

CALL FOR PAPERS: 'Melancholy'. DEADLINE: 26 JUNE 2011

Contributions are now invited for the 2011 issue of the MHRA Working Papers in the Humanities, an international, refereed online journal aimed at postgraduate and early-career researchers.

*Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux,
Riche, mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant très vieux*

(Charles Baudelaire)

Baudelaire here captures what might be called the melancholic mood, expressing the almost indefinable in his description of a mind both deeply troubled and yet apparently without tangible grounds for despair. After Baudelaire, the notion of a state of mind remains prevalent in discourses of melancholy today. This mental state has been presented both as transitory but recurring, and as a permanent disposition. The concept of melancholy has, however, been shaped by a variety of discourses, emerging first and foremost among the ancients as the subject of scientific and medical investigation. In the arenas of both science and literature, the melancholy mind has historically been linked to the body, with certain deviant physical features apparently betraying a troubled psyche. The traditionally perfect body of the classical hero, can, however, belie a melancholic state. Discursive scientific reasoning in the 4th century BC began to produce rational explanations for this phenomenon which existed alongside the mythological, as the madness allegedly inflicted on heroic figures by jealous or insulted gods also began to be interpreted as signs of pathological melancholy. Moreover, the scientific endeavours which connected melancholy to extremes of mood and temperament led to the recognition of this affliction in the ecstasy of poets and philosophers; an idea which has endured from Plato to the Romantics and beyond. A shift from science to aesthetics might therefore be read in the reception of melancholy, though the question of whether science has really abandoned melancholy or simply rebranded it (as, for example, depression) remains an open one. If melancholy by a different name is still the subject of scientific investigation, then we might be given to wonder how the aesthetic treatment of melancholy relates to aesthetic treatments of mental illness which prefer to describe the subjects which they represent using this revised scientific terminology.

We seek to publish articles engaging with a variety of aspects of this theme, considering melancholy in its range of guises as disease, temperament and inspiration; its literary and social reception; and its aesthetic construction. The following should be viewed as suggestions rather than limitations:

- melancholy as disease / as disposition
- melancholy as an affliction of heroes
- melancholy and artistic creation
- the melancholy body

- poetic / lyrical melancholy
- the natural melancholic as 'other'
- melancholy and gender
- loss and trauma; *Mourning and Melancholia*
- melancholy landscapes, lights, and moods
- the construction of melancholy

Papers, of up to 3,000 words in length, may come from any field in the 'modern humanities', which include the modern and medieval languages, literatures, and cultures of Europe (including English and the Slavonic languages, and the cultures of the European diaspora). History, library studies, education and pedagogy, and the medical application of linguistics are excluded.

In order to submit a paper, you are kindly requested to register as an author at <http://mhra.org.uk/ojs/index.php/wph/user/register>. Any informal queries can be directed to the editors at postgrads@mhra.org.uk.