

Melancholy Minds and Painful Bodies: Genealogy, Geography, Pathogeny

University of Liverpool, 9-11 July 2013

Strange Contraries in thee combine,
Both *hell* and *Heaven* in thee meet,
Thou greatest bitter, greatest sweet
No *pain* is like thy pain, no *pleasure* too like *thine*.
John Norris, 1687

One of the major developments in the study of melancholia over the last thirty years has been the rise to aesthetic and cultural prominence of varieties of negative emotions proposed and discussed as melancholy, including different conceptions, analyses, and portrayals from grief to insanity. Most recently, Lars von Trier's film *Melancholia* (2011) happens to be the melodramatic adaptation of the concept fuelled by cinematic symbols. Correspondingly, often observed as 'a central European discourse', melancholia has resurfaced to embody complementary or paradoxical notions not merely in the literary analysis of texts and contexts, but it has also emerged to retrieve its historical categorization. The cultural and social history of emotions entwined with modern medical and psychiatric lexicalization has opened new pathways to provide relative definitions of melancholia. However, theories about the choice of analogies for melancholy, whether aesthetic, cinematic, religious, or medical, somehow fail to distinguish the connections between contrary factors involved in melancholia.

It is also noteworthy that theories of characterization, no matter of what kind, tend to reformulate and evaluate contrary factors for the sake of preserving 'superiority' according to prevalent taste at each moment in time. In Britain, for example, individual and collective melancholia has been appreciated as a sign of genius and national pride at one time and announced as a national malady at another. Analogous is the contemporary history of behavioural rather than cognitive attributes to grief, e.g. tearfulness. Pain, in comparison, is bodily and often mental distress which in the past was closely perceived in relation to melancholia, but today research on pain is divorced from depression let alone *melancholy*. Thus, we miss the 'melancholy-pain bridge' in contemporary scholarship of mental and physical suffering. On the other hand, while pain is seen through the lens of universality, with management models stretching from Chinese medicine to Latin America, melancholia has rarely been investigated beyond the Western borders with regard to its genealogy, pathology, pathogeny, and management. Whether this geographical focus is a matter of re-establishing pre-eminence or in want of psycholinguistic reference, thereby centred on a gap in universal scientific communication, it invites intriguing and challenging enquiries.

We welcome contributions from different fields in humanities, social and life sciences in the following categories and other relevant areas:

- Diversity in the geography of melancholia and pain
- The relationship between Western theories of emotions and Oriental conceptions
- The European hypothesis of melancholia-pain in non-European cultures
- Orientalism, grief, and abstinence
- Emotionality as negativity
- Gender attributes and tearfulness
- Art history, muscle tension, and the painful posture
- Interpretation, assumption, semantic relation
- Fear, Pain, and melancholy dominance
- Depression and pain
- Paranoia, melancholia, and pain
- Misconceptions; cyclothymia and bipolar disorder
- Melancholy appropriation, ethnicity, multicultural perspectives
- Cosmology and elegiac pain management
- Cinematic symbols
- Literary emotionality, fictive superiority
- Embodied cognition
- Anaesthetics, the relationship between medical management and other models
- Lyric manifestation of melancholy and pain

Submission:

Abstracts and panel proposals of up to 300 words per 20-minute papers are welcome plus a short biographical note. If you wish to attend without presenting a paper, please email the organisers with your CV and a statement as to how your research relates to the conference. Postgraduate students can apply for **Dr Wasfia Mhabak Memorial Grant** by sending your abstract, 1000-word research statement, and CV to the conference board.

A selection of papers expanded and edited after the conference will be considered for publication in the *International Journal of Literature and Psychology* (issues 2014). Further particulars: <http://paranoiapain.liv.ac.uk>

Submission Deadline: 1 March 2013
Email your proposal to: painpara@liv.ac.uk