is with two of them, the "Ode to Melancholy," and "Ode: Autumn," first published in 1823, which writers have been tempted to compare with Keats' two odes, similarly titled, because os what they consider Hood's indebtedness. The "Ode to Melancholy," except for a few references to Keats' work (Clubbe 336), is more indebted to Milton's "Il Penseroso" than to any other poem. Moreover, Keats' sadness in his "Ode to Melancholy" (1819) arises from the awareness of the paradoxes that lie at the very heart of existence, the joys of life mixed in with the knowledge of inevitable death. Hood's feelings on the other hand are more confined to his already growing awareness of the miserable conditions of the poor, when he speaks of "The World (that) has many cruel points, / Whereby our bosoms have been torn, . . . In sadness to outlast the morn. . ." He is altruistically thinking whereas Keats is mindful of his own unhappy self. Both odes are in fact indebted to the neoclassic Miltonic tradition of writing odes that retain some of the effects of that mode; both contain allusions to "Proserpine," "yew-berries," mournful Psyche," to which the Hood poem has added "pensive shades," "gloomy nooks," and "winding sheets," and the like, all in keeping with the general mood of each ode. Furthermore, Hood

has retained the tripping octosyllabics of Milton's poem, written in stanzas of varying lengths, and not in the iambic pentameter, ten-line stanza of Keats' poem. When the poet in Hood's poem bids us

Come, let us set our careful breasts,
Like Philomel, against the thorn,
To aggravate the inward grief,
That makes her accents so forlorn;

he is not inviting us to participate in his own personal grief, but in the "inward grief" of the nightingale because of its recognition that

The world has many cruel points,
Whereby our bosoms have been torn, . . .
In sadness to outlast the morn, . . .
With all the piteous tales that tears
Have water'd since the world was born.

If anything, Hood's poem comes closer to the mood and sentiment of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale," than to any other, as he enlarges on this thought:

The world!--it is a wilderness,
Where tears are hung on every tree;
For thus my gloomy phantasy
Makes all things weep with me!

The poet has set firmly into his poem another tone and language that is neither derivative nor imitative, but speaks of his own world and his growing pessimism. His vision of that world is as a hostile "wilderness" where death is the final victor. The expression of "my gloomy phantasy" is a forced pathetic fallacy that helps fit the major portions of the poem within the recognized boundaries of an ode on

melancholy.

The poet sums up his "Ode to Melancholy" with a morbid philosophizing on the world and the human condition that expresses one of the saddest elements in Romantic melancholy, the notion that

> All things are touch'd with Melancholy,
> Born of the secret soul's mistrust,
> To feel her fair ethereal wings
> Weigh'd down with vile degraded dust;
> Even the bright extremes of joy
> Bring on conclusions of disgust,
> Like the sweet blossoms of the May. . .

Then, in a sudden, paradoxical twist strongly suggestive of "Il Penseroso," the poet closes his poem with a call to render melancholy "her tribute just," releasing, at the same time, the tension that has been building up throughout the poem and ending on an upward not altogether pessimistic note:

> O give her then, her tribute just,
> Her sighs and tears, and musings holy!
> There is no music in the life
> That sounds with idiot laughter solely;
> There's not a string attun'd to mirth,
> But has its chord in Melancholy.
>
> (Clubbe 49-52).

Hood's poem "Ode: Autumn" (1823) was first published in the London Magazine during the two-year period (July 1821 to June '23) he was employed there contributing to the magazine, as more than just a "sort of sub-editor" (Clubbe 5-6). It also belongs to that early per-

iod when, as a transition poet, he was still deeply involved in the works of the Romantics and honing his skills in the style of Keats. His "Autumn" ode is therefore deeply indebted to Keats' ode "To Autumn" (1819), a subject that has attracted many a critic, and is rather fully documented by this time.

The most telling part of Hood's poem that indicates its indebtedness to Keats' ode is the language he uses in stanza 4, that suggests some of the characteristics Keats has attributed to autumn's sense of calm and fullness:

> And honey bees have stor'd
> The sweets of Summer in their luscious cells;
> The swallows all have wing'd across the main;
> But here the Autumn melancholy dwells,
> And sighs her tearful spells
> Amongst the sunless shadows of the plain.
> Alone, alone,
> Upon a mossy stone
> She sits and reckons up the dead and gone
> With the last leaves for a love-rosary. . .

The "mossy stone" reference here in Hood's poem is taken from line 5 of Wordsworth's poem "She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways," which reads: "A violet by a mossy stone." Also, Hood's reference to a "rosary" in line 42, is to be compared with Keats' line 5, in the "Ode to Melancholy": "Make not your rosary of yew-berries. . ." In addition, Keats' image of Autumn "sitting careless on a granary floor. . . / Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep" (14, 16), is in this section of Hood's poem as well; this time, however, she shares her seat with

Dürer's image of "Melencolia I," as she sits, reckoning up "the dead and gone / With the last leaves for a love-rosary" (41-42). In the final stanza, Hood bids us "go and sit with her, and be o'ershaded / Under the languid downfal of her hair; / She wears a coronal of flowers faded / Upon her forehead, and a face of care;--" (48-51). Belatedly, we have found a reference to Dürer's melancholy figure in Hood's "Ode to Melancholy," that slipped our notice, in lines 109-112 of the poem, beginning: "All things are touch'd with Melancholy. . ." (cited above page 177). The "secret soul's mistrust," of which she was born, is perhaps a reference to Milton's "stain of parentage," in "Il Penseroso" (26), and the "fair etherral wings / Weigh'd down with vile degraded dust," are hers as well, along with "the languid downfal of her hair. . . / . . . and a face of care" (cited above, page 177, from Hood's poem "Ode: Autumn") that is corroborated in the Durer engraving.

In the final lines of "Ode: Autumn," Hood returns once again to thoughts of sympathy for the poor that recall the beginning of his "Ode to Melancholy," lines 5 and 6: "The world has many cruel points / Whereby our bosoms have been torn. . ." In "Autumn," however, the tone has sharpened into an irritant plea or cry that takes on an urgency, placed there by the repetitious use of the word "enough" to end all sadness and suffering. At the same time, it would also free the soul from melancholy's "cloudy prison," a reference, appropriately, to Keats' last two lines (29-30), in his "Ode to Melancholy": "His soul shall taste the sadness of her might, / And be among her cloudy trophies hung." The concluding lines to which we refer in "Ode: Autumn" read (Clubbe, 58-62):

There is enough of sorrowing, and quite
Enough of bitter fruits the earth doth bear, --
Enough of chilly droppings for her bowl;
Enough of fear and shadowy despair,
To frame her cloudy prison for her soul.

We see then that even as he was writing his "romantic" poetry in the Keatsian vein, Hood was looking toward other horizons closer to his own time and generation. After 1830, circumstances forced him to resolve the conflict between what might be called the "aesthetic" and the "social" spheres of his temperament. A romantic at heart to the end, Hood found success in the more direct, human expressions of sentiment and situations, which aroused in him greater compassion than just abstract causes (Clubbe 29). In particular, it is his poems of social protest that critics today agree remain his best and most notable works: "The Song of the Shirt," "The Bridge of Sighs," "The Lay of the Labourer," and others.

With Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), the third and last representative of a melancholy poet functioning on the fringe of Romanticism, we are brought to the questions: Where is French Romantic poetry at this time? and How much of it is not already there in Baudelaire that is not already explicit or implied in other Romantic writers? (Brereton 153). The divergent paths that Romantic poetry was supposed to have taken - after the 1840s and 50s - to warrant a break with Romanticism in reaction against the aesthetics and works of the Romantic poets - as the Parnassians and the appearance of their Preface-Manifesto of 1852 had done (Peyre, What Is Romanticism? 158) - did not

materialize into other literary schools, until the Symbolists at the end of the century. Yet even they cannot be said to have broken with Romanticism, but merely to have introduced new techniques in approaching themes and modes of expression in poetry. In fact, the basic principles of French Romanticism, along with 'la mélancolie,' never quite ceased to exist in the spirit and psyche of the poets, but remained intact - in one form or another - to the end of the century - from Musset to Baudelaire, to Laforgue, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, and even to Valéry, who was strongly influenced by the Symbolists, especially Mallarmé.

As for melancholy per se, what had begun at the beginning of the century with Chateaubriand's 'mal,' had continued to worsen from decade to decade, deepening its moods into nihilism, ennui, and despair, as the changing climates of industry and science, political upheavals and social unrest, continued to play havoc with a society already suffering from the wounds left over from 1793 and 1814. And if Romanticism changed at all it changed its shades of melancholy from darkest gray to deepest black which we see in Baudelaire's "Spleen" poems and the poems of his Les Fleurs du mal (1857), in his emphasis on 'Spleen' and 'Idéal,' evil and good, and his willingness to go to the brink of his abyss - 'le gouffre' - to be redeemed from that despair and ennui of the unbearable inertia from which he suffered.

Of Baudelaire's four "Spleen" poems that are grouped together in the section of Les Fleurs du mal, entitled "Spleen et Idéal," it is the last one which comes closest to describing the state of mind that he variantly identified as 'ennui,' 'spleen,' or 'dégoût.' It is also the one quintessential poem that has been indirectly re-

ferred to throughout this study as a prototype representing the blackest shade in our spectrum of melancholy - from white to gray to black - played out this time not in the poet's 'krankes Herz,' but in the madness of the poet's mind.

The poem itself is another crisis poem and as such attempts to come to grips with the hideous forms that haunt the poet's brain with morbid imaginings. It is constructed in five stanzas of four alexandrines each, in an alternating rhyme scheme of a b a b, dominated by one motif or image, described as a weight pressing down, relentlessly, on the poet's 'crâne' or skull. The poem conveniently divides itself into two parts: stanzas 1, 2, and 3, fall into the first part, distinguished by an anaphora of 'Quand' at the beginning of each of the stanzas, that ties them together. As an ensemble, it may be said that they develop what might be described as the ennui without hope which forms for Baudelaire the fundamental experience of existence. The first three stanzas read (Oeuvres complètes I, 74-75):

(1) Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle
Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennuis,
Et que de l'horizon embrassant tout le cercle
Il nous verse un jour noir plus triste que les nuits;

(2) Quand la terre est changée en un cachot humide,
Où l'Espérance, comme une chauve-souris,
S'en va battant les murs de son aile timide
Et se cognant la tête à des plafonds pourris;

(3) Quand la pluie étalant ses immenses traînées
D'une vaste prison imite les barreaux,

Et qu'un peuple muet d'infâmes araignées

Vient tendre ses filet au fond de nos cerveaux,

[When the low and heavy sky weighs down like a lid, / On the groaning spirit, a prey of long ennuis, / And when embracing the whole horizon / It pours on us a black day gloomier than the nights; // When the earth is changed into a humid dungeon, / Where Hope, like a bat, / Beating its timid wing against the walls / And knocking its head against the rotted beams; // When the rain spreading its endless shafts / Imitates the bars of a vast prison, / While a silent horde of loathsome spiders / Comes to attach their webs in the depths of our brain,]

The main image in the poem so far is not so much in any one object, as it is in the verb 'pèse,' weighs down , in this case, and the feeling that is produced and then transferred to images, such as 'couvercle,' at the end of line one, which the poet uses as a metaphor to impress the feeling. From here, the metaphor is skillfully maintained, line by line and stanza by stanza, held together by each repetition of the word 'Quand' at the beginning of the three stanzas which in this part of the poem sets up the first of the two postulates.

The sensation of pressure evoked by the 'couvercle' in the first stanza, is carried down vertically to the second stanza, in the word 'terre,' and then to the third stanza, to rest temporarily in the word 'pluie.' In the interim, the poet encounters the dreadful images that suggest humid dungeons, flying bats, and crawling, repulsive spiders, all serving to describe in the most graphic terms, what is going on in the theater of his mind.

There is also a hint in line four, above: '. . .un jour noir plus triste que les nuits' of Nerval's 'soleil noir,' from "El Desdichado," published in 1854; indirectly, it also points to Dürer's "Melencolia I," which, among other works of his, was enjoying a notable revival in poems and articles on art at this time. It is more likely, however, that Baudelaire received his influence from Nerval's translation of Heine's

poem, "Die Nordsee" (1826), that appeared in the Revue des Deux Mondes, 15 June 1848, where the image of a "black sun" in the poem, was first introduced into French literary circles (Patty, Symposium 245, 255 n.18).

The results of the first causes, in part one, now make up, in part two, the concluding arguments or statement furnished in stanzas 4 and 5 (Oeuvres complètes I, 75):

(4) Des cloches tout à coup sautent avec furie
Et lancent vers le ciel un affreux hurlement,
Ainsi que des esprits errants et sans patrie
Qui se mettent à geindre opiniâtrement.

(5) -- Et de longs corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,
Défilent lentement dans mon âme; l'Espoir,
Vaincu, pleure, et l'Angoisse atroce, despotique,
Sur mon crâne incliné plante son drapeau noir.

/Bells suddenly leap out with fury / And hurl a terrifying howl toward the sky, / Like wandering spirits without a country / Who stubbornly start to wail. // --And long hearses, without drums or music, / Slowly file through my soul; Hope, / Vanquished, weeps, and atrocious, despotic Anguish, / Plants its black pall on my bowed skull./

The vertical movement of the 'ciel' in stanza 1, descending to 'terre' and then to 'pluie,' finally comes to rest 'sur mon crane,' in the last verse of the poem. In stanzas 4 and 5, 'cloches' and 'corbillards' usurp the scene, the one sounding like the howls of mad dogs, and the other depicting imaginary scenes of endless funeral processions that 'Défilent lentement,' filing off slowly in a column, in the poet's head, 'sans tambours ni musique.' These, like the bats and spiders before, now occupy the poet's skull, where Hope, personified, is described as vanquished and weeping, and fierce, despotic Anguish, triumphantly plants the banner of death on its bowed head, where the

emblem of death will be proclaimed the final bitter victor.

The forcefulness and power of the poem may be accounted for in the slow, almost relenting tension that is built up in the poem produced by language and imagery. Also changed is the emphasis placed on outside objects and the exterior world from which the poet of Romantic melancholy had derived his material. These have now been transformed into the most hideous kinds of imagery which the poet has appropriated as the vision and imagination of his interior world. Also, the themes of ennui and the disease of the head are far more intensely drawn out than we have seen so far. Here, they have increased to the point where existence hardly seems possible and the stark, grim future holds out nothing except a kind of living hell. What is apparent from the poem, however, and from every piece of work, prose or poetry that Baudelaire produced, is its complete sincerity and total commitment to the feelings of the poet.

Baudelaire's "Le Voyage," a poem of thirty-six, 4-line stanzas, did not appear until 1859, too late for the 1857 edition of Les Fleurs du mal, but in time for the second edition in 1861. It was then added to the five other end poems in the section entitled "Mort," where it retains its place, not only as the last poem but as the longest in Les Fleurs du mal. As such, it holds a unique place, sustaining in its 144 lines, the equivalent of a microcosm of the poems in Les Fleurs du mal, where its concentration on Death summed up in a voyage, or journey of an individual ship, is likened to the journey of an individual seen through images of childhood, the sea and the ship, music, memory, dangerous enchantments, or the maternal consolations of a woman, ennui that tries to conquer curiosity but fails, the exe-

cutioner and the martyr, escape or flight, Infinity, time, and finally, Death. All these images come together to give this poem, and to all poetry that deals with these complexities, a majesty and sublimity that is at the same time most fragile and most precious. In essence, it is a metaphorical journey and farewell to life, a going out or departure, and a coming home, that is summed up in the last two stanzas of the poem (Oeuvres complètes I, 134, 137-144):

Ô Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre!
Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons!
Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre,
Nos coeurs que tu connais sont remplis de rayons!

Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous réconforte!
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!

/O Death, old captain, it is time! let us raise anchor! / This country bores us, O Death! Let us set sail! Though the sky and the sea are black as ink, / Our hearts which you know are filled with rays! // Pour us your poison so that it comforts us! / This fire burns our brains so that we want, / To plung to the bottom of the abyss, Hell or Heaven, what does it matter? / To the bottom of the Unknown to find the new!/

More than merely a summing up of the poem, "Le Voyage," these two last stanzas come at the end of a great period of creative productivity that, for the time it lasted, represented a triumph of the 'Idéal' over the 'Spleen,' the two dialectical aspects of Baudelaire's vision of life where he saw himself - and mankind on a larger scale - as a victim struggling with the forces of good and evil: the 'Idéal,' and the desire to free his creative spirit from the center of his prison, and the 'Spleen,' that represents his inability to

move out of his despair and inertia, his blackest melancholy. In this sense "Le Voyage" is also an image of the 'Idéal,' seen in the imagery of a sea-voyage, which Baudelaire used to demonstrate the passage of a ship moving out over the waters, unencumbered by fetters or anchors, and free to escape the dreaded horrors of the 'Spleen.'

At the same time, however, the personification of Death as the captain of a ship, and the urgency of the ship's impatient cry: It is time! . . . Let us set sail! is not to be overlooked. Obscure as it may seem, it becomes clearer once we realize that we are now in the years fast approaching the poet's end, and the reason no doubt for his obsessive attention to the subject of death in many of his last poems. But there is in all this sea of blackness, a ray of hope that continues to shine through, in the poet's recognition that even with the dreaded 'ennui' and the fire in the brain, soothed only opiates or alcohol, something new can be retrieved out of the dull and familiar in life, to reinvigorate the poet's vision of life and, at the same time, refresh the heart of man in all its fathomless innocence and terror.

But it is to the very last stanza of the poem that our attention is drawn, and the message it conveys that once again embodies the poet's need to refurbish the imagination by looking for something new, 'nouveau' from which the poet would then be able to draw new inspirations. We will be closer to the intent of the poet when we recognize that this process is best described as a quality of naïveté, or spontaneity, or as Baudelaire himself identified it, a "childhood rediscovered at will" (Peyre, Romanticism 156), which creative persons resort to when seeking new inspiration. It is the same naïveté that

Verlaine was to find after Baudelaire, and the artists Picasso, Miró, and Calder were to discover in their time: the play of the imagination on the familiar which allows the artist to see things with the naïveté and freshness of a child - an insight, no doubt, gained by Baudelaire from the years he spent as an art critic. It is in this sense that we understand the meaning of the word 'nouveau,' and not ostensibly as a reference to death, although that too plays its part as the overseeing image in the poem. But the reference here is with the living and not the dead, and one that tells the artist, the poet, the writer, not only to look anew but to plunge into the very depths of his own being, Hell or Heaven, what matter? in order to find the new inspirations necessary for creation.

Conclusion

We have seen with respect to this study of melancholy poetry how the presence of a dominant and recurrent literary theme and mood, shaped out of the attitudes and conventions of one period, was able to furnish the poetry of the next with a different kind of melancholy presence, darker and gloomier in feeling, to accommodate the growing despair reflected in the changing spirit of the time. We have also seen how with the aid of hindsight and some literary history - that occasionally lend insight and order to facts and time - a unity of purpose developed in all three literatures considered here, which resulted in a changed perception of the terms imagination, feeling, and vision, discerned in the way objects and scenes "out there" were transformed to an inward manifestation described in a "new" more intensified language that poets gave to aspects of reality.

For the most part, the information contained in this study has followed prescribed statements of fact and the opinions of certain critical writers that time and interest in the subject have accrued. To that extent, I have made no new or startling conclusions of my own; but neither have I made this study merely a repeat of those facts and opinions. Rather, it would be fairer to say that there is some material in the study that may justly be called new; and a number of points suggested in other studies that have been more fully developed, to include investigation in all three literatures, not merely in one, guided by the focus and goal of the inquiry outlined in the first pages of the Introduction. To the extent that this has

been successfully achieved, to that same extent can we say that the matter presented here is the result of first-hand study.

Insofar as finding something new to add to the tradition of melancholy poetry, we can say that the literary phenomenon of melancholy poetry did not exist equally in each of the literatures. What has been obvious is the fact that neither the French nor the Germans can compare with the stream of tradition generally which characterizes the history of English poetry, and in particular with that of melancholy poetry where a preference for the malady was already inherent in the national temperament. The more immediate influence of the theme in mid-eighteenth century poetry was Milton's "Il Penseroso," later implemented by Thomson's Seasons and the poetry of lesser poets.

We have also seen that though German Romantic poetry is not on the whole especially melancholy, it did not prevent their poets from doing with melancholy and the folk song what no other nation could do once they found a way to domesticate the theme and give it a quality of their own, thereby enabling them to transform it in ways suitable to their imagination and personal temperament. In France, too, where there was no recognized tradition of melancholy in poetry before 1820, and therefore little preference was given to the theme, except for a handful of nature poets, and in particular, the 'créole' poet, Évariste de Parny, whose affinity to nature and melancholy was later to influence the poetry of Lamartine, and through him, Musset. But the dismal state of French poetry generally during almost the whole of the eighteenth century did not prevent a poet like Lamartine, a few years later, from bringing together imagination, language, and

passion into his work that would give his poetry the emotional quality to identify it as Romantic. If as we say elsewhere in the study, literary melancholy looks different from each side of the spectrum, one fact is apparent: whatever differences there may have existed among the English, French, and Germans in the development of this literary mode in the context of Romanticism, they were basically the same in their perception of it, where poets merged the mystical with the visual as a parallel process that enabled them to withdraw from their soul-weary world of reality to achieve that "inwardness" of purpose which poets like Novalis, Hugo, and Keats sought and expressed in their work.

Bibliography

This bibliography lists anthologies, books, articles cited in the text together with a select number of works used but not cited. The whole is divided into four categories: Section I is arranged in two parts, (a) Anthologies, and (b) General; Sections II, III, and IV list works cited or used according to one of the three national literatures treated in the study. Texts within each category are compiled alphabetically, according to author, editor(s), or title of the work.

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N. B. All translations are my own except where otherwise indicated.