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# "That delicious melancholy which no person […] would resign for the gayest pleasure": A Study of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic Melancholy in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*

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## Abstract

Melancholy or melancholia is a condition that has always attracted the attention of several experts belonging to different fields of knowledge over the centuries. Initially limited to the domain of medicine, the issue of melancholy acquired more and more relevance in the fields of art and literature. By the end of the eighteenth century, melancholy was a central theme in English literature, which inspired both poets and novelists. In line with the most important studies on that theme, this thesis focuses on Anne Radcliffe's representation of melancholic affliction in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian.* In particular, after delivering a brief introduction on the history of melancholy concerning both the medical and cultural knowledge, this work demonstrates that Radcliffe not only was fully aware of the past legacy of atrabiliar affliction, but that she also actively exploited it in order to deliver an accurate characterization of her protagonists. Characters such as Emily St. Aubert, Ellena di Rosalba, Vincentio di Vivaldi, and Father Schedoni exhibit clear symptoms of *humor melancholicus,* which can be traced back both to personal inclinations and circumstances. Indeed, landscape can exalt tender feelings of despondency, while gloomy settings such as Catholic places of worship or imposing castles provoke negative reactions such as terror and hallucinations. This thesis will explore the importance of melancholy in Ann Radcliffe's novels by exhibiting the strengths and weaknesses of that much desired, though dreaded, condition.

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# Introduction

MELANCHO'LY. n.s.

[melancolie, Fr. from μέλανς and χολη.] 1. A disease, supposed to proceed from a redundance of black bile; but it is better known to arise from too heavy and too viscid blood: its cure is in evacuation, nervous medicines, and powerful stimuli.

2. A kindness of madness, in which the mind is always fixed on one object.

3. A gloomy, pensive, discontented temper[1].

Despite the pursuit of happiness occupied a special place among the writings of the most important eighteenth-century English thinkers and writers, the issue of melancholy rose to such a level of prominence that it was dubbed as the "English Malady" by the end of the first half of the century. In his dictionary entry concerning this matter, Samuel Johnson underlined the three different forms that this aliment could take. In the first instance, melancholy is presented as a disease attributed to an excess of black bile, which causes a series of symptoms such as insomnia, general weakness, and a state of utter sadness. In the second place, melancholy took the form of a mental illness similar to madness, in which the subject is tormented by fixed ideas, groundless terrors, and also hallucinations. Thirdly, melancholy could be identified as a pensive mood, tinged with a pleasing sadness, that expands the mind and the soul of the subject. This threefold definition denotes a centuries-long tradition of medical and cultural studies on melancholy that caught the interest of several eighteenth-century artists and writers. That progressive ennoblement of melancholy, paired with a morbid interest in sorrowful feelings, prompted writers to focus their works of fiction on this theme. This topic was partially employed by Horace Walpole, the initiator of the gothic novel, but it is with Ann Radcliffe that its full potential was exploited. Indeed, it may be observed that Mrs Radcliffe's novels are completely permeated by a sense of sadness attributable to melancholy. In other words, melancholy constitutes the very structure of Radcliffe's fiction, since it enables the author to deliver a poetic analysis of that desired, though dreaded, condition. This thesis will focus on the portrayal of melancholy in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*, by means of discussing the different causes, symptoms, and remedies presented in those two novels.

[1] Samuel Johnson, definition of "Melancholy" from *Johnson's Dictionary Online* <https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/views/search.php?term=melancholy > [accessed 28 September 2022]

By reading a series of scholarly works that studied the melancholic matter in detail, the importance that the theme held in Radcliffe's fiction appeared evident to me. First of all, I based my analysis on fundamental studies on melancholy such as Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl's *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art,* a seminal study exploring the concept of melancholy in medicine, philosophy, and the arts, from Ancient Greece to Italian Renaissance. The three scholars made an incredible journey through the different ages of melancholy, underlining strengths and weaknesses of this condition, respectively artistic genius and madness. They focused on the conception of melancholy as a temperament, commenting on centuries of pathological studies, philosophy, and astrology. Indeed, they demonstrated that those souls afflicted by dark thoughts, accompanied by an unsociable personality, are not simply victims of a disease, but like this by constitution.

Another prominent source on melancholy is constituted by Jean Starobinski's academic studies, *Histoire du Traitement de la Mélancolie, des Origines à 1900* and *L'Encre de la Mélancolie*. The first study extensively covers the development of melancholy, from its origins to the modern days, and dedicates each chapter to the main theoreticians of *humor melancholicus.* On the other hand, *L'Encre de la Mélancolie* focuses on melancholy in literature and dedicates a whole chapter to Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Starobinski delivered one of the most comprehensive studies on melancholy, which started from its very origins as a pathologic disease, treated with toxic substances, and then treated its evolution as a malady of the soul, which can be treated with music, good company and art.

In addition to the studies that focused only on the history of melancholy, Bridget Gellert Lyons and Lawrence Babb's works were fundamental to provide some context concerning the atrabiliar disorder in Early Modern England. In *Voices of Melancholy: Literary Treatments of Melancholy in Renaissance England*, Gellert Lyons focused on the analysis of literary malcontents in Elizabethan theatre and on Burton's *Anatomy.* On the other hand, Lawrence Babb provided additional depths to the Elizabethan tradition of melancholy, yet proceeded with an analysis of John Milton's poems concerning the pleasing experiences of sadness. However, the work that provided me with the most comprehensive context for melancholy in eighteenth-century England was *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century* edited by Clark Lawlor. Here, a pool of experts covers this theme to all of its extents, including medical essays, social studies, and literary production both in poetry and prose.

In order to conduct my analysis of Radcliffe's employment of melancholy, it appeared necessary to me to read a series of studies concerning Gothic literature. David Punter's seminal work *The Literature of Terror* provided a vast amount of information about the origins of Gothic fiction during the first half of the Eighteenth century. Punter is very clear in explaining the role of the Graveyard poetry in the development of Gothic fiction, by underlining the high concentration of melancholic elements, and circumstances that will recur in Radcliffe's novels. *The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats* by Eleanor Sickels is another seminal work concerning melancholy, since the author dedicates her study to the compositions on that theme. Starting from Milton, Sickels delivers a detailed analysis of melancholic poetry from Gray to Keats, including Ann Radcliffe's production in the same literary tradition. Like Sickels, yet with a different aim, Eino Railo underlines the deep debt that Radcliffe owed to the Graveyard poets in terms of melancholy settings. In *The Haunted Castle: a Study of the Elements of English Romanticism,* Railo creates an ordered compendium of the typical tropes featured in Gothic literature and explains their literary origins. In addition to those texts, Fred Botting's *Gothic* provided an extensive introduction to Gothic fiction, concerning especially the theme of Burkean sublime and Radcliffe's concepts of terror and horror.

However, in order to better understand the core of Ann Radcliffe's fiction, it is necessary to approach a series of studies that explicitly focused on her works. James Watt's *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* and Pierre Arnaud's *Ann Radcliffe et le Fantastique: Essai de Psychobiographie* provided a general introduction to Radcliffe's life and writing style, while Claudia Johnson's *Equivocal Beings* had a prominent role in the analysis of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*. The issue of Radcliffe's strong connection with melancholy is addressed by Adela Pinch's *Strange Fits of Passions: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*, by Gary Kelly's article '"A Constant Vicissitude of Interesting Passions": Ann Radcliffe's Perplexed Narratives' and by Terry Castle's *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny.* In addition to those texts, Brandy Lain Schillace's article "Temporary Failure of Mind": Déjà Vu and Epilepsy in Radcliffe's "The Mysteries of Udolpho"', on the schizophrenic condition of Emily St. Aubert, revealed a valuable source of information about the symptoms of atrabiliar affliction. Moreover, Alison Milbank's studies on Radcliffe's melancholy added further material for my research, including a further insight on the relationship between sorrowful characters and gloomy landscapes. The theme of natural scenery, and its relationship with the feelings of the main characters, is one of the main

tropes of Radcliffe's works, which enable her to realise the full potential of her melancholic fiction. In order to acquire a broader knowledge in this field, it is necessary to approach several articles by Anne Chandlers, Joanna Piwowarska, Dale Townshend, and Angela Wright. Furthermore, the articles by Cannon Schmitt and Elizabeth Broadwell resulted to be fundamental in exploring the paranoid portrayal of the characters, by evidencing their phobias and their behaviours that match with *humor melancholicus*. Indeed, Radcliffean heroes and heroines cannot read reality as it is anymore due to their atrabiliar affliction and therefore suffer from the discrepancy between reality and the internal delirium of characters, which are made of unjustified terrors and groundless anxieties[2].

This thesis consists of four chapters that want to demonstrate the centrality of melancholy in Ann Radcliffe's novels, by means of analysing the several symptoms that afflict their main characters. The first chapter consists of a general introduction to the history of melancholy, from its very beginning to the Age of Reason. Starting from the Ancient Age, I tried to summarise centuries of medical knowledge concerning the treatment of melancholy by presenting a series of theories about causes, symptoms, and cures. After a brief introduction to the early theories of Pythagorean and Empedoclean schools, I started my report with Hippocrates' theory of excess of black humour. According to the ancient physician, melancholy was the result of an overabundance of black bile that compromised the state of health of the whole body. Consequently, that condition could affect the body or the mind, and in the latter case, it encompassed a series of symptoms affecting the mental health of the subject. In addition to that, black bile's reactivity to changes in temperature fostered phobias and hallucinations. In order to treat that condition, Hippocrates recommended purging via the administration of hellebore, whose black colour recalled black bile. Asclepiades of Bithynia fully endorsed Hippocrates' theory with a sort of psychotherapy, since he introduced new treatments such as occupation, amusement, and music. Despite Hippocrates's theory was considered the most influential, other philosophers exposed their assumptions. For instance, Soranus of Ephesus dismissed the theory of humours by means of creating a new doctrine. In his view, melancholy was the result of a mere construction of the fibres. On the other hand, Aretaeus of Cappadocia insisted that melancholy could derive from passions or excessive fixation with books and studies. However, the most influential theory on atrabiliar affliction derived from Galen of Pergamum. Starting from humoral imbalance and combustion, the Hellenistic physician

[2] The texts briefly approached in this introduction will be further discussed and examined in the following chapters of this dissertation.

produced a theory about vapours, which rise from the excessive heat of the abdominal region and intoxicate the brain with mental illness. Following Hippocrates, Galen accredited purges, sleep, diet, and a healthy lifestyle as cures against generalised sadness and visions.

In addition to the medical account, I focus on the relationship between melancholy as a pathology and melancholy as a temperament. The melancholic type acquired qualities such as timidity, depression, and unsociability due to the Galenic classification physiognomics. Furthermore, that temperament acquired more negative traits such as cunning, greediness, misanthropy, and envy. Theories of physiognomy were also included in Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, which constituted the most complete compendium of centuries of theories on melancholy. Burton based his work on Galen and Timothie Bright, analysing both on the physical and psychological aspects of the disease. Among the many causes of atrabiliar disorder, the he enumerates God, devils, excessive solitude, and love. Fear, causeless sorrow, and general dejection were the main symptoms of melancholy, accompanied by occasional misanthropy and terrible hallucinations caused by the vapours arising from the abdominal region. Despite recognising melancholy as a terrible condition, Burton acknowledged the positive aspects of the early stages of the malady, which encompassed indulging in long walks in contemplation of nature and daydreaming. In addition to the traditional varieties of melancholy, Burton included lovesickness and religious melancholy as two new kinds of *humor melancholicus*. In his view, unrequited love and religious fanaticism could disrupt the natural balance of the body, as much as black bile did. Despite those novelties, Burton's remedies included purges, vomits, good air, general control of the six non-naturals, along with music and good company. The real novelty was the introduction of marriage and the reading of theological writings as cures for his new varieties of melancholy.

The approach to melancholy changed with the development of modern medicine and sciences. Consequently, ancient doctrines of vapours were modernised by the new doctrines about dejection. For instance, the discoverer of the nervous system, Thomas Willis, deemed the disruption of animal spirits as the main source of melancholy. Indeed, the feeble agitation of those liminal substances was enough to convert them into viscous and dark fluids that disordered the mind. By the end of the Eighteenth century, the main cause of melancholy was made to depend on the animal spirits, without dismissing black bile. For instance, Nicholas Robinson still recognised spleen and vapours as the main source, while George Cheyne maintained that melancholy was a malady of the fibres. According to the latter, the pollution of fibres was directly connected to the condition of the air, which was relatively

poor in England. Despite this new approach to the illness, Cheyne remained anchored to the popular remedies of the old days, such as purges and bloodlettings.

Parallel to medical concerns, melancholy became the main issue in the world of arts due to Aristotle's reflections. The Greek philosopher noticed, for the first time, the link between melancholy and unusual artistic attributes since he realised that the depressed spirits were well-versed in art. During the Italian Renaissance, that concept was recalled and expanded by the Italian humanist Marsilio Ficino. He ultimately upheld the liaison between melancholic temperament and the unlimited powers of the imagination, by making it a highly desirable condition. However, not everybody could achieve that privileged status, since women were completely excluded. Indeed, female melancholy was not interpreted as a sign of elevation, but simply as hysteria, therefore female authors had to claim back some space to express their atrabiliar sadness. Later, melancholy became the most popular disease among eighteenth-century women. By the previously illustrated connection with superior intellect, upper-class women boasted about atrabiliar symptoms to assert their social relevance. To sum up, melancholy passed from a dejected condition of physical and mental disorder to a "fashionable disease" connected with intellectual qualities.

In chapter two I focus on the importance that the theme of melancholy acquired in English literature, from the Elizabethan Age to Eighteenth-century poetry and prose.

During Elizabethan Age, several varieties of melancholy were treated by theatrical literature in the form of stock characters. Indeed, the vast medical tradition concerning *humor melancholicus* provided material for the creation of four characters corresponding to the scholar, the lover, the traveller, and the schemer. It is only with the arrival of John Milton that melancholy acquired positive implications in the English literary scene. The poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* combined together in a unique manner the contrasting aspects of *humour melancholicus*, by dismissing the pathological aspects of the disease. Indeed, Milton seemed to focus on the pensive and ecstatic contemplation of gloomy natural landscapes, making melancholy an inclination of thought based on a certain predisposition to sadness. On such a basis, eighteenth-century authors would develop a distinction between the concepts of white melancholy and black melancholy.

White melancholy was defined as "a good easy sort of state" by Thomas Gray, a pleasing pensive state enjoyed in solitude. The victim of white melancholy indulged in the solitary contemplation of the nocturnal landscape, while projecting a series of emotions on the external reality. "Pathetic fallacy" constituted a fundamental resource to express internal sadness, as the dying light of twilight or autumnal nature matched with the poets' sorrow.

On the other hand, the concept of black melancholy was closer to the medical conception of *humor melancholicus*. Poets tended to portray the negative side of atrabiliar disorder, as in the case of Alexander Pope's *Cave of Spleen* from *The Rape of the Locke* or Anne Finch's pomes. The former represented in an allegory the mechanism of vapours spreading through the body, while the latter addressed the debilitating effect of depression, which annihilates every hope in the future and destroys the visionary ability of the poets. Eighteenth-century poetry offered the opportunity to portray love melancholy from an unprecedented perspective by addressing female sorrow. Poets focused on the deleterious effect that unrequited love has on young maidens, also offering a series of tropes such as separation or the death of the lover. That aspect would also become a recurring topic in the rising fictional production of the eighteenth century, the novel. Indeed, the whole genre is acknowledged as a result of English Malady, since several authors wrote their masterpieces to vent an excess of *humor melancholicus*. However, the favourite subjects of writers were characters that exhibited clear symptoms of atrabiliar disorder. For instance, Defoe's protagonists continuously undergo fits of vapours, while Richardsonian heroines are victims of melancholy due to their weak status in a male-dominated society. Not directly displaying their own money or not directly choosing their husband was the main cause of female dejection during the long eighteenth century. By the end of the first half of the century, Laurence Sterne concluded that melancholy is a default state of the human condition, and the only solace comes from the acknowledgement that this is the common destiny of humans.

The second half of the century took a gloomier turn in terms of tone and themes, due to Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry on the Origin of Our Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime*. Based on Longinus' work on the sublime, Burke underlined the "delightful horror" excited by a sublime view, which stands in open contrast with the concept of beauty. Sublime recalls melancholy since it is defined as an experience of fear without immediate danger, just like atrabiliar disorder provokes fear without a direct cause. Darkness, which is one of the main elements of the sublime, can expand the powers of imagination, and amplify melancholic terrors. Following this new doctrine, the English writers of the second half of the eighteenth century started to associate melancholy with the positive experience of elevation felt by contemplating a sublime view. That theme was further discussed by Ann Radcliffe in her essay *On the Supernatural in Poetry*. Hence, Radcliffe openly disagreed with Burke, since darkness and vastness should excite strong feelings only in the right context. Furthermore, Radcliffe distinguished terror from horror, preferring the elevating power of the former to the annihilating qualities of the latter. As a result, that new gloomy

doctrine spread among the country and influenced a new literary movement later recognised as the Graveyard School. In those highly melancholic poems, authors generally portrayed melancholy musings prompted by bones, graves, and nocturnal landscapes. Graveyard poets had the ability to unite the dark context of black melancholy with sorrowful pleasure, therefore creating a new unsettling aesthetic that will be fully embraced by the authors of Gothic fiction. The first author that was influenced by that new aesthetic, combined with the newly-discovered taste for medieval architecture, was Horace Walpole. He wrote *The Castle of Otranto* with the intent of recalling the darkness traditionally connected with the Middle Ages, and he unconsciously created a new fictional genre. Walpole's story bears the germ of melancholy that will be fully exploited by Ann Radcliffe since he introduced mournful landscapes made of forests, dark castles, and dungeons that sometimes react with the sadness of the characters. Moreover, Walpole featured for the first time characters such as the melancholic tyrant Manfred, the helpless and dejected maids Isabella and Matilda, and the young sorrowful hero Theodore.

In chapter three I try to conduct an analysis of melancholy in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* based on the notions discussed in the previous chapters. Despite being considered a full-fledged gothic novel, *Udolpho* appears imbued with a sentimentality that privileges melancholy feelings, even in an extremely Gothic context. Indeed, the protagonist Emily St. Aubert exhibits all the symptoms that usually afflict the victims of melancholy, while the story traces the development of her malaise. Initially, I focus on the first phase of melancholy by portraying Emily's sentimental education and her natural inclination to genius. Despite being a woman, the heroine inherited St. Aubert's melancholy, which enables her to access the dimension of art. Therefore, the girl is accustomed to express her gentle despondency through poems or songs played with the lute, which generally revolve around the crepuscular landscapes she witnesses during her solitary musings. In the first section of the novel, nature is mainly associated with white melancholy, since the dying light and the moonlit woods of pines and cypresses always throw the protagonist into a pensive trance, that corresponds to a fit of melancholy. Nevertheless, those very natural views trigger excesses of sadness and sorrow, which are attributed to nostalgia. The theme of nostalgia is a recurring issue, and corresponds to black melancholy since it fails to inspire feelings of pleasure. In those scenes, Emily recollects the moments of past happiness with her departed loved ones, and subsequently falls into serious fits of depression.

Even landscape fails to soothe Emily's mind when she suffers from serious access of pathologic melancholy. That is explicitly evident in the section of the novel set in the Castle

of Udolpho. Here, Emily's mind is prone to terror due to the circumstances of imprisonment in a gloomy and dangerous castle. As a result, the girl fails to correctly interpret reality around her and surrenders to troubling hallucinations and groundless terrors, which debilitate her health. Emily is constantly struck by horrible ideas that she holds true, for example, the visions of corpses behind the Black Veil and in the turret. The heroine's paranoid delirium is not only due to the previously mentioned kinds of melancholy, but also to love melancholy and patriarchal anxiety. Indeed, certain of the most intense onsets of melancholy can be attributed to Emily's strong attachment to Valancourt. The young Frenchman becomes a fixed idea for the heroine, and the separation from him, combined with dark forebodings about his health and the terror that they never see again, are typical symptoms of lovesickness. Consequently, the girl's mind is occupied with improbable anxieties concerning Valancourt. Similarly, Emily is prone to create groundless terrors relating to her newly acquired uncle, Montoni. The heroine suffers from typical patriarchal anxiety since her uncle is regularly trying to dispose of her as a property to increase his wealth. However, Emily invests him with supernatural powers, which are rather unjustified and unjustifiable. Montoni is just a petty leader of a band of mercenaries, who tries to replenish his finances with the girl's properties.

To sum up, the remedies offered by Radcliffe appear to be in line with the medical tradition encompassing music, reading, drawing, and good company as momentary solutions. Moreover, the author agrees with Burton in addressing marriage as the final treatment for melancholy disorders. Emily St. Aubert can definitively resolve her *humor melancholicus* and achieve happiness by wedding Valancourt.

Chapter four consists of an attempt to analyse the varieties of melancholy embodied by the three main characters of *The Italian*. Indeed, Ellena di Rosalba, Vincentio di Vivaldi, and Father Schedoni are deeply imbued in melancholy, each of which with its variations. Ellena di Rosalba embodies the perfect model of the melancholic heroine. In appearance, she might seem similar to Emily St. Aubert, yet her characterization offers some variations. In the first place, Ellena is referred to as a genius, but of a different kind if compared to Mademoiselle St. Aubert. Her abilities are presented on a more practical level since she accomplishes her outstanding artistic gift through embroidery. Such an activity represents a remedy against melancholy and a source of melancholy at once. In other words, manual work might deviate her dark thoughts, yet the solitude in which she conducts her activities fosters depression. Furthermore, it may seem necessary to underline the role of the natural landscape in the expression of Ellena's melancholy. Indeed, nature is able to encourage a gentle

despondency, but also to depress the heroine's spirit. In some sections of the novel, natural sceneries excite a Miltonian pleasure in Ellena, which enables her to elevate her mind to a divine dimension. Twilight scenes and hilly landscapes allow Ellena to entertain a relationship with God, therefore she can soothe her sufferings.

While free spaces evoke pleasure and gentle musings, prisons and places connected with Catholic worship are dangerous for the heroine's health. Therefore, Ellena appears to be prone to attacks of pathologic melancholy when incarcerated in the monastery of *San Stefano,* or in Spalatro's cottage. Under those circumstances, the young maiden is liable to develop gloomy predictions on her future and foster dark hallucinations that do not correspond to the external reality. Those dangerous symptoms manifest themselves in the cases of love melancholy. Similarly to Emily St. Aubert, Ellena suffers from lovesickness due to the impossible feelings that she harbours for Vivaldi. The heroine acknowledges the social gap between herself and the young aristocrat, therefore she tries not to surrender to love, with poor results. Nevertheless, Vivaldi becomes a fixation for Ellena and she is forced to fear for his life. In the end, Ellena's melancholic anxieties concerning both her extreme circumstances and the health of her beloved will be ended by marriage.

Vincentio di Vivaldi embodies a new model of hero, who possesses an extremely developed sensibility, therefore liable to melancholy. Contrarily to Ellena and Emily, Vincentio's atrabiliar dysfunction is only constituted by lovesickness. His symptomatology varies from fixed ideas to the creation of illusory fears, to restlessness and jealousy. Vivaldi's aliments can occasionally degenerate into pessimism, depression, and in terrible visions of death concerning Ellena. In open contrast with the heroine, landscape and nature do not seem to provide a valid solace for his torment. Vivaldi's conflictual relationship with nature is increased by means of pathetic fallacy, which amplifies his solitude. Nature does not soothe him nor exalts him since he can only see the most aggressive side of the landscape, while the gentler side of nature is mediated by Ellena. The idea of the young heroine is indeed a fixation for Vivaldi, especially in the last section of the novel. The irrational terror raised by the alleged imprisonment of Ellena at the hands of the Inquisition generates illusive scenarios in Vivaldi's mind. In that manner, his vivid imagination, combined with lovesickness, make him the perfect prey for Schedoni's machinations. After a vast amount of sufferings due to his paranoid melancholy, Vivaldi is able to dismiss the atrabiliar disorder by means of marriage with his beloved Ellena.

Father Schedoni is the last main character of the novel on which I focus in my analysis. Despite being portrayed as a villain, the monk exhibits the most interesting signs of

melancholy in the whole narrative. Indeed, it is possible to observe the vast amount of similarities between him and the saturnine characters of humoral tradition. Indeed, Schedoni's physiognomy and character highlight a particular kind of melancholy, which does not encompass the pleasing aspects seen before in Emily, Ellena or Vivaldi. On the contrary, the monk is afflicted by the *snodeste* condition of the melancholic attitude. In effect, Schedoni can be considered a real son of Saturn due to his gloomy appearance and his disagreeable personality. The personal traits of misanthropy and deceit, combined with excessive ambition and envy, can be directly attributed to the character of the ancient god Saturn. In addition to that, Schedoni's fate follows a descending spiral that mimics Saturn's footsteps. In the first place, the monk embodies an example of bad fatherhood, analogous to that of Walpole's tyrant, Manfred. The difficult relationship with his alleged daughter Ellena bears a series of similitudes to Saturn's family history and with Manfred's rapport with Matilda. Moreover, Schedoni's vengeful disposition is a saturnine trait that is part of the main intrigue of the novel. His desire to revenge on Vivaldi sets the main plot in motion. In addition to those features, Schedoni is insensible to both landscape and music. The monk cannot be moved nor relieved by the sight of nature, even if sometimes he can identify with sublime elements such as storms. By the end of the novel, Schedoni will be truthful to his saturnine nature and will die in prison in the darkest way, remaining coherent with his melancholy disposition.

Ann Radcliffe herself seemed quite aware of the insight on this disorder since she portrayed the various ailments in the most accurate manner possible. She exploited several varieties from lovesickness to pathological humoral imbalance, in order to illustrate the tormented state of her characters. Her protagonists are generally afflicted by fixed ideas, obsessions, dejection, perpetual sadness, dark unmotivated terrors, and terrible hallucinations. In addition to that, heroes and heroines have a penchant for observing autumnal crepuscular landscapes with a sepulchral accent, while indulging in solitary musings.

# 1. Melancholy: The English Malady

The term melancholy may well be considered a polysemic word that acquired a vast amount of different meanings over the centuries. Initially, melancholy simply indicated a state of mental illness characterised by anxiety, sadness, and fear. Subsequently, the term acquired a psychological trait, which indicated one of the four temperaments associated with the four humours – sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic. At a later date, melancholy could mean a provisional state of mind that varied from sadness to a pleasing state of nostalgia, shifting from person to person.

According to Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, those disparate concepts developed over two thousand years and maintained validity in modern times. Similar meanings found their germ in the theory of four humours, especially in black bile, the one that provoked melancholy[3].

## 1.1 The Theory of Humours: Early Theories of Melancholy and Remedies

### *1.1.1 Physicians, Symptoms and Remedies of the Ancient Age*

The four fluids present in the body – notably black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood, were believed to influence human actions due to a close relationship with the elements of the macrocosm. Therefore, humours were held responsible for controlling human behaviours, and, depending on the way in which they combined, could determine human temperaments[4]. The actual theory of humours originated roughly around 400 AD, when the Pythagorean and Empedoclean corpus of knowledge about cosmic entities, macrocosm, microcosm, and natural elements was applied to the humours empirically found in the human body[5]. Similar substances were waste products generated by those indigestible parts of ordinary food intake that could not be assimilated into the blood or into the bones[6]. In medical terms, humours were considered as pathogenic agents and symptoms of the disease at once, especially when they were clearly visible in bodily expulsions like vomits and faeces[7]. That was particularly relevant for black bile because it was believed to blacken human excrements.

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[3] Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl (eds), *Saturno e la Melanconia: Studi di Storia della Filosofia Naturale, Religione e Arte,* traduzione di R. Federici (Torino: Einaudi, 1995), p. 5, 7.

[4] Ibidem.

[5] Ibid. pp. 9-12.

[66] Early forms of melancholy were generally linked to an upset gastric region accompanied by delusions and sadness. Asa Jansson, *From Melancholia to Depression, Disordered Mood in Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), p. 11; Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 12.

[7] Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 12.

The Greek Hippocrates was the first physician to approach the melancholic matter and the theory of humour in clinical terms. Indeed, he provided a diagnosis based on the excess of black bile, which lead to a physiological imbalance of the bodily fluids[8]. In *On the Nature of Man*, a seminal Hippocratic work both attributed to Hippocrates and to his son-in-law Polybius, the melancholic condition was entirely ascribed to the excess of atrabiliar fluid, which contravened the perfect balance that would allow health[9][10]. Along with black bile, Hippocrates also acknowledged as humours blood, phlegm, and yellow bile, whose source was situated in different organs of the body[11]. Those four elements were constantly present in the organism, forming its basis and providing the work for the body[12]. That balance could be easily damaged by irregularities such as overabundance, inflammation, and corruption. Those anomalies were guilty of altering the natural isonomy of the frame and causing several diseases such as epilepsy, frenzy, mania, sadness, and skin lesions[13]. Nevertheless, the question of balance changed from body to body, as each organism possessed its unique constitution, and adjusted the quantities of each humour in order to obtain a customised balance. In that sense, Hippocrates recognised the existence of predisposition, since some individuals were predisposed more than others to develop an overabundance of a specific humour without the corresponding pathology. In other words, a subject provided with surplus black or yellow bile could be considered healthy, even if it was easy to shift from a simple predisposition to a full-fledged disease[14]. At that point, the terms “melancholic”, “phlegmatic” or “choleric” shared two different meanings, both designating a pathologic state and a state of the constitution as well.

Hippocrates marked a hierarchical difference between humours, as some were more important than others. For example, surplus blood, which was not considered as a complete humour in virtue of being the main fluid observed in the body, was regarded as the healthiest disposition possible. On the other hand, *humor melancholicus* was considered the worst condition ever and the most renowned at the same time, therefore it was simply known as melancholia. In open contrast to the other three temperaments, *humor melancholicus* early

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[8] Juliana Schiesari *The Gendering of Melancholia. Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolism of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (London: Cornell University Press), p. 97.

[9] Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl (eds), *Saturno e la Melanconia: Studi di Storia della Filosofia Naturale, Religione e Arte,* traduzione di R. Federici (Torino: Einaudi, 1995), p. 13.

[10] The Greek etymology of Melancholía consisted of the terms mélas/mélanos (black) and cholé (bile), indicating the overabundance of black bile. Jean Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia dalle Origini al 1900*, (Milano: Guerini, 1990) p. 23.

[11] Spleen was possibly identified as the source of black bile due to its dark colour which expanded to faces and vomits, colouring it of the same shade. Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia,* p 23

[12] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 13.

[13] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia,* p 23

[14] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 16.

acquired more and more relevance, becoming the theme of several monographies[15]. Among the many symptoms of atrabiliar excess, Hippocrates mainly identified sadness and fear, restlessness, sorrow, lethargy, and a general moroseness afflicting mind and body alike[16]. Since complications were so various and violent in their manifestation, pathological melancholy was easily distinguished from its humoral counterpart[17]. A distinction should be made between the bodily and the mental disease, based on the part affected by the exceeding humour. Consequently, atrabiliar excess could develop into epilepsy, which derived from bodily affection, or into melancholy, which resulted from intellectual affection[18]. In their complete study on melancholy *Saturn and Melancholy*, Klibanski, Panofsky and Saxl define melancholy as a physical illness enhanced with mental disorders – a “permixtio rationis” of physical origin[19]. Therefore, melancholy was both a natural bodily condition and a pathology, which affected intellectual capacities. A similar condition could prove to be an advantageous situation for individuals endowed with artistic abilities.

As mentioned above, the natural surplus of atrabiliar humour was not the only irregularity in which the atrabiliar fluid could incur. Hippocrates clearly exposed a causal relationship between physical causes and psychological diseases; depression, hallucinations, and manic states were not only attributed to the excess of humours, but also to the corruption of the latter[20]. Indeed, Hippocrates recognised black bile as the combustion residue of the other three humours, especially of yellow bile. As a result, the fluid produced by that burning process was considered a condensed substance with an extremely aggressive force, therefore even the smallest amount could provoke a great deal of damage. In addition to that, the Greek philosopher Aristotle maintained that the atrabiliar humour was exceedingly unstable, being susceptible even to the slightest temperature excursion. Black bile, in effect, could change from icy cold to incandescent heat, in a short lapse of time, with noxious effects on reason[21]. Therefore, those sudden temperature swings deeply affected the mind of the victim and provoked hallucinations. For that reason, Hippocrates recommended treating psychical symptoms with a vast array of physical cures, such as defecation, deviation of the humour, and controlling the bodily temperature. Other cures included a balanced and specific diet, in order not to increase the atrabiliar excess, physical exercise, frequent baths, and a good

[15] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, pp. 17-18.
[16] Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 97.
[17] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 18.
[18] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, p. 25.
[19] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 18.
[20] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 25-26-27.
[21] Ibid. p. 25.

amount of sleep per night[22]. In other words, a healthy lifestyle based on the principles of *Paideia* could help prevent and cure melancholy[23]. That kind of cure could be administered to those patients who were still to a certain extent clear-headed and self-aware. On the contrary, raving subjects, who no longer responded to reason, were forcedly medicated with violent drugs, in order to purge the organism from the noxious humour. Traditionally, the victims of raving melancholy were treated with hellebore, a pharmakon obtained from the extract of *Helleborus Niger*'s root, a highly irritating substance that provoked black vomits and faeces. Those dark-coloured expulsions fuelled the illusion of evacuating the atrabiliar fluid in excess, yet there was no scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of such a cure[24]. Moreover, the use of a violent solution is meant to compensate for the lack of a "natural" evacuation that had been unfortunately interrupted, for instance, in the case of suppressed menstruation flow, haemorrhoids, or cutaneous rashes. In virtue of that, a forced ejection of the black bile was a successful method to treat the humoral excess[25]. Hippocrates had a great influence on the following physicians, who often referred to his treatises in order to develop their own theories on humours and on melancholy.

Another ancient authority discussing the melancholic disorder was Asclepiades of Bithynia, the Greek physician to whom was attributed the merit of having imported Greek knowledge in Italy. Asclepiades ascribed melancholy to the group of mental maladies, along with *phrenesis* and a persistent state of *tristitia*[26]. He considered it a chronic state deriving from an imaginative disorder, whose symptoms were a sudden swinging from sadness to mirth, or a form of intellective aliment[27]. According to the encyclopaedia by Aulus Cornelius Celsus, Asclepiades recommended the same cures previously prescribed by Hippocrates, backed by his original form of psychotherapy. The latter consisted of the elimination of all those objects that acted as a source of anxiety and fear for the melancholic subject, supported by special attention towards entertainment. Amusement aimed at cheering the patient by means of pleasing conversation and enthusiastic activities, in order to divert the subject's attention from paranoias and obsessions. In addition to that, Asclepiades was the first to

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[22] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 26-27.
[23] Pandeia was doctrine that claimed that, in virtue of a strict and healthy lifestyle, it was possible to rule the body following the dictates of reason. Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 26-27.
[24] The effectiveness of hellebore was based on traditional magical properties attributed to certain plants as in the case of mandragora. Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 28-29.
[25] Ibid. p. 30.
[26] According to Asclepiades, Phrensis was a sudden state of frenzy accompanied by fever, while tristitia was a most persistent state without fever. Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia,* pp. 42-43.
[27] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia,* pp. 42-43.

introduce music as a technique to heal melancholy, since it could offer an effective distraction to pessimistic thoughts.

However, musical therapy was not universally recognised as a successful means to treat the malady of black bile. For example, Soranus of Ephesus not only was largely sceptical about the employment of music, but also about the theory of humours as the primary cause of melancholy. Instead, melancholy originated from the anomalous constriction of fibres, which caused a vast plethora of symptoms including heavy anxiety, weariness, sadness, animosity – especially towards family and relatives – mood swings varying from a desire for life and an intense longing for death, paranoid thinking followed by fits of crying without any concrete reason, and senseless mumbling[28]. In order to deal with that state, Soranus elaborated both a medical and psychotherapeutic treatment, including cataplasms on the region of the oesophagus[29] combined with theatre and rhetorical exercise. Despite failing to recognise music as a valid antidote to melancholy, the Greek physician prescribed theatre as an emotional remedy. In particular, comedies provided a beneficial distraction from melancholic turmoil. In addition to that, Soranus also detected in rhetoric exercise another successful method of distracting the mind from suffering. That cure consisted of two steps: first of all, the subject was supposed to elaborate a discourse in written form, and then, during the second step, the patient was bound to read it in front of an audience formed by his closest relatives. After that exercise of reason, the patient underwent a light friction and took a quick walk in order to complete the therapy. Considering the contemporary and traditional theories on melancholy lacking and weak, Soranus of Ephesus was deeply convinced with the certainty of the effectiveness of his new method, completely trusting in the reason of the patient[30].

Other classic physicians were highly sceptical towards the possibility of healing completely from melancholy. For instance, Aretaeus of Cappadocia affirmed that it was nearly impossible to deal with a disease that had been seeding for a long time. While labelling the use of hellebore as useless, the physician simply focused on palliative cures, such as purges and thermal baths, to ease the sufferings of melancholy men. Besides atrabiliar disorders, Aretaeus attributed melancholic sadness to moral and passional causes, which could modify the physical and temperament predisposition at once. By discussing the melancholic disease on a psychosomatic level, the physician theorised that even an individual that was not

[28] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 33-34-35

[29] Melancholy was traditionally associated to the region of esophagus, since the atrabiliar excess originated from the unabsorbed intake of food.

[30] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, p. 36.

naturally predisposed to an excess of black bile could develop a melancholic temperament due to an intense state of anxiety, unrequited love, and excessive study[31]. In short, Aretaeus traced a clear correspondence between the inner turmoil of the soul and the physical malaise, as melancholy rising from passional motives was no less serious than melancholy produced by atrabiliar unbalance[32].

One of the most authoritative sources on melancholy was the Hellenistic physician Galen of Pergamum, whose theories will remain undisputed until the Eighteenth Century. In contrast to Soranus of Ephesus, Galen undoubtedly adopted the theory of humours as the main cause of melancholy and elaborated his original approach to the disease. According to him, the excess of black bile could virtually occur in different regions of the body, provoking a different plethora of symptoms depending on where the debris settled. In the first instance, the major alteration developed in the brain, as the melancholic humour could be transported there by the bloodstream, or could develop directly there by a sudden increment of temperature in that body part. That kind of fever was able to burn yellow bile or blood, generally its thickest part, producing black bile right on the spot. In the second place, the alteration could develop in any part of the body, as atrabiliar humour could easily spread everywhere by means of the veins, reaching the brain as well[33]. Furthermore, Galen recognised a new variety of melancholy, whose origin resided in the stomach. Affecting hypochondria, a similar variant provoked symptoms that disturbed the abdominal region.

During ancient times, the term hypochondria directly referred to a particular kind of disease located in the abdomen, and it was caused by a deposit of black bile. That illness was considered surprisingly dangerous for the body and the mind as well because atrabiliar sediment had the tendency to ferment and to produce noxious vapours that rose the brain. Therefore, according to Galen, those toxic vapours arising from the gastric region were the real reason behind the depressing ideas and hallucinations plaguing the melancholic mind[34]. The same mechanism explained the noxious effects of unrequited love.

Apart from Aretaeus of Cappadocia, Galen was among the first physicians that treated lovesickness as a reason for melancholic discomfort. Similarly to black bile in hypochondria, the fermented unreleased seminal fluids discharged malignant vapours, which intoxicated the brain with visions relating to the object of the unrequited passion, and constituted a serious health hazard[35]. Along with the tripartite model, Galen was renowned for the cycle

[31] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 37-38.
[32] Ibidem.
[33] Ibid. p. 40.
[34] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, p. 41.
[35] Ibid. p. 38-39.

of treatments focusing on the six non-naturals, namely diet, retention and evacuation, sleeping and walking, air, and the passions and the perturbations of the mind[36]. Following the Hippocratic recommendation for a healthy and balanced lifestyle, Galen recognised to light and moist food a series of benefits in preventing the formation of black bile. Unfortunately, exceeding atrabiliar fluid that was issued from dark and dry aliments was not the only noxious element intoxicating the body. In a similar manner to Hippocrates and Aristotle before him, Galen deemed black bile as the result of a process of combustion – a sort of residue poisoning the whole organism. That fluid could undergo the process of combustion a second time, becoming a new substance called bile adust, or blood adust, which is even more toxic and viscous than before[37]. The resulting residue named melancholy adust, or atrabilious melancholy[38], altered the human being's physiological and psychological balance, causing a never-ending condition of grief[39].

### *1.1.2 Melancholy as a Temperament*

As shown in the previous sections, "melancholic" entailed two meanings at once. Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl maintain that the awful and violent manifestation of atrabiliar excess was the reason why the melancholic temperament soon emerged as a well-developed character[40]. The ambiguity between psychological symptoms and normal disposition constituted a reason to find a melancholic constitution that did not correspond to an illness, but to a psychological type. In that manner, that behavioural disposition became to be arranged with specific characters and unpleasant physical features, such as speech impediments, baldness, and hairiness[41]. In earlier times, Hippocrates had already attempted to establish a physiognomic relationship between physical appearance and moral behaviour. That theory, combined together with a series of philosophical, behavioural, psychological, and cosmological ideas, gave birth to a complex system of correspondences between humours, behaviours, and physiognomics. Even Galen theorised a classification system for physiognomics, hinting that hot, cold, dry, and moist weather could influence humoral production. Moreover, the physician maintained that physical appearance and personality

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[36] Bridget Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy: Studies in Literary treatments of Melancholy in Renaissance England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 125.
[37] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 42-43.
[38] Clark Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy', in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, Before Depression, 1660–1800,* ed. by Allan Ingram (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 27.
[39] Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 97.
[40] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia,* p. 18.
[41] Ibidem; Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 98.

entertained a strong and explicit relationship based on "bodily mixtures", which were based on ancient cosmic speculations. Although his model was lacking due to the absence of a clear phlegmatic quality, Galen focused on the melancholic temperament, which was defined as solid and stable.

A complete scheme for the four temperaments will be developed later, during the Third Century AD, where cosmologic principles were once again linked to characters. Each natural element possessed two qualities that bore many similitudes with bodily humours, and that took dominance depending on the four seasons and the four stages of life:

| *Humour* | *Season* | *Quality* | *Age of life* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Blood | Spring | Warm and moist | Childhood |
| Yellow Bile | Summer | Warm and dry | Youth |
| Black Bile | Autumn | Cold and dry | Maturity |
| Phlegm | Winter | Cold and moist | Old Age |

In the doctrine of the four temperaments, the melancholy type was considered timid, depressed, indolent, unpleasant and unsociable, excessively thin, head bent forward, and with a dark complexion[42]. In time, the melancholic temperament started to be mistaken for the phlegmatic temperament, absorbing its negative aspects due to Galenic mixtures. In addition to classic humours, Galen proposed four supplementary constitutions based on a combination of four basic humours. Following mixtures, black bile was both cold and dry, and, subsequently, those features were transferred to the humour itself. Consequently, the melancholic type acquired mainly negative traits such as cunning, greediness, depression, misanthropy, timidity, anger, envy, sadness, a dark complexion, and a frowning gaze[43].

In conclusion, melancholy was initially born as a disease connected to the alteration of black bile, which was due to excessive flux, combustion, intense passional states, or hypochondrial disruption. The disease was regarded as a dangerous and miserable condition that afflicted both mind and body, and that induced devasting symptoms like causeless fear and sadness, obsessive pessimistic thoughts, excessive brooding, and hallucinations. In order to treat that indisposition, ancient physicians recommended the use of vomits induced by hellebore, purgatives, and bloodletting. Similar cures were fundamental to drain the unhealthy humour, and restore the natural bodily balance. The medical approach was combined with a strict control of diet, sleep, and physical exercise, in order to promote a

[42] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia,* pp. 52-53-54-55-56.
[43] Ibid. pp. 58-59, 61-62.

healthy lifestyle that would have positively influenced humoral balance. Along with physical therapies, early medicine focused also on psychological treatments. Music, theatre, and rhetorical exercise were recommended to disengage the mind from negative thoughts and to consume anxiety. In addition to that, melancholy became part of the theory of four temperaments, acquiring a series of negative moral and psychological features united to a dark and unpleasant physical appearance. Despite rare and sporadic attempts to undermine its authority, the complex system of medicine, biology, psychology and cosmology remained untouched and in effect until the Early Modern age.

## 1.2 Robert Burton: *The Anatomy of Melancholy*

Despite being perhaps one of the most examined diseases of Antiquity, melancholy apparently lost its relevance during the Middle Ages, due to its similarities with the sin of Acedia[44]. Meanwhile, in the Middle East, Arabic philosophers continued to analyse the bond between the excess of *humor melancholicus* and physiognomic science. Those discoveries enjoyed a revival during the Italian Renaissance. In particular, the Italian philosopher Marsilio Ficino created his own poetic concept of melancholy by combining the artistic Aristotelian approach with astrology and humoral theory[45]. Italy acquired the status of "home of melancholy", spreading its miserable, yet fashionable, influence all over Europe. England in particular provided a suitable environment for melancholic apprehension due to its gloomy climate[46], therefore creating general concern for the matter. As a result, English philosophers and physicians attempted to analyse melancholy by writing several medical, philosophical, and theological treatises, starting with Thimothie Bright's *A Treatise of Melancholy* in 1586[47]. The pamphlet heavily relied on the Hippocratic tradition concerning the damaging effect of vapours rising from the spleen, including visions and hallucinations.

Although Bright's work constituted a rather interesting study, the most influential work on melancholy of Early Modern England was *The Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton. *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* which is defined as "the most ambitious literary treatment of

[44] Melancholy was seen as one of the seven deadly sins, Acedia, which is a sort of sinful sadness that hinders communication with the exterior world, even with God. In addition to that, Acedia was associated with a profound dislike of the present moment and a desperate desire of being somewhere else. Usually, that condition afflicted hermits and monks who dedicated their life to penance and self-martyrdom. Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 47-48; Jansson, *From Melancholia to Depression*, p. 12.

[45] Melancholy acquired a positive quality, since it was considered as the malady of exceptional individuals who colud crack the code to acquire a higher knowledge of truths hidden to common human beings. Georges Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere : dalla Malinconia alla Depressione* (Bari: Dedalo, 2005), p. 76.

[46] Several sources of that age reported that the bleak climate was enough to lead men and women to suicide. Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 78.

[47] Ibid. p. 78.

melancholy in the seventeenth century" by Bridget Gellert Lyons[48], was the monumental monographic work of a depressed lifelong scholar of Christchurch, who struggled to find a cure for his own melancholy[49]. By diverting his own manic thoughts to other concerns, such as language and its rules, Burton wrote a highly personal work that illustrated "the melancholy mind at work"[50], merging together medical studies and classic literature[51]. The work achieved an immediate success, partially due to the fact Burton "offered a book on melancholy to a melancholy generation"[52]. The book was reprinted several times over the centuries and played a central role in influencing a considerable number of literary authors, including John Milton, Laurence Sterne, John Keats, Lord Byron, and Samuel Johnson[53]. Burton delivered an exhaustive analysis of the melancholic theme in two thousand pages, both on a medical and physiognomic level[54], introducing two relatively new categories: religious melancholy and love melancholy[55].

### *1.2.1 Medical Knowledge about Melancholy*

In the Renaissance, melancholy was defined as "a psychosis caused by a black bilious humour and characterized by morbid depression, continuous or recurrent"[56]. The term encompassed a vast range of meanings: 1)Natural melancholy: a cold and dry humour which is produced in the body, 2) unnatural melancholy or melancholy adust, the pure cold humour that underwent a corruptive process of combustion. As its very name suggests, natural melancholy was present naturally in the organism, and became harmful just in case of superabundance, while melancholy adust was always deleterious for health. In addition to that, the term also applied to those individuals whose predominating humour was black bile, which altered their physical and mental condition[57]. Presenting a compendium of classical and contemporary sources ranging from Hippocrates to Galen, to Timothie Bright[58], Robert Burton delivered a detailed analysis of the melancholic condition encompassing multiple

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[48] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 113.
[49] "I write of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy." Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 121. Lawrence Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam: A Study of Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy* ( [N.P.]: Michigan State University Press, 1959), p. 3.
[50] Ibid. p. 114; Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, pp. 104-105.
[51] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 114.
[52] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 3.
[53] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 106.
[54] The first two partitions focused on causes, symptoms, and cures. Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 125.
[55] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 106.
[56] Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady: a Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951), p. 37.
[57] Ibidem.
[58] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 107; Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 37.

fields of knowledge, which included medicine, philosophy, psychology, physiognomy, and literature[59]. His examination of the disease started with a general discussion about causes, symptoms, and cures, subsequently focusing on a far more detailed level[60]. By all means, Burton appeared to focus on the psychological aspect of that disorder in order to support the Seventeenth-century concept of melancholy, which recognised the Early Modern interplay between mind and body[61]. Burton listed the main causes triggering melancholy in descending order, from the highest to the lowest. For that reason, God is considered the primary cause for melancholy together with the original sin of Adam[62], while devils and spirits followed in closely[63]. On the other hand, secondary causes were of less magnitude, yet encompassed a vast array of possibilities that constituted the human experience. For that reason, Burton listed as causes hereditariness[64], old age[65] and the six non-naturals already enlisted by Galen (comprising poor air quality, excessive exposure to sunlight, lack or excess of physical exercise, excess of sleep), focusing with a higher level of attention on female sexual abstinence[66]. Further causes were presented in the digressions[67], as for example the issue of poor air quality. Burton delivered an exhaustive discussion about English climate and weather in the "Digression of Air", labelling it one of the principal causes for the general melancholy afflicting the whole nation[68].

Like air and climate, passional turmoil provided a significant cause for melancholy[69]. Intense emotional states like anger, hate, jealousy, greed, but also fear or pain subordinated to a sudden occurrence or to grave concern, could disturb the natural balance of the body,

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59 Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 1.

60 Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 125.

61 Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p 2.

62 Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 110.

63 "*Generall* causes, are either *supernaturall*, or *naturall*. *Supernaturall* are *from God* and *his Angells*, or by *Gods permission from the Divell*, and *his Ministers*. That God himselfe is a cause for the punishment of sinne and satisfaction of his Justice […]" Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy I*, 1.2.1.1. p. 169; Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 125.

64 Melancholy could derive from the mother, especially if she had conceived the child during menstruation or, alternatively, if she had a heavy character. Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 110.

65 old people were more prone to develop melancholic disturbs due to weakening vital spirits. Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 111.

66. Women were recommended to temper their sexual activity because their melancholy could have been worsened by any kind of excess. Ibid. pp. 111-112.

67 Causes could also be found in digressions, of which the work was well-supplied. Despite being deviations from the original flow, the *Anatomy*'s digressions fitted so well in the general framework that scholars consider them as integral parts of Burton's work. Digressions were also a further demonstration of the melancholic character, being the written demonstration of Acedia – the ability to be extremely proficient and productive in a field which is not connected to one's real task. Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 128.

68 Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 126; Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 112.

69 "A most frequent and ordinary cause of Melancholy, […] this thunder and lightning of perturbation, which causeth such violent and speedy alterations in this our Microcosme, and many times subverts the good estate and temperature of it." Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* 1.2.3.1. pp. 246-247.

and trigger melancholy[70]. Moreover, Burton detected another behavioural cause in excessive study or curiosity. Along with restlessness[71], curiosity was one of the psychological traits attributed to the melancholic temperament, often accompanied by unpleasant emotions such as sorrow and idleness. General diffidence towards curiosity was associated with man's fall from Terrestrial Paradise since it was the principal cause behind the sin of Adam. In such a manner, curiosity was deemed to be the offspring of pride and self-love – the desire to acquire forbidden or useless knowledge, generally connected with faith.

The aspiration to know the hidden causes of the universe constituted both a cause and a remedy for melancholy. Indeed, travels and studies originating from curiosity were considered leisure activities and a valid distraction from melancholic thoughts. According to Burton, that was just a mere diversion that was supposed to keep humans sane from the general melancholy permeating the world[72].

### *1.2.2 Symptoms of Melancholy*

In the beginning, Burton defined melancholy as a "similitude dissimilis", since symptoms may be generally shared, yet acquired singular features on the basis of the individual's disposition[73]. As Lawrence Babb reports, the main symptoms consisted of "exaggerated griefs and fears, hallucinations, lethargy, unsociability, morbid love of darkness and seclusion, sometimes bitter misanthropy". That condition was associated to melancholy adust, which shared a part of its symptoms with madness, like for example "mental aberrations"[74]. Generally, the main symptoms enlisted by Burton included fear and causeless sorrow that varied to different degrees, from a state of sanity to a state of dementia, which was induced by an intense anguish of the mind[75]. Certain varieties could manifest in the form of intense fits of rage, or in a violent impetus of hysterical laughter, but always included morbid fear and sorrow[76]. Further symptoms were epileptic seizures, blindness, madness, depression, and anguish leading to suicide[77], combined with bashfulness and an extreme sense of suspicion that "that colours all his [the victim's] observations and thoughts" [78]. Indeed, Burton recognised melancholy as a brooding disease, since the sufferers are

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[70] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 112; Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 132.
[71] It is also the quality that lies at the basis of the melancholic traveller, who is constantly discontent, whether at home or abroad. Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p 128.
[72] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, pp. 128-129-130.
[73] Ibid. p. 124.
[74] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 37.
[75] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 2.
[76] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 36, 38.
[77] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 108.
[78] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, pp. 30, 32.

constantly lost in dark thoughts, which involved the suspicion that the world is weaving a conspiracy against them[79]. Such an overthinking was detrimental to social skills, as melancholic men were neither able to hold a proper conversation nor to behave politely in society. Therefore, sick people longed for solitude and darkness, seeking shelter "in desolate places, and monuments of the dead", while shunning sunlight. The obsession with solitude could escalate into misanthropy, a general hatred towards humankind, including close relatives and friends[80]. Moreover, the inclination towards overthinking made the subject prone to difficulties in undertaking actions regarding everyday life's problems, as they overwhelmed the mind and froze the action[81]. Eventually, the subject developed a marked disgust for life accompanied by a correspondent desire for death[82]. Burton detected in moodiness another symptom of melancholia, as the victims would suddenly pass from a state of exalted happiness to the darkest pits of despair in an unpredictable way[83]. When in that state, melancholics are constantly sighing, crying, and remembering unsettling past events, whose magnitude was aggravated by present anxieties[84].

Among physical symptoms, Burton recognised the traditional ideas of the earlier authorities, which encompassed excessive thinness, wrinkles, thick lips, inflated veins, stomach ache, insomnia, tremors, and diarrhoea[85]. All those disorders were the result of black bile, whose qualities of coldness and dryness were at the opposite of warmness and moisture, the very qualities required for life and belonging to blood, and therefore had toxic consequences for the organism[86]. For that reason, black bile was directly responsible for causing visions and hallucinations by disordering the victim's perceptions and thoughts[87]. *Humor melancholicus*, in effect, had a detrimental effect on the brain. Animal spirits were vitiated, therefore the mind was clouded by toxic vapours that tinged thoughts and delirious images with a black hue. The final result was the forging of persistent impressions, which were eventually established as permanently fixed ideas[88]. Furthermore, Burton was able to attribute specific kinds of visions to specific humours. Those hallucinating subjects who

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[79] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 107.
[80] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 32.
[81] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 133.
[82] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 33.
[83] Melancholic men were moody due to their "Humorous" nature; hot-and-cold cycle of humours directly affected the mood, from exaggerated happiness to utter despair. As a result, melancholics were resulting unpredictable, even if Burton was not able to explain that switch. Ibid. p. 35.
[84] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p.107.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 2.
[87] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 29, Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press Incorporated, 1995), p. 171.
[88] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 42-43.

fancied themselves as monarchs or simply saw pleasing apparitions were victims of blood adust, meanwhile, those suffering from melancholy adust fostered unpleasing visions featuring black men, devils, ghosts and goblins, additionally developing the delusion of being beasts or dead. Alternatively, hypochondriacal flatulence was also liable to develop melancholic fancies[89].

Despite focusing his analysis on the negative aspects of melancholy, Burton eagerly discusses a series of advantages linked to that dejected condition. For instance, solitude favoured meditation, suspicion sprang prudence, fear encouraged sobriety, and tiredness removed any risk of taking pleasure in ephemeral things. Moreover, Burton recognised the brilliancy of melancholy men, since melancholy was considered a fuel for developing clever ideas[90]. Fancy, the same source for hallucinations, was the most pleasing aspect of the melancholic condition, especially during the first stage of the disease[91]. Before the malady developed its drawbacks, melancholic were used to indulge in long lone walks, in states of meditation, or laid in bed for days while daydreaming or fostering flights of imagination[92].

### *1.2.3 Early Modern Remedies*

After devoting some space to the apparent benefits of melancholy, Burton reverted back to the pathologic aspect of the disease, discussing a series of remedies coming from prior medical tradition[93]. In that consolatory branch, Burton elaborated the doctrines of several authorities like Plutarch, Cicero, Seneca, the Bible, and the church fathers[94]. For example, in order to avoid the troubles deriving from the passions of the mind, Burton suggested the stoic approach – the extirpation of violent passions, which was possible by avoiding any kind of solitude and idleness, encouraging instead recreational moments and devotion towards God[95]. The author devoted a whole section of forty pages to the treatment of the disorders ascribed to the gloomy climate and to poor air quality. Indeed, in "Air rectified. Digression of the Air", Burton proposed travelling as a useful therapy against melancholy, a theory directly based on his personal explorations and wanderings[96]. Other sections dealing with the treatment of melancholy were "Exercise rectified of Body and Mind" and "A

[89] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, pp. 32, 46.
[90] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 108, 114.
[91] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 133.
[92] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere* p. 110; Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 134.
[93] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere* p. 114-115.
[94] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 7.
[95] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 132.
[96] Ibid. p. 126; Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, pp. 6-7.

Consolatory Digression containing the Remedies of all manner of Discontent.[97]", in which Burton discussed sexual activity, spending time with friends[98], listening to "sweet" music[99], and living a balanced and healthy lifestyle as possible cures for melancholy. In addition to music, theatre was another good way of dealing with melancholy. If the symptoms persisted, Burton recommended a series of pharmaceutical remedies featuring laxatives and bloodletting, especially with leeches[100]. In the third part of the work, both love and religious melancholy were broken down into several kinds, providing an accurate summary of cures, causes, and symptoms. The section on Religious melancholy was devoted to atheism, which was represented as a kind of madness, while superstition was seen as a type of melancholy[101].

### *1.2.4 Love Melancholy*

After a brief mention by Galen, love melancholy acquired some relevance in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*[102]. Although the subject was neglected by the previous medical treaties, lovesickness was the most portrayed kind of melancholy in literature. For that reason, according to Bridget Lyon Gellert, the section "undoubtedly heightens the literary quality of his work"[103]. Although the whole oeuvre is permeated by personal opinions and experiences, the chapter about love constituted one of the most self-referential parts of the *Anatomy*. Here, Burton openly discussed his frustration towards women, occasionally trespassing on misogyny. Due to a poor love experience, the author apparently did not hesitate on making love the root of a series of problems and woes, directly connected to melancholy and suicidal tendencies[104]. Burton opened his dissertation on love melancholy with a forty-three long pages introduction on love in general, also including a little digression on charity, which was influenced by religion[105]. The actual discussion about love melancholy is quite of composite nature since it consists of several essays and digressions, such as for example the part on the power of beauty. That segment was inspired by a long tradition of treaties on love, quoting

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[97] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 7.

[98] "[…] in my judgement none so present, none so powerful, none so apposite as a cup of strong drinke, mirth, musike and merry company." Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy II, 2.2.6.3. p. 112.
"Mirth […]*purgeth the blood, confirmes health, causeth a fresh, pleasing, and fine colour*, prorogues life, whets the wit, makes the body young, lively and fit for any manner of employment" , The Anatomy of Melancholy II, 2.2.6.3. p. 116.

[99] *Musica est mentis medicina maestae*, a roaring-meg against Melancholy, to rare and revive the languishing Soule, *affecting not onely the ears, but the very arteries, the vitall and animall spirits, it erects the minde, and makes it nible* […] Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy II, 2.2.6.3. p. 113.

[100] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, pp. 114-115-116-117.

[101] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, pp. 125-126.

[102] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, pp. 112-113.

[103] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 141.

[104] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, pp. 112-113.

[105] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 7.

authorities such as Lyly, Sir Thomas Overbury and Ovid[106]. Unrequited love was recognised as the source of violent emotions that could disrupt the natural balance between the mind and the body – that was the principal cause that lay behind chronic melancholy. Love was traditionally treated as a virus that could be caught through the eyes, which immediately spread all over the organism like an infection. As a result, the melancholic mind became volatile, the liver started to fail, blood acquired the consistency of mud, and the whole bodily system started to deteriorate[107]. Passion and desires were believed to heat up the body and to melancholy thanks to the combustion of humours. Indeed, Burton defined that as "a modern writer of amorous Emblems, expresse Loves fury by a pot hanging over the fire, and Cupid blowing the coales"[108].

Traditionally, symptoms linked with love melancholy were fear and sorrow – the "inseparable companion of most melancholy"[109], with the addition of insomnia, loss of appetite, exhaustion, depression, fixed ideas, and obsessions. With regard to physiognomy, the victim of lovesickness was characterised by paleness, thinness and sunken eyes, mood swings, and catatonic phases, and longed for solitude in order to quietly sigh over the love object. The lovesick mind was dominated by the thought of the lover, which provoked a state of delirium[110]. Burton portrayed Dido from the Ennead as a fitting example of suffering from love, which monopolises all the psychic faculties of the individual[111]. If not cured, that kind of melancholy could develop into self-neglect, madness, raving episodes, and suicide[112]. In addition to classical symptoms which may be shared with standard melancholy, love provoked also jealousy and a series of passions of the mind[113]. Jealousy was defined as a "bastard ranch of love-melancholy", but it was not identified as a medical condition[114]. That subsection, contrary to the other sections, was poor in medical and psychological explanations, but it compensated in terms of description, comments, and counsels[115]. With its melange of love and fear, hot and cold passion, jealousy was considered one of the passions to which melancholy men fall prey, since "melancholy men are apt to be jealous, and jealous are apt to be melancholy"[116].

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[106] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, pp. 7-8.
[107] Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 13,15,16.
[108] Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy III,* p. 159, quote in Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender,* p. 16,
[109] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 136.
[110] Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender,* pp.17-18.
[111] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 135.
[112] Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender,* pp. 17-18.
[113] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 136.
[114] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 141.
[115] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 8; *The Elizabethan Malady,* p. 141.
[116] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 141.

Burton discussed cures for lovesickness in the section "Cure of Love-Melancholy[117]". Pharmaceutical cures could include diet[118], bloodletting, vomits, and the detraction of the desired objects as happened in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*[119]. In general, Burton's remedy for love melancholy was the satisfaction of the love desire, letting the melancholic subject reunite with the cause of melancholy. In an un-Ovidian manner, Burton maintained that the most satisfying and effective antidote to lovesickness was marriage[120].

### *1.2.5 Religious Melancholy*

Religious melancholy was one of the most popular forms of melancholy of the Renaissance. Several authors had already approached the matter, such as Timothie Bright, who prescribed moderate physical activity, moderated study, leisure time, music, hellebore, natural purges, and bloodletting as treatments for the condition[121]. Religious affliction was further developed and widely discussed by Burton in the last section of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. The real attempt to bring innovation in that field was the identification of religious melancholy as a new kind of melancholy, despite several authors had already approached the matter before him[122]. Burton based his study on the Early Modern theory that fanaticism and exaggerated terror, which were induced by the possibility of eternal damnation, were not normal behaviours, but a manifestation of melancholic affliction[123]. A similar torment was especially common among Catholics[124], who fell prey to that evil when they realised that God was not going to listen to their prayers. However, religious melancholy could occur also among puritans, since preachers instilled the fear of damnation in their audience through their harsh sermons[125]. Indeed, the protestant fear of not being the chosen ones by God, and therefore of being condemned to eternal damnation during the Last Judgement, was the main cause for religious melancholy[126]. As a result, puritan believers developed suicidal tendencies[127]. Moreover, another cause for religious affliction was constituted by the Devil[128]. Burton suggested that the Arch Enemy established one of the main menaces to

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[117] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, p. 7-8.
[118] Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender,* p. 18.
[119] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 134.
[120] Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam*, pp. 7-8.
[121] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, pp. 101-103, 113-114.
[122] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 141.
[123] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 141.
[124] Burton was a fervent Anglican, therefore he had the urge to discredit the church of Rome.
[125] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, pp. 113-114; John F. Sena, 'Melancholic Madness and the Puritans', *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 3, 66 (1973), 293-309 (p. 298)
[126] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 48.
[127] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, pp. 113-114.
[128] Ibidem.

humans since he took advantage of the weakened spirit of the melancholic in order to infiltrate their minds and induce them into sin, eternal damnation[129], or in atheism[130]. In addition to those psychological or supernatural causes, Burton recognised a series of natural causes connected with the conditions of strong deprivations faced by believers. Penitents engaged in several ascetic practices that had harmful effects on the whole body, which generated a situation of humoral unbalance. Poor diet, extreme fasting, and self-inflicted injuries are liable to develop an excess of black bile, which resulted in melancholy. Other religious practices that induced melancholy were isolation and meditation over divine matters, which forced the penitent to overthink matters as salvation. The lack of nutrients, self-inflicted damage, isolation, and black bile nourished hallucinations, whose subjects ranged from "beatific visions" and prophetic premonitions by God, to terrifying visions of Hell, Hobgoblins, and Devils[131].

Despite being a spiritual disease, Burton recommended the typical medical treatments used in all kinds of melancholy, which combined a proper diet with moderated physical exercise and good quality air, avoiding idleness and solitude that promoted unhealthy brooding about the sense of life and God[132]. Moreover, against the judgement of puritan preachers, Burton recommended leisure and distraction, so that penitents should not focus on the contemplation of their sins, an activity which aggravated melancholy[133]. Another method for dealing with religious melancholy was reading theological writings or the Bible. The Holt Book had a stronger impact on the mind rather than reading philosophy, even though reading, in general, was a good diversion for the melancholic mind[134]. To sum up, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* represented a milestone for the studies on melancholy. The innovation of the manual lies not in its content, but in the proper systematization of prior knowledge attributed to authorities such as Hippocrates, Galen and Rufus, Boorde, and Bartholomaeus Anglicus[135]. By presenting a vast compendium of causes, symptoms, and cures, interspersed with several digressions, Burton tried to find a way to treat his own melancholy by distracting his mind from his own obtrusive thoughts.

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[129] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 49.
[130] The section on Religious melancholy was devoted to atheism, represented as a kind of madness while superstition was seen as a type of melancholy. Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, pp. 113-114; Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 126.
[131] Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 48.
[132] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere*, p. 116; Lund 673
[133] Mary Ann Lund, 'Robert Burton the Spiritual Physician: Religion and Medicine in "the Anatomy of Melancholy" in *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 57, 232(2006), 665-683 (p. 679)
[134] Lund 'Robert Burton the Spiritual Physician', p. 680.
[135] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere,* p. 106; Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 141.

In a similar manner, reading the *Anatomy* was supposed to ease the readers' melancholy by offering some hours of entertainment. Indeed, as Mary Ann Lund affirms "Burton presents his work as mentally curative, aiding the reader just as medicine does the patient. Burton's method of 'rectifying' the mind is chiefly through verbal persuasion: advice, diversion, and particularly consolation". The whole opus is rather consolatory in tone, proving not to be just a manual, but an active process of healing directly involving the reader[136]. Burton identified melancholy as a part of the human condition, observing that people belonging to different faiths or social standings were plagued by atrabiliar disorders. After the *Anatomy*, the melancholic matter continued to be discussed in essays that were progressively updated on the basis of new scientific theories. As Barbara H. Rosenwein declares in her treaty about feelings, a new chemical and corpuscular science started to undermine the centuries-old theory of humours. For instance, the English physician Thomas Willis was the very first exponent of the new science, since he wrote a treaty challenging the importance of humours[137].

## 1.3 Eighteenth Century Concept of Melancholy

### *1.3.1 Thomas Willis*

By writing *Two Discourses Concerning the Soul of Brutes* in 1683, Thomas Willis anticipated several physicians of the eighteenth century in dismantling the ancient humoral theory[138]. In doing so, he replaced the long-established causa prima – black bile – with a more modern concept, which consisted of a derangement of the nervous system still comprehending fear, sadness, hallucinations, and a state of "raving without a Feaver or fury"[139].

Definitely, Willis changed the main cause while leaving the core symptoms untouched[140]. Willis's nervous system was composed of animal spirits, possessing several mechanical properties. Many diseases of the nervous system, like for example delirium, seemed to be

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[136]Lund 'Robert Burton the Spiritual Physician', pp. 672, 680, 682.

[137] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: a History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 253, 260-261.

[138] Ibidem.

[139] Clark Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy', in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, Before Depression, 1660–1800,* ed. by Allan Ingram (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 29.
Melancholy was a "Distemper of the Brain and Spirits dwelling in it" and "also of the Praecordia, and of the Blood therein inkindled, from thence sent into the whole Body: and as it produces there Delirium or idle talking, so here fear and sadness" Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 10-11.

[140] Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy,* pp. 10-11.

explained by malfunctioning animal spirits[141]. According to the Augustan medical society, the above-mentioned spirits were the substance that regulated the relationship between the mind and the outer world[142], therefore any malfunction would practically damage the brain. In opposition to that, anxiety, fear, and sadness that traditionally belonged to melancholics could not be explained so easily. Excluding the existence of a circulation system dedicated to anxiety and fear spirits, Willis attributed the underlying reason of melancholy to a feeble agitation of the animal spirits. That kind of agitation was neither dynamic nor violent, yet it spread all over the brain while opening "new pores". Such a ferment did not last long and ceased shortly after, yet it produced manifold forms of delirium. Melancholy did not involve violent reactions, as it was a "madness at the limits of its powerlessness", as Foucault writes in *Madness and Civilization*[143]. Paradoxically, those movements provoked a non-observable alteration of the animal spirits, which passed from purity to a murky state that polluted the brain with its darkness, tinging of black every thought. Animal spirits became viscous, dark, and heavy, quite similar to vapours of acid nature, and their particles moved restlessly without a particular strength. Willis attributed the cause of melancholic uneasiness to an apparent similitude between acid vapours and melancholy. The latter was identified as an impotent disorder that imposed its shadow over the mind, similar to the sour acidity of the vapours that corroded both mind and spirits. In that manner, Willis explained that humours and their noxious vapours were not the main cause behind the melancholic affliction[144].

By the end of the eighteenth century, the most widespread notion of melancholy was a corruption of healthy animal spirits. Once darkened, the spirits threw their threatening shadow over the mind and its ideas, thickening the blood that could not properly run through the veins. Subsequently, acrid and deleterious black vapours were formed and determined the failing of visceral functions. Although those features were considered a trademark of melancholy, it is possible to affirm that they were a consequence of sensibility, rather than the result of proper scientific research. In the end, melancholy lost its faculty of delirium and retained symptoms such as sadness, bitterness, love for solitude, and general passivity. All

[141] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization, A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 121.
[142] Animal spirits were between myth and reality, enjoying a special status of scientifically acknowledged hypothesis despite the lack of scientific proofs. They were material and immaterial at once, in order to communicate with the mind but also deal with the external reality. They originated from rarefied vital spirits, made out of the "purest and most refined blood." John F. Sena, 'The English Malady: The Idea of Melancholy from 1700-1760', PhD thesis (Princeton University, 1976), pp. 11-12, 14-15.
[143] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, pp. 121-122.
[144] Ibid. p. 122.

those cases of madness that presented inertia, despair, depression, and dullness were categorised as melancholia[145].

### *1.3.2 Melancholy in the Eighteenth Century England: Robinson, Cheyne, and Mandeville*

Rapidly, melancholy grew into the most investigated disorder of the first half of the eighteenth century, especially in the British Isles. English physicians continued to follow Willis's thesis, adding further elements. The practitioner Nicholas Robinson extensively inquired about the melancholic mindset first in his essay known as *A new System of the Spleen, Vapours and Hipochondriack Melancholy* (1729), and secondly in the Gentleman's Magazine entitled *Of the Hypp* (1732)[146]. In the latter, the physician discussed the difference between the various names of melancholy, Vapours and Spleen, Hypp, Hyppos, and the Hyppocons[147]: "the old distemper call'd Melancholy was exchang'd for Vapours, and afterwards for the Hypp, and at last took up the now current appellation of the Spleen, which it still retains"[148]. The terms hypp and hypo were remarkably common in the melancholy discourse since they referred to Hypochondria, a failure of the eponymous organ in the gastric region[149]. Spleen, instead, was correlated to hypochondriacal melancholy in virtue of its black colour and alleged function; it was supposed to store and absorb surplus black bile springing from the blood and the liver[150]. When those circumstances could not occur, the atrabiliar humour was released in the blood and caused a particular type of melancholy designated as Spleen. Robinson gave a clear outline of melancholy men, maintaining that those subjects were prone to develop sudden and senseless fears, ruining both their lives and those of their closest friends and relatives[151]: "Sometimes they fancy they are just going to die, and call for their Relations and Neighbours, as if they were immediately about to expire". The physician was not renowned for owning a tender attitude toward the mentally ill. Melancholy was a

> Melancholy madness is a complication of continual and unintermitting Horrors, that spares neither Body nor Mind. When this Affection is farther advanc'd into the Habit, the Patient

[145] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 124.
[146] Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy' in *Melancholy Experience in the Long Century,* p. 29, Allan Ingram, 'Death in Life and Life in Death: Melancholy and the Enlightenment', *Gesnerus,* 63 (2006), 90-102 (p. 29)
[147] Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy' in *Melancholy Experience in the Long Century,* p. 29
[148] Ibidem.
Robinson argued the existence of four different stages of melancholy: 1) spleen or vapours, 2) hypochondriac melancholy as a consequence of prolonged spleen, 3) development of illness, 4) madness. Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 73.
[149] Hypochondria was a condition affecting mainly male individuals. Sena. 'The English Malady', p. 67.
[150] Ibid. p. 68.
[151] Ingram, 'Death in Life, Life in Death', p. 92.

> appears to all the see him a moving Piece of Ruin, and wears his Soul in his Countenance, which is mark'd with all the Characters of Woe, Gloom, and Desperation[152].

Melancholy men were constantly shunning the light of day and seeking solitude, but nevertheless lamenting their painful condition, while being subject to sudden enthusiasm spurs and fits of sullenness[153].

On the other hand, the English Dutch philosopher Bernard Mandeville was sceptical towards vapours. In his *Treatise of Hypochonriack and Hysterick Passions* (1711), Mandeville labelled them as a sort of a "joke", a sullen tantrum thrown by women with unreasonable desires[154].

Nevertheless, in eighteenth-century England, melancholy established itself as "The English Malady". A similar condition affected Englishmen due to the cold, damp climate of Great Britain, combined together with the sedentary and luxurious lifestyle of the upper and middle class[155]. Even French philosophers and travellers openly acknowledged the English inclination toward the gloom. Indeed, Voltaire affirmed that "philosophy, liberty, and climate are productive of misanthropy: London has scarcely any Tartuffes, while it abounds with Timons[156]. As Allan Ingram reports in his analysis on melancholy, a popular adage of that age declared that "It is November when the English begin to hang themselves[157]." Those words were mainly held true by one of the greatest theoreticians and practitioners of melancholy of the first half of the 1700s: George Cheyne[158]. He was so certain of the identification between melancholy and England that he entitled his most influential work *The English Malady*:

> The title I have chosen for this Treatise, is a Reproach universally thrown on this Island by Foreigners, and all our Neighbours on the Continent, by whom *nervous* Distempers, *Spleen*, *Vapours, and Lowness of Spirits*, are in Derision, called the ENGLISH MALADY[159].

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[152] Nicholas Robinson, *A New System of the Spleen, Vapors and Hypochondriack Melancholy,* p. 234 in *Patterns of Madness in the Eighteenth Century. A Reader*, ed. by Allan Ingram (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p. 78.

[153] Ingram, 'Death in Life, Life in Death', p. 93.

[154] Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy' in *Melancholy Experience in the Long Century,* p. 30.

[155] Asa Jansson, *From Melancholia to Depression,* p. 12.

[156] French philosophers loved English intellectual, economic, religious, and political liberty, yet ascribed melancholy to the cold and foggy climate, the coal-smoke, the excessive consumption of meat and ale, the severity of English Protestant sects, and the excessive rigidity of empirical science. Therefore melancholy was considered a feature of English nature. Eric Gidal, 'Civic Melancholy: English Gloom and French Enlightenment, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, (Fall, 2003) 23-45 (p. 23-24)

[157] Ingram, 'Death in Life, Life in Death', p. 90.

[158] Cheyne stated that he had anticipated the publication of his volume on melancholy, which was intended to be posthumous, due to the large increase in suicides. Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 44.

[159] George Cheyne, *The English Malady: or, A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of all Kinds* (London: G. Strahan and j. Leake, 1733), p. i.

According to him, the underlying cause of melancholy was the weakness of fibres, which constituted the elementary unit of the body[160]:

> The Fibres are small, transparent, solid, and elastick, or springy Threads of Filaments. By Fibres, I mean here the least and smallest Threads in the Composition, of which may unite to make one sensible *Fibre.* Our Hairs, which are a Kind of Fibres, may be divided and split into a great Number of small ones evident to the naked eye. […] They are *transparent*, as is evident, when sufficiently wash'd and cleans'd from the Skins, Humoura and Fuids that adhere them[161].

The fibres' tension and elasticity were directly connected to bodily health, sustaining the physical operations of the organism. When fibres weakened and lost their qualities, even basic processes like digestion and blood circulation started to fail, resulting in weak nerves[162]. That status was worsened by cold weather, as damaged fibres reacted to climatic conditions:

> Those who are naturally of a cold Constitution […] are apt to run into Rigours and Shiverings upon a sharp North-East Wind; are too sensibly and violently afflicted, and feel too much Pain and Uneasiness from cold or frosty Weather[…][163].

Moreover, Cheyne recognised insalubrious food as a pathogenic agent for melancholy, which led to poor digestion, and to the development of toxic substances that crystallized in the blood, damaging both solids and fibres[164]. Cheyne, together with many of his colleagues, detected in passions of the mind an additional risk for health. By classifying passions, the physician recognised animal passions and spiritual passions[165], further classified as acute or chronic. While acute passions manifested in the likes of acute disease, chronic passions entailed excessive reactions and endangered the nervous system. In addition to that, a contemplative lifestyle was another triggering factor for melancholy, as students and scholars were likely to eat less than those leading an active life, while their nerves were weakened by the lack of physical exercise, therefore they were more prone to develop melancholic disorders[166].

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[160]– Fibres composed all the solid parts of the body, comprising muscles, tendons, bones and organs. Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 20.

[161] Cheyne, *The English Malady*, pp. 60-61

[162] Sena, 'The English Malady', pp. 21-25. Moreover, fibres's well-being could be endangered by small particles that entered into circulation and interrupted the normal flowing of the animal spirits, altering the perception of reality: "sensory data would not be properly communicated to the brain and impulses from the brain would not be correctly transmitted to muscles. Sena, 'The English Malady', pp. 83-84.

[163] Cheyne, *The English Malady*, p. 103.

[164] Strong food would unleash "oily, sulphurous, and inflammatory Particles" that made blood rush violently into the thin veins, allowing those particles to gather together forming crystals. Sena, 'The English Malady', pp. 90-91.

[165] Animal passions were produced by external objects acting through the senses, while spiritual passions were produced by the spirits operating directly on the soul. Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 102.

[166]Sena, 'The English Malady', pp. 94- 95, 103.

The Scottish biographer James Boswell discussed the hereditariness of melancholy, basing his thesis on the direct observation of Samuel Johnson's disease. Boswell noticed that Michael Johnson's – Johnson's father – melancholic depression constituted a major influence on the evolution of his son's melancholy, who absorbed his father's sadness and anxiety[167]. Therefore, melancholy appeared to be akin to a hereditary disease that could be passed from father to son and handed down for generations. In addition to those factors, another underlying cause of melancholy connected with the spleen was Vapours[168]. Similarly to the rest of humours, black bile tended to heat up when confined in narrow spaces, such as the spleen, emanating vapours that damaged the animal spirits, and interrupting the proper communication between the world and the mind. Consequently, contaminated animal spirits produced a disorder of the imagination – a melancholic state exacerbated by hallucinations[169]. Despite being gravely concerned with the melancholic matter, eighteenth-century English physicians failed to find one univocal definition for the disorder. That difficulty was ascribed to the vast amount of traditional beliefs and ideas linked to melancholy since it the disorder was understood both in physical and psychological terms[170]. As a result of that plurality of meanings, melancholy became known as the Protean disease[171], the symptoms of which were ever-changing like the shapeshifting Grecian god of the sea Proteus.

In line with the previously expressed concept, John Francis Sena defines the complex corpus of symptoms as "a plurality of melancholies[172]". Among the many disturbing symptoms, the most relevant were gastric disorders, vomiting, belching, muscular spasms, the emission of inarticulate sounds, general giddiness, visual disturbances, swooning and weak pulses, heart palpitations, swollen stomach, and general low bodily temperatures[173]. On the other hand, psychological symptoms involved fits of violent passions, episodes of panophobia, paranoid thinking, anxiety, languor, general grief and inconstancy, inability to concentrate, and hallucinations[174]. Nevertheless, sadness remained the characterising quality

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[167] Clark Lawlor, *From Melancholia to Prozac , a History of Depression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 5-6.
[168] The term "Vapours" referred to a pathology affecting both sexes, yet it was commonly applied to women suffering from melancholic distress. Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 69.
[169] Ibidem.
[170] Melancholic disease engaged both the gastric tract (hypochondria) and the imagination (through vapours and hallucinations).
[171] Even the part of the body affected by the disease was constantly shifting. Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 78.
[172] Ibid. p. 65.
[173] Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 97.
[174]Ibidem.
During 1700, with the development of a new force of bureaucracy, ghostly apparition started to diminish and to be defined as signs of paranoia. Hallucinations were delusions of the mind, commonly mistaken for

of melancholy, which was extensively analysed by Samuel Johnson in Rambler 47 (28 August 1750). Being a melancholic himself, Dr Johnson discussed sorrow's nature and focused on its passivity. The sufferer is completely frozen and cannot think about the present or the future, yet he constantly mused about the past and mourned about what is lost[175].

### *1.3.3 Modern Remedies*

By reason of Thomas Willis new theories, the Enlightenment gradually shifted the general understanding of melancholy from humoral imbalance to the fragility of nerves, thickening of the blood, and weakening of vital fibres. The basics of medical treatment remained nonetheless unchanged, displaying vomiting, bleeding, and purging as the favourite remedies[176]. The evacuation of viscid fluids was the primary remedy recommended by most physicians, therefore a vast variety of drugs were prescribed to cleanse the digestive tract from noxious substances[177]. For instance, Cheyne recommended "Ipecacuanha", a purge made from hiers prica and aloetic pills, to melt down obstructive matters, along with chalyneats to restore the original tone of the fibres, valerian, and mercury to purge and bleed the disease[178]. On the other hand, Dr John Purcell stayed true to the tradition and deemed hellebore the best cure for melancholy, along with French wine. In addition to that, Bath water seemed to hold special curative properties, which liquified the blood due to its salts[179]. When those medical treatments seemed not to suffice, practitioners enforced stronger, life-threatening cures, which included bleeding and baths – usually cold, but also hot. Bleeding

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supernatural entities by ancient people. Since the old understanding of the "Invisible world" was no longer acceptable by the Enlightened thinkers, visions seemed to come from the interior; the internalization of ghosts and spirits had consequences on the modern theory of imagination. In order to prevent the appearance of ghosts, it was necessary to limit study, brooding over obscure intellectual problems, reading in the night, excessive mourning, overindulgence in poetic or erotic fancies – all activities akin to melancholy. See more in Terry Castle's 'Spectral politics: Apparition Belief and the Romantic Imagination', in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-century culture and the invention of the uncanny*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press Incorporated, 1995), pp. 168-189.

[175] Richard Terry 'Philosophical Melancholy' in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, Before Depression, 1660–1800,* ed. by Allan Ingram (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 62.
"Sorrow is properly that state of mind in which our desires are fixed upon the past, without looking forward to the future, an incessant wish that something were otherwise than it has been, a tormenting and harassing want of some enjoyment or possession which we have lost, and which no endeavours can possibly regain [...] It seems determined, by the general suffrage of mankind, that sorrow is to a certain point laudable, as the offspring of love, or at least pardonable, as the effect of weakness; but that it ought not to be suffered to increase by indulgence, but must give way [...] to social duties, and the common avocations of life."
Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler in Four Volumes*, Volume I (London: Dosley, Owen, 1794), p. 273.

[176] Ingram, 'Death in Life, Life in Death', pp. 91-92.

[177] Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 134.

[178] Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 134; Allan Ingram, 'Deciphering Difference: A Study in Medical Literacy' in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, Before Depression, 1660–1800,* ed. by Allan Ingram (Basingstoke, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 183.

[179] Sena, 'The English Malady', pp. 135,137.

was the main method used to cope with mental illness and melancholy in Bethlem Hospital for the Insane. There were manifold techniques to administer that medication, such as blistering, issues, leeches, trepanning, administering salivation in order to induce an excess of saliva, errhine to provoke sneezing fits, diaphoretic for perspiration and diuretics. On the other hand, Robinson remained faithful to vomits that expelled the "glewy Humour, that lies impacted in the fibres of the Brain, and chains down the noble Faculties of the Soul to this Gloomy Way of Thinking", combined with cold baths. Meanwhile, Sir Richard Blackmore generally advised against bleeding in favour of vomits and Chalybeate's waters[180]. Among many practitioners focused on medical treatments and purges, just one physician seemed to divert his attention toward the phycological side of the disorder. Bernard Mandeville expanded his psychological insight in the fictional dialogue of *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysteric-Disease* (1711, reissued in 1730). The treaty demonstrated that it was possible to treat the illness by scrupulously discussing the causes and the symptoms with the patient, in order to avoid the prescription of medicines[181]. The royal physician Peter Shaw prescribed clysters, issues, blisters, emetics, cephalic drops, sternutatories, and cold baths to deal with melancholic disorders, in combination with a strict control of the six non-naturals. In his *A New Practice of Physics* (1726), melancholy was presented as "a delirium without a fever, joined with fear and sadness" that could be healed by a balanced diet, a modest quantity of wine, moderated physical exercise, cheerful company, and merry conversation[182].

Controlling food intake was also recommended by George Cheyne, in virtue of the fact that light nourishments could prevent gastric disorders and clotting animal spirits[183], as body and mind seemed to influence each other[184]. In addition to that, Cheyne recommended also a life dedicated to self-discipline, avoiding excesses and luxuries, while constantly searching for clean air[185]. Another method to deal with melancholy was staying busy, a point of view already expressed by Burton in the *Anatomy of Melancholy.* The victim of melancholy was expected to divert sad thoughts through a mental activity like reading or writing. Dr Johnson himself employed that method first-hand by dedicating his spare time to the writing of the Dictionary[186].

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[180]Allan Ingram, 'Deciphering Difference: A Study in Medical Literacy', pp. 181-182-183..
[181] Ibid. pp. 187-188-189.
[182] Ibid. p. 195.
[183] "Animals and vegetables that came to maturity rapidly were easier to digest." Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 92.
[184] Ibid. pp. 93-94.
[185] Laura Bandiera *Settecento e Malinconia: Saggi di Letteratura Inglese* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1995), pp. 16-17.
[186] Lawlor, *From Melancholia to Prozac,* pp. 12-13.

To sum all things up, the eighteenth-century concept of melancholy was explained by Boswell's description of Johnson's malaise: "a bodily disease, which made him often restless and fretful; and with constitutional melancholy, the clouds of which darkened the brightness of his fancy, and gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking[187]". Although practitioners did not generally agree, it was a common belief that the disease arouse from irregularities in animal spirits, which provoked psychical symptoms including sadness, gloom, anxiety, and disgust for life. Since that period witnessed an incredible development of medical treatments, physicians suggested a wide range of cures, from the simple balanced lifestyle to the most lethal, such as vomits, purges, and bleeding.

## 1.4 The Ambiguity of Melancholy: between Genius and Disease

While Greek physicians were occupied establishing a coherent tradition about the medical aspects of melancholy, Greek humanists developed that issue in the fields of philosophy and art.

### *1.4.1 Aristotle and Marsilio Ficino's Re-evaluation of the Melancholic Temperament*

The new attitude toward melancholy was observed for the first time in Aristotle's *Thirtieth Problem* (*Problemata XXX*). Known with the subhead of *"Problems connected with Thought, Intelligence, and Wisdom"*, the essay explained the correlation between genius and melancholy. Aristotle conducted an analysis of prior myths and literary works in which he underlined the great features of heroes and their melancholy features, coming to the conclusion that all outstanding men suffered from melancholic fits[188]. In other words, Aristotle suggested for the first time that the atrabiliar disorder constituted an ethical quality[189] connected with Platonic *furor*[190]. Nevertheless, not only did he consider tragic heroes as outstanding melancholy men[191], but also ascribed that condition to politicians, poets, philosophers and artists in general[192]. According to Milena Schiesari, it is *Problem XXX* that probably upheld melancholy as an "élite affliction", a burden of excellence that oppressed uncommon men[193]. Aristotle seemed to attribute that state of superiority to a

[187] Lawlor, *From Melancholia to Prozac,* p. 3.
[188] Juliana Schiesari *The Gendering of Melancholia. Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolism of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (London: Cornell University Press), pp. 101-102.
[189] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) pp. 6-7.
[190] Ecstatic exaltation shared by the poet, the lover and the philosopher. Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia,* p. 20.
[191] E. g. : Bellerophon, Heracles, and Ajax.
[192] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 21.
[193] Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, pp. 101-102.

natural excess of *humor melancholicus*, which, when manifested, did not culminate in pathology but in a particular kind of ethos[194]. In *Saturn and the Melancholy*, Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl state that this is how the dark side of genius was discovered since the madman and the genius shared the same preconditions, and the same virtually unlimited powers of imagination[195].

By rediscovering the classics, Italian humanists revived the strong liaison between brilliance and melancholy. The main exponent of that current was the Florentine philosopher Marsilio Ficino, the man who gave life to the stereotype of the melancholic genius, which was exported all over Europe[196]. Ficino was a self-proclaimed melancholic, and ascribed his condition to the influence of Saturn, the ill-fated planet of melancholy[197]. Despite the heavy role played by planets at birth, Ficino realised that he could not blame a heavenly body for his status, and therefore agreed with Aristotle in outlining his superior intellect as a divine gift. Saturn was revealed to have a rather positive influence on scholars – setting them apart from the vulgus[198]. Hence, the lowness of spirit evolved into a desirable condition that helped to achieve spiritual greatness; the Saturnine man became the symbol of creativity and of exceptional faculties[199]. Ultimately, Ficino worked a sort of rehabilitation of melancholy and Saturn[200], mixing different traditions such as astrology, medicine, and philosophy.

### *1.4.2 Female Melancholy: the Relationship between Women and Genius*

The blessings of melancholy were only available to male individuals, while melancholic women were simply labelled as ill[201]. The androcentric vision of melancholy was already evident back in the times of Aristotle. Indeed, among the list of outstanding victims of melancholy compiled by the Greek philosopher, there were no females mentioned but a category. Sibyls were the only noteworthy example, nevertheless, their prophetic ravings were induced by black bile. Hence, Schiesari points out that the female individual was excluded from the exceptional category, and if she happened to "express all the manic-

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194 Black bile should achieve some require conditions in order achieve genius; the *humor melancholicus* should be present in significant quantities, but not enough to create a pathological condition, it should be of a medium temperature, neither too cold nor too hot, Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, pp. 28, 30.

195 Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, pp. 33, 37, 39.

196 Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 112-113.

197 "Saturnum in Aquarium ascendentem" -"Saturn seems to have impressed the seal of melancholy on me from the beginning". Giorgio Agamben, *Stanze: la Parola e il Fantasma nella Cultura Occidentale*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2011), p. 17.

198 "Saturn guides the contemplation spirit of the highest things" Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 145.

199 Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 114.

200 Agamben, *Stanze: la Parola e il Fantasma nella Cultura Occidentale,* p. 17.

201 Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, p. 40.

depressive characteristics of uncommon inspiration, it is because she is sick and both because she bears a 'natural' relation to genius that mark the mad poet". In other words, women who exhibited the same symptoms of distinguished melancholic men were mad.

A similar belief was due to female physiology, as women were considered colder, and therefore, could not satisfy the lukewarm condition necessary for genius[202], just sticking to torpor, fear, and depression[203]. Hippocratic and Galenic theories, which continued to persist in seventeenth-century medical care, maintained that female melancholy was a symptom of madness; a theory that influenced even Robert Burton. However, that scheme of ideas was going to change soon thanks to the introduction of nerves. With Willis's discovery of the nervous systems, women were found to be more prone to develop fits of nerves and hysteric disorders than their male counterparts. That new awareness helped to gradually craft melancholy into a desirable and fashionable pathology[204]. Laura Alexander declares that, after such a shift occurred, women started to appropriate the artistic side of melancholy[205], and expressed their painful experiences in a new aesthetic discourse[206]. Ladies had learned to pour their melancholic thoughts into poems and literature in general, as in the case of Ann Finch. The countess of Winchilsea composed a poem in which she analysed authentic and inauthentic melancholy, declaring suffering as the marker of her inclination towards genius[207].

### *1.4.3 The Elitist and Fashionable disease of Women, Poets and Sensible People*

By the eighteenth century, physicians classified melancholy as a "fashionable disease", principally due to its implications for genius and fragile nerves. For instance, James McKittrick made a list of those maladies which were welcomed by the upper society: spleen, vapours, nerves, and atrabiliar disorders[208]. Robinson seemed to agree with the popularity of melancholy, observing that a large number of "Court Ladies" complained about their wretched nerves and melancholic disposition. On the other hand, Cheyne assumed melancholy as a highly refined disease that plagued wealthy and witty people[209], who, according to him," have a great deal of sensibility, are quick thinkers, feel pleasure and pain

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[202] Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia,* p. 105,107.
[203] Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy* , p. 39, Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia,* p. 108.
[204] Laura Alexander, *The Beauty of Melancholy and British Women Writers, 1670-1720*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), pp. 2-3-4.
[205] Ibid. p. 5.
[206] Laura Alexander, *The Beauty of Melancholy and British Women Writers*, p. 7.
[207] Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy', p. 44.
[208] Ibid. p. 25.
[209] Bandiera, *Settecento e Malinconia,* p. 20.

the most readily, and are most livery imagination[210]". For that reason, the amusements of polite society and a fashionable lifestyle were considered an effective mode to cure melancholy. In *On the Discourse of the People of Fashion* (1766), the Swiss physician Samuel August Tissot seemed to admit that fashionable people were "subject to fashionable diseases because of their modern, civilized lifestyle". Those "sons of idleness" suffered from several disturbances related to frail nerves, meanwhile, labourers possessed stronger nerves and sturdier bodies, which prevented them from developing a melancholic illness[211]. Tissot affirmed that sensible people possessed a superior ethos and the most refined feelings; for the first time, moral superiority was associated with the suffering induced by the hyperstimulation of nerves[212], giving way to what Barker-Benfield defined as the "cult of melancholy", affiliated to the cult of sensibility and refined emotions[213].

Hallucinations, one of the most fearsome aspects linked to the melancholic condition, were regarded as the root of genius and as the main inspiration for poets. The extreme introspecting focus required of poets was also a primary feature of depression, once again underlining the fact that melancholy was both a source of creative elevation through suffering and also a seed of mental illness[214].

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[210] Cheyne, The English Malady, p. i-ii.
It seemed highly improbable for an ironmonger or a peasant to develop melancholic disorder, as they possessed a crude nervous system. Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy', p. 30.
[211] Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy', p. 30, 46.
[212] Ibidem.
[213] G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. xix.
[214] Ibid. pp. 31, 34, 38-39.
Writing while suffering was very popular, as the writer could experiment extreme states of agony and achieve a higher level of artistic expression.

# 2. Melancholy in the Eighteenth-Century English Literature

From the previous chapter, it can be seen that *humor melancholicus* represented a major centre of interest in medicine and in art as well. By exploiting the rich corpus of beliefs and superstition that gathered around that issue, melancholy is revealed to be a suitable subject for literature. The topic was presented for the first time in Elizabethan drama, yet it is with John Milton that melancholy established itself as a well-defined topic, with a series of clichés and tropes. As a result, its importance grew more and more in the English literary context, becoming the topic of several poets. Authors could express their melancholic affliction under several forms, which ranged from indulging in pleasing despondency to utter depression. Those two varieties acquired the names of white melancholy and black melancholy, whose distinction was fundamental in understanding the severity of the affliction. Inevitably, melancholy became one of the main topics of prose fiction, since it was recognised as a common human experience. However, the topic was discussed in all its gloominess in the Graveyard poetry. Indeed, that group of poets was able to combine those central themes with a landscape of gothic taste, which darkened the melancholic experience. As a result, Gothic fiction drew inspiration from those poems in order to explore human misery in prose.

## 2.1 Early Representation of Melancholy: Elizabethan Drama and John Milton

Despite inspiring several English writers over the centuries, the first ones to fully exploit the potentialities of melancholy were the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights who based their melancholic characters on the popular stereotypes portrayed in Renaissance expository books. In addition to that, the great wave of melancholic characters may have been a consequence of the protests that took place in London by the end of the Sixteenth century. During those days, a faction of 'Melancholy Malcontent' openly contested the current socio-political order and the world in general. Those figures, that generally sided against the world, and belonged to the court, were faithfully transposed by the Early Modern playwrights in stereotyped figures.

In effect, writers were able to condense in those figures the features generally attributed to atrabiliar men, such as unhappiness, alienation, and rebellion, and their desire for comedy and satire. Those new stock characters embodied a shared imagery of behaviours and moral qualities, which was linked with melancholy. In effect, those characters presented physical attributes such as dark facial expressions, a penchant for dark clothing, and a gloomy posture consisting of folded arms and downcast eyes. Malcontent melancholics were generally divided in four categories, each with its specific features: the traveller, the political schemer,

the scholar and the lover[215]. The traveller usually embodied the spirit of a fashionable young man who had undertaken an instructional Grand Tour all over Europe, in which he enjoyed the refined beauties of the continent. Once back to his native county, the young gentleman appeared to be unsatisfied with everything he saw or heard of, providing a pretext for satire as he fancied himself as a learnt European. Starobinski classified the Elizabethan malcontent traveller as a youth that developed his sombre humours, his atheism, and his misanthropy as a consequence of squandering his fortune in Italy[216]. The political schemer, instead, fully embodied the stereotype of the Saturnine man. Being acid, discontented, unpleasant, and disappointed with the world, the political schemer possessed a series of Machiavellian features[217]. Being one of the oldest stock figures in literature, the melancholic lover constituted an exceptional case. His typical behaviours partly descended from the Medieval tradition of courtly love, and partly from medical knowledge. The lover's melancholic features, which included an excessive obsession with physical appearance, sighing, pallor, loss of appetite, and sleeplessness, were not the result of a humoral disproportion. On the contrary, similar symptoms were issued from unrequited love, a condition which could be fully recovered by obtaining the desired object. In addition to that, male melancholic lovers were exclusively employed as comic relief due to their dramatic attitude, and extravagant predilection for literature, while female melancholic lovers expressed unaffected pain and genuine pathos.

The scholar embodied a kind of melancholic affliction developed while studying until late night in solitude, a condition already extensively investigated by Robert Burton. The figure of the scholar officially linked the melancholic stance with a life of studies, sacrifice, restlessness, and loneliness, and demonstrated that that figure was both naturally predisposes to develop the disease, while nourishing it through their activities.

On the other hand, tragedies portrayed melancholy types both as victims and as perpetrators. The latter were shaped after the sinister god Saturn, whose malevolent personality devoted to revenge and schemes was traditionally attributed to melancholics. On the contrary, victims reflected the passivity attributed to the melancholic condition. Those characters were caught by the course of the events orchestrated by the villains, unable to react with determination to the tragic incidents of their life. For that reason, they remained defenceless and idle, sometimes slowly descending into madness. Indeed, melancholy was

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[215] Bridget Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy,* pp. 1, 17-19, 22.
[216] Jean Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia,* p. 93.
Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy,* p. 23.

a starting point for madness, an irreversible state that constituted a pretext for expressing extravagant emotions, blurring the limits between imagination and reality[218].

However, Elizabethan melancholic stock characters could not adequately disclose their vast arsenal of gloomy afflictions without a proper setting. As Bridget Gellert Lyons affirms, melancholic lore not only did provide writers with the necessary inspiration to create new characters, but also with enough materials to write down landscapes that perfectly fit melancholic delirium. According to the secular belief of humours, the victims of melancholy were more prone to project their sombre thoughts on the surrounding scenery than other humoral types. That assumption encoded a new kind of landscape, which fully embodied the mournful torment of the melancholic mind, consisting of a nocturnal landscape and nocturnal fauna. That scenery featured bats and owls, but also dogs and cats; bleak plants such as yew and cypress; heavy and dark minerals such as lead.

Despite those first approaches to the literary depiction of melancholy, it is only with John Milton that the complex corpus of aesthetics and behaviours linked with atrabiliar affliction was fully developed in lyrical poetry[219]. In his coupled poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*[220] (1645), Milton appeared to outline two separate kinds of melancholy. The former portrayed the dull and dark variety spreading from the depths of Hell, while the latter focused on the noble kind linked with Hermetic tradition, which illustrates the double nature of melancholy. In *L'Allegro* Milton dealt with the tragic side of melancholy, delivering an extensive portrayal of the hellish reality tinged with black, in which the melancholy man was plunged – a raven-black darkness surrounded by nocturnal animals. On the other hand, in *Il Penseroso*, melancholy underwent a process of transformation, presenting its capital train of darkness in a new guise. Here, blackness acquired a contemplative quality, since the man looking for solitude was looking for wisdom as well. *Il Penseroso* may well be considered as a glorification of the inner life of the melancholic type, which is not just a symptom of passivity but of creative genius, "the imaginative maker of images." The poem heavily relied on stock features attributed to the victims of melancholy, such as the love for darkness and shadows, and the dislike for solar light. Moreover, it established the new archetype of the reserved individual who loves nature, and muses for hours over the landscape, gently indulging in his melancholy during the twilight.

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218 Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, pp. 24-25-26, 34-35, 37-38-39.
219 Ibid. p. 44-45-150.
220 The Italianate form of pensive, a synonym for "melancholy". Amy Louise Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy: A Study in the Taste for Melancholy Poetry, 1700-1751* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), pp. 19-20.

Consequently, eighteenth-century poets were massively influenced by those new attributes. From that moment on, melancholy will be less and less associated with a pathological state, and more with a delicate inclination of thought characterised by a gentle and half-pleasing despondency[221]. Milton succeeded in combining together all the aspects of melancholy into a solid and unitary image. English eighteenth-century poems revolved around the image of the ecstatic, contemplative, quiet, and saturnine nature lover[222], who struggled with different kinds of melancholy, yet privileged the darker side[223]. Milton had deliberatively dismissed the pathological symptoms of melancholy – disease, fear and suicidal tendencies – and focused the attention on pensiveness as a mark of "divinest Melancholy[224]". In conclusion, he helped establish the connection between retired mood, solitude, contemplative love for nature and melancholy[225].

## 2.2 Eighteenth-Century Poetry: White Melancholy and Black Melancholy

Eighteenth-century poets expanded Milton's heritage by identifying two separate species of melancholic affliction, which became popular in 1750[226], namely white melancholy and black melancholy. The former was a product of the culture of sensibility[227], a sort of elegiac sadness that prompted creativity, and was generally valorised by poetry, while the latter was commonly associated with the morbid feeling of depression introduced in Milton's *L'Allegro*[228].

### *2.2.1 White Melancholy: the Pleasure of Melancholic Solitude in Nature*

White melancholy represented the most pleasing aspects of melancholy, which was described as "a good easy sort of state" by Thomas Gray. As Sickels underlines, "[i]ts basis is an intellectual contemplation of the instability of life and of fame, and its emotions is vague and diffuse and on the whole not unpleasant." White melancholy corresponded to a state of pensiveness, a solitary and quiet indulgence in philosophical meditations and

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[221] Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, pp. 151, 160-161.
[222] Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 223.
[223] John Baker, "'Strange Contrarys': Figures of Melancholy in Eighteenth-Century Poetry", in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, Before Depression, 1660–1800,* ed. by Allan Ingram (Basingstoke, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 98.
[224] Eleanor M. Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 14. Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy*, p. 19.
[225] Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy*, p. 20
[226] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist,* p. 47.
[227] Sensibility emphasized the inner dimension of feelings, giving relevance to personal grief and melancholic thoughts. Andrew Smith, *Gothic Death 1740-1914: a Literary History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 11.
[228] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia,* p. 223.

musings. That disposition was mostly pleasurable and generally enhanced by the observation of sublime landscapes. Aligning perfectly with Miltonian legacy, white melancholic poems tended to portray the pleasure of contemplation, which started with an invocation to the Goddess Melancholy veiled in black, generally accompanied by music and pathos. The standard traits of the goddess included downcast eyes and dark tresses, and was generally portrayed waling among nature or sitting in contemplation, while folding its arms and shedding tears[229]. Pathetic fallacy, the projection of melancholic feelings on the surrounding natural background, was another element that established itself as a trope of the eighteenth-century white melancholic tradition, since landscapes and feelings tended to influence each other. Melancholy odes generally presented a description of circumstances dear to the goddess, both in terms of time and place. The hours consecrated to melancholy ranged from the evening to midnight, yet the former was the favourite time of the day for indulging in melancholy musings. Twilight, with its soft and mellow shades, accompanied the mild tones of melancholic affliction, while midnight's darkness expressed a marked trait of despair[230]. Evening, in general, lasted from the twilight to the moonrise, and offered a suitable period of time for melancholic musing, accompanied by the soft humming of the birds. Similarly to the periods of the day, even certain periods of the year were more prolific for the development of melancholic feelings. In effect, winter, and principally autumn, were the seasons in which nature left prosperity behind, becoming bleak and bare[231].

Eighteenth-century poets like Gray, Collins, and Warton, might be ascribed to the Miltonic tradition, as the vast majority of their odes presented a contemplative character. The poets expressed their personal sorrows, yet betrayed a gloomy enjoyment of that miserable situation. In order to better enjoy their sombre but pleasant musings, melancholy men had the tendency to look for a setting that would perfectly fit their emotional state. Therefore, haunts were many as many were the varieties of melancholy, ranging from the mildly Miltonic, to the picturesque and romantic, and ending with the haunts of Gothic taste. Milton provided the main tropes for an appropriate gloomy shelter with his descriptions of murmuring rivers, gentle shades, and restful groves, while the succeeding poets developed those landscapes in a much more extreme key portraying forests, deserts, and precipices, reaching Gothic peaks with bleak tombs and sepulchral settings[232].

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[229] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist,* pp. 11, 41-42-43, 45.
[230] The equivalent to Thomas Warton's 'religious horror'.
[231] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist*, p. 241.
[232] Ibid. pp. 46-47-48

In conclusion, Sickels suggests that nature had become a dominion in which humans could express their own pain, a new language through which poets could vent their own frustrations and apprehensions. The landscape could play a double role, both as a trigger and as a sedative for melancholy. Sadness could arise from an in-depth contemplation of the natural sight, endangered by the early industrialisation, and by human foolishness towards nature. Yet, at the same time, natural scenery could provide a means of solace. For instance, Reverend William Lisle Bowles recognised, in his poem *The River Cherwell*, the soothing qualities of extreme and wild landscapes, such as mountains and seas. Instead, poetess Anna Steward was a fitting example of pathetic fallacy, since she projected her sufferings on the landscape. Indeed, she described her gloomy wanderings in the twilight as a pretext to express her regrets for the foregone happiness, which clashed with her present sorrows[233].
By the mid-eighteenth century, indulging in the pleasing melancholy induced by gardens, was a well-established practice among those poets who nodded to Milton's style[234]. The solitary admiration of growing plants and shifting landscapes was a source of pleasure and an antidote to the lowness of spirit. However, as Lady Luxborough's letters expressed, meditation was a double-edged sword, charming at first, but evolving into a dreadful sensation of abandonment in the long run[235].

### *2.2.2 Black Melancholy and the Negative Experience of Spleen: Alexander Pope and Anne Finch*

As Robert Burton had previously declared, the first phases of melancholy coincided with a pleasing state of gentle despondency, which contributed to the creative input[236]. However, it would turn soon into a pathological condition, sensibly worsening the victim's quality of life. Similarly to pathologic melancholy, white melancholy could take a dreary turn, and develop into black melancholy. That dreadful affliction was generally associated with a state of morbid depression[237], therefore poets affected by that condition had a penchant for depressive and horrific odes in which they could describe their hopelessness. Black melancholy's paraphernalia included several dreadful images such as Superstition, Fear, Despair, Horror, caves, magic, and nightly dread. The poetess Mary Robinson described her descent into madness, and into black melancholy, in the poem '*The Progress of Melancholy,*

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[233] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist,* pp. 120, 251, 257.
[234] Stephen Bending, 'Melancholy Amusements: Women, Gardens, and the Depression of Spirits' in *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol. 44.2, (2011), 41-62 (p. 47).
[235] Ibid. p. 60.
[236] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist*, p. 62.
[237] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia,* p. 223.

*a Fragment'*. Here, the poem began by describing some solitary wanderings in the presence of funeral monuments in the pleasing shades of twilight, which inevitably glided towards the portrayal of hallucinating visions on a freezing heath, just to end with a view of a precipice on the sea, with melancholy plunging into despair[238].

Other noteworthy poetic examples of black melancholy were provided by Alexander Pope and Ann Finch. The poet Alexander Pope gave a satirical and unflattering description of melancholy in the canto *The Cave of Spleen,* contained in the poetic composition *The Rape of the Locke*. Pope based his allegorical poem on the medical theories of vapours and spleen, which were popular at the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, Pope's aim was to ridicule those who were constantly sighing and indulging in their sufferings. By portraying Spleen as a "sullen goddess" who extends her dominion in a bleak subterranean cave filled with vapours, fumes, and hallucinating servants, Pope intended to show the dark side of what was considered as a fashionable disease[239]. Anne Finch, Countess of Wilchinsea, was even more radical than Pope in condemning the melancholic condition. Despite being a fashionable court lady and a skilled poet, the Countess suffered from a deeply-rooted melancholy. Unlike her fellow courtiers and poets, Finch was unable to enjoy the pleasurable side of that condition, being affected by numerous depressive episodes that she described as being trapped in a 'Dead sea'[240]. In '*A Pindaric Ode on the Spleen'*, the poetess cleverly dismissed the elitist conception of melancholy, bringing to light the underlying pain[241]. Spleen is here described as an evanescent and formless entity, whose nature is impossible to grasp. Despite being a shapeless object that eludes human comprehension, eighteenth-century high society understood spleen as a sign of moral elevation, and as a mark of highly-developed sensibility. Finch openly portrayed the deleterious effects of melancholy, by describing it as a debilitating force that intrudes on the mind and darkens every thought. However, spleen had a stranger ascendancy on writers, since it exposed them to self-doubt[242]. That aspect was particularly dangerous for Finch, because, together with delusions and hallucinating fits, melancholy drained her writing powers. The Countess felt constantly under attack, comparing her body to a fortress sieged by spleen.

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[238] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist*, p. 62-63.
[239] Lawrence Babb, 'The Cave of Spleen' in The Review of English Studies, Vol. 12, 46(1936), 165-176 (p. 165); Allan Ingram and Stuart Sim, 'Introduction: Depression before Depression', in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, Before Depression, 1660–1800*, ed. by Allan Ingram (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 6, 18.
[240] Ibid. p. 19.
[241] Clark Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy', in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, Before Depression, 1660–1800,* ed. by Allan Ingram (Basingstoke, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 44-45.
[242] Baker, "'Strange Contrarys'. pp. 92-93.

Therefore, Anne Finch can be considered as an exponent of black melancholy, as she conveyed the sufferings linked to the present and the unsettling loss of hope in the future. Spleen was a negative malady that undermined the body and destroyed the mind, smothering rational cogitations and artistic creativity at once; disordering imagination with sombre visions, and filling life with irrational feelings of sorrow and fear[243].

## 2.3 The Female Experience: Love Melancholy in Eighteenth-Century Poetry

As a result of the increasing importance of feelings and sensibility, love melancholy became more and more relevant in the eighteenth-century literary background. Women were generally associated with delicate nerves and overdeveloped sensibility, hence love poetry was inevitably connected with the female experience of melancholy. Of course, not all love poetry was composed by female poets, but it generally privileged a womanly approach. That shift of focus, as love melancholy was traditionally attributed to men, perhaps occurred because women could not access to philosophical melancholy due to social concerns of propriety, while "sweet sensibility" was considered more appropriate. Hence, female melancholy developed in the field of feelings linked with all the forms of love, encompassing the romantic and familiar one, even extending to benevolence and religion[244].

Love poetry was soon identified as a female domain, even if the composition of similar poems remained a male prerogative influenced by Italian compositions. Male poets emphasised female despair by means of well-established tropes, which encompassed songs composed as a coping mechanism with the loss of a lover usually fallen in war, the lamentations of a maiden seduced and deserted, the evergreen topic of unrequited love, the lovers splitting due to external circumstances (a cruel fate or cruel relatives) and parting to meet no more, and the girl forced to take vows and abandon her lover. Generally, those figures that mourned their lost love had three tragic epilogues, which consisted of madness, suicide, and death of a broken heart. That was due to the fact that women were expected to centre their social and emotional life around their husbands, so it was natural for them to lose their life in conjunction with the loss of their loved ones. The female decline started with a desperate nocturnal wandering in search of the body of the fallen lover while singing a song to the moon, and then it naturally ended with the death of the heroine. If the latter was not available, the protagonist usually surrendered to madness, and restlessly roamed in

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[243] John F. Sena, 'Melancholy in Anne Finch and Elizabeth Carter: The Ambivalence of an Idea' in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol.1, (1971), 108-119, (p. 110-111, 114-115).
[244] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist*, pp. 182, 204.

a delusional state in utter solitude. Those wanderings generally took place at night, in wild locations such as graveyards and ruins, and were accompanied by sorrowful songs. The final destiny for a desperate heroine was to commit suicide shortly after the passing of her lover[245].

## 2.4 The Eighteenth-century Novel: Melancholy as a Human Default Condition

In his article dedicated to the English eighteenth-century novel, Doughty affirms that "The novels of the Eighteenth Century, too, revealed the extent of the English Malady." In effect, "the malady of the century" had acquired such a relevance that it even entered the domain of the novel, which was the newest form of writing. The vast majority of the novels composed during that period appeared to be attempts to divert melancholic thoughts into some practical activity. The most notable examples for that were Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne, two novelists that never hid the fact that they wrote their masterpieces in order to treat their own melancholic affliction. In particular, Reverend Sterne affirmed that *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* was written "against the spleen", discussing and mocking both the ancient and modern treaties on melancholy.

Evidently, not only did authors suffer from vapours and melancholy fit, but also their characters did so. A large number of characters presented melancholic disorders that varied in their symptoms on the basis of the authors' inclinations[246]. Daniel Defoe, for example, heavily relied on the spiritual autobiography pattern, therefore his characters developed disorders linked to religious melancholy. Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders both arrived at a point of their narrations in which they were left alone confronting with their sinful deeds, a process that led them to utter despair, accompanied by fits of vapours. Defoe resolved their existential dread with an in-depth reading session of the Bible, which helped his characters to come to the conclusion that they were not alone thanks to God[247]. Samuel Richardson, instead, centred his fictional portrayal of melancholy around the female experience of patriarchal exploitation. In eighteenth-century England, women had to face countless hardships related to their socioeconomic status. For instance, they could not vote, they could not inherit, and they were forced to marry a man chosen by their father in order to preserve their fortune. Therefore, Richardson portrayed two persecuted heroines, Pamela and Clarissa, who were lead to anguish and despair by society That model will influence

[245] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist*, pp. 133, 207, 216, 218, 222, 226, 228-229-230.
[246] Oswald Doughty, 'The English Malady of the Eighteenth Century' in *The Review of English Studies*, Vol.2, 7(1926), 257-269, p. 262.
[247] Stuart Sim, 'Despair, melancholy and the Novel', in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century, Before Depression, 1660–1800,* ed. by Allan Ingram (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 120-121.

following writers such as Frances Burney, Mary Hays and, to a certain extent, Ann Radcliffe. In the eponymous novel, the comic heroine Pamela is called to preserve her honour (imposed by the laws of propriety) against the repeated attacks of Mr B, who is her employer also a professional rake. By finding her force in the knowledge that God is with her, even though testing her faith, Pamela faces the challenge with the necessary steadiness to overcome every obstacle, and then convert Mr B by the very end of the novel.

On the other hand, religion is not quite a solace for Clarissa. Contrary to Pamela, the most tragic Richardsonian heroine is plunged into an utter state of misery due to the tragic loss of her purity at the hands of the man that she loved, the rake Lovelace. By losing her only apparent value for the English eighteenth-century society, Clarissa is deserted by her family, and finds no support in prayer, as she no longer satisfies the requirements of purity and honour of a proper lady[248]. Hence, Richardson delivered one of the most relevant portrayals of female melancholy connected to the powerlessness of women in front of the patriarchal system of English eighteenth-century society. Clarissa's affliction presents all the symptoms ascribed to melancholy, including loss of appetite, bad digestion and consequent pulmonary failure, fainting fits, and a strong disorder of passions. Therefore, her death is generally acknowledged as 'death from grief', caused by melancholy that destroys the nervous system. By paraphrasing George Chey, Clark Lawlor affirms that 'long Grief, dark Melancholy, hopeless natural Love' and religious melancholy 'waste' and 'wear out' the nervous system". For that reason, melancholy acts as an accelerator of decline, resulting in consumption or in alternative to suicide[249].

Reverend Laurence Sterne came to the conclusion that melancholy was a constitutive element of human experience, hence the contradicting aspects of pleasing sadness and hopeless despair. Concerning that subject, Stuart Sim affirms that "melancholy is a powerful presence in Sterne's Fiction, almost a default emotional position for the main characters in Tristram Shandy, who find themselves unable to exert much in the way of meaningful control over the progress of their lives." Sternean characters fully embodied melancholic passivity, as they implemented a resigned stance towards life in general[250]. That

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[248] Sim, 'Despair, Melancholy and the Novel'. pp. 123-124-125.

[249] Clark Lawlor, '"Long Grief, dark Melancholy, hopeless natural Love': Clarissa, Cheyne and Narratives of Body and Soul' in *Gesnerus* 63 (2005), 103-112, (pp. 104, 106-107-108).

[250] Stuart Sim, 'Despair, melancholy and the Novel', p. 133. Melancholy is present in the large amount of hardships and losses faced by the Shandy family, but also in the style of writing. The fragmentary and labyrinthic format of the novel is just the literary rendition of melancholic wanders, a sort of stillness and stagnation masked by progression, which well resumes the state of stagnation and passivity proper of the melancholics. Inanity is perfectly represented by that frozen story which does not seem able to develop into a full narrative and remains fragmented. Laura Bandiera *Settecento e Malinconia,* pp. 42-43.

"melancholic resignation" did not involve a religious meaning, yet it became the signature feature of Sternean narratives. Unlike Robinson Crusoe, Tristram Shandy is not able to find God's answer in his meditations about the harshness of life. Therefore, characters were constantly plunged into the depths of despair due to their personal disgraces, and that the only consolation was provided by the acknowledgment that suffering was an experience shared by the whole humanity. In other words, humans were destined to a state of melancholic inanity that should be accepted in total resignation[251]. In Sterne's last work, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, spleen and melancholy are mentioned several times, since the whole plot revolves around the figure of a splenetic traveller modelled on Tobias Smollett[252]. Travel was a further cause for melancholy, as exiles were observed to decline both physically and mentally when far from their familiar landscapes, yet Englishmen firmly believed that Grand Tour could heal their melancholic condition[253]. Reverend Yorick travels to see the world, deluding himself to be in love with every woman he meets along the way, or sharing melancholic experiences with the fellow humans he stumbles into[254].

In conclusion, melancholic disposition acquired a significant status in English literature. In the space of almost two centuries, the literary portrayal of melancholy witnessed a remarkable development from the stereotyped stock figures of the Elizabethan theatre, to the Miltonian gentle despondency in a natural background; from the inner turmoil of the eighteenth-century poets on the brink of black and white melancholy to the recognition that melancholy is a constituent element of human nature that is fully expressed in novels.

## 2.5 The Gothic Melancholy: Aesthetic of the Sublime and the Cult of the Ruins

Despite the large variety of melancholic disorders presented by previous English literature, the second half of the eighteenth century took a gloomy and mournful turn due to Edmund Burke's theory of the Sublime. By entering the literary domain as a developed aesthetic theory, the sublime instilled a new creative impetus to black melancholy and fostered a wave of horrific literature that portrayed the bleakest side of melancholy through Gothic paraphernalia.

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[251] Stuart Sim, 'Despair, Melancholy and the Novel', p. 134.

[252] Vapours were a recurring bane in Smollett's novels, as the vast majority of his characters – Celinda from *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, Crabtree in *Peregrine Pickle,* Narcissa in *Roderick Random* and Matthew Bramble in *Humphrey Clinker* just to name a few – suffered from vapours, making an appearance in all of his writings. Doughty, 'The English Malady of the Eighteenth Century', p. 263.

[253] Jean Starobinski, *L'Inchiostro della Malinconia,* pp. 210-211-212.

[254] Stuart Sim, 'Despair, melancholy and the Novel', p. 135.

*2.5.1 The Burkean Sublime*

As shown above, Edmund Burke introduced the term 'sublime' for the very first time in the aesthetic field with his dissertation *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757. The sublime matter had already been discussed in ancient times in *Peri Hypsos*, a Roman-era Greek document attributed to Longinus. In that work, the sublime was understood as a question of style of language, which consisted of a series of rhetorical figures that could elevate the compositions of the mind[255]. Longinus recognised two primary sources of sublime, magnanimity (*magalophrosyne*) and passion (*pathos*), that were completed by the virtues of speech (*aretai*) and *phantasia* – a "thought productive of speech", and the sight of natural landscapes[256]. Finally, Longinian sublime was conceived as a violent force that dominated the self by means of removing the subject's personal freedom, inspiring the eighteenth century awe for violent sublime scenes[257]. In 1674, the French translation of *Peri Hypsum* at the hands of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux operated a revival of interest on that matter, which directly influenced Burke's work[258]. The *Enquiry* had the purpose to exhaustively analyse the relation between beauty and terror, laying down a model of terror that met the expectations of Gothic writers. As a result, the author presented those principles that lied at the basis of the feelings of pleasure that were excited by extreme and terrible sights. In order to proceed with that plan, Burke started his enquiry by analysing the theory of sympathy previously elaborated by philosophers like Hume and Smith. The Irish philosopher directed his attention towards the formation of pleasure and delight while observing scenes of emotional turmoil that acted on human's moral sense as a reaction against fear. Even mournful sights like death could be elaborated as a source of delight, nevertheless, Burke carefully pointed out that extreme pains, dangers, and terrors produced enjoyment only when witnessed at a safe distance, both physical and emotional. Only under those conditions, terror can excite "a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror"[259].

[255] Jennifer J. Jones, 'Beyond Burke's Precedent and Back Again: Longinus and the Romantic Sublime' in *Neophilologus* 99 (2015), 175-189 (pp. 180-181)
[256] Eugenio Refini, 'Longinus and Poetic Imagination in Late Renaissance Literary Theory' in *Translations of the sublime: The Early Modern Reception and Dissemination of Longinus'* Peri Hupsos *in Rhetoric, the Visual Arts, Architecture and the Theatre,* ed. by Caroline van Eck, Stijn Bussels, Maarten Delbeke, and Jurgen Pieters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 44-45, 50.
[257] Vanessa L. Ryan, 'The Physiological Sublime: Burke's Critique of Reason' in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 62, 2 (2001), 265-279 (p. 266-267-268).
[258] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 38.
[259] Smith, *Gothic Death 1740-1914,* pp. 17-18.

Burke's concept of Sublime stood in open contrast with the concept of Beauty[260] since it constituted a raw force that nurtured unbalance, mental disturbances, and violent passions over the severe rules of balance and harmony connected to beauty. According to the Irish philosopher, beautiful objects produce pleasing emotions due to their smallness and smoothness. Meanwhile, sublime objects were vast, magnificent and obscure, and evoked a sense of power and infinity. Despite sublime objects could not be fully understood by reason, they could elevate the mind, expand the soul, and enhance the powers of imagination[261]. Circumstances like terror, perception of danger, power, darkness, vastness, and pain[262] could overwhelm the rational capacities of the mind, and excite the instinct of self-preservation[263]. The latter was closely related to nerves and sensibility, as all those objects which produced a muscular tension that blocked both the body and the mind were considered sublime: "on self-preservation rests our sense of the sublime which is that which terrifies and astonishes us, in particular whatever is vast, obscure and powerful."[264]. Since humankind shared equal physiology and organs, Burke claimed that the sensation of sublime must be standardised in all human creatures. The sensation of delight and agreeable terror is highly intense, and connected to individual sensibility. Consequently, a similar fanciful quality allowed sublime's duality of terror and pleasure[265].

That new aesthetic attitude was translated in art, especially in painting an poetry. Natural sights, which once were considered ugly and imperfect, were now regarded with admiration and sublime awe, due to the intense feelings of wonder, horror, and joy that they inspired[266]. By its ability to produce strong physical and mental reactions, Burke recognised in the sublime a valid cure for melancholy. Sublime feelings provided the energy necessary to labour while preventing melancholy, dejection, despair, and often self-murder[267]. Furthermore, the concept of melancholy itself was completed by the sublime, as that new aesthetic category filled in the role that the supernatural played in creative composition. While exploring the depths of the mind connected with melancholy, sublime elevation was

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[260] The standard of creative production, the set of rules of ideal harmony and proportions rigidly respected by classical and neoclassical artists. Botting, *Gothic,* p. 7.
[261] Botting, *Gothic*, pp. 36-37.
[262] And all the elements that provoked psychological tension. Richard Shusterman, 'Somaesthetics and Burke's Sublime' in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 45, 4(2005), 323-341 (p. 333).
[263] "The Passions which concern self-preservation, turn mostly on *pain* or *danger*. The idea of *pain*, *sickness*, and *death*, fill the mind with strong emotions of horror;" Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful,* edited by Dave Womersley (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 86.
[264] Anthony Quinton, 'Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful' in *Philosophy*, Vol.36, 136 (1961), 71-73 (p. 72); Richard Shusterman, 'Somaesthetics and Burke's Sublime' in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 45, 4(2005), 323-341 (pp. 323, 331).
[265] Ryan, 'The Physiological Sublime', p. 271; Botting, *Gothic,* p. 7.
[266] Botting, *Gothic,* p. 36; Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 114.
[267] Ryan, 'The Physiological Sublime', p. 276.

also as powerful as the ecstatic intellectual elevation prompted by melancholy. That was possible due to the inward-looking nature of both melancholy and sublime. In effect, those internalised phenomena nourished self-interest and fostered internal musings, privileging the attention toward the inner reality of the subject. By the mid-century, melancholy was akin to any experience of vision or sound that was able to bewilder reason by causing a sense of dread without real danger, just like the sublime. The link between sublime and melancholy was underlined by Jennifer Reid, as she affirmed that "what was particularly striking in Burke's formulation of the sublime was that, in some critical respects, it echoed Robert Burton's understanding of melancholy". In other words, Burke's identification of the sublime as an experience of fear without danger, or cause, that undermined mental faculties was very similar to Robert Burton's concept of melancholy as fear and sorrow without a cause, which drained the brain of its full capacities. In addition to that, sublime's attribute of darkness echoed Burton's definition of obscurity, which was considered an amplifier of causeless fear by expanding the powers of imagination in a negative manner[268].

In conclusion, after many years of neglect, the interest in the sublime has been restored and renovated by Burke, who managed to valorise the slight sensation of menace without real pain, or danger, due to a proper distance. Such an enjoyable frisson, generated by powerful scenes of vastity and obscurity, filled the minds of eighteenth-century English writers and was associated with the melancholic creative impetus. In that manner, the new artistic concept generated a wave of literature focused at first on gloomy natural landscapes, and then on full-fledged Gothic landscapes.

### *2.5.2 Radcliffe's Sublime: Terror and Horror*

Writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, and being addressed as "the Doyenne of Gothic fiction", Ann Radcliffe was fully influenced by the general trend of the melancholic sublime. Despite being well aware of Burke's *Enquiry*, Radcliffe preserved a certain independence regarding her interpretation of sublime, due to the influence of the cult of emotions supported by the Age of Sensibility. In a posthumous essay entitled *On the Supernatural in Poetry*, Radcliffe made her own remarks on poetry, on art and on the concept sublime. There, she paid a tribute to William Shakespeare's Gothicism, she opened a discussion on Burke's conclusions on sublime, and delivered a clear-cut differentiation between terror and horror. Radcliffe began her excursus by discussing Shakespeare's ability

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[268] Ryan, 'The Physiological Sublime', p. 276-277; Jennifer Reid, *Worse than Beasts: An Anatomy of Melancholy and the Literature of Travel in 17th and 18th Century England,* [N.P.]: The Davies Group Publishers, 2005), pp. 61-62-63-64.

to portray mysterious darkness and melancholy in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*[269], summoning the spirit of the Bard:

> "[…] the undying spirit […] that could inspire itself with the various characters of the world, and create worlds of its own; to which the grand and the beautiful, the gloomy and the sublime of visible Nature, up-called not only corresponding feelings, but passions; which seemed to perceive a soul in every thing: and thus, in the secret workings of its own characters, and in the and in the combinations of its incidents, kept the elements and local scenery always in unison with them, heightening their effect.[270]"

With those lines, Radcliffe expressed her admiration for the Shakespearean technique, and explained from where she drew the inspiration for her own works. Similarly to Milton's poetry, characters always matched with landscapes, especially those suffering from melancholy, which moved in a landscape typical of white melancholy. Radcliffe also appeared to claim back Shakespearean sublimity, an aspect which had been completely neglected by Burke[271]. For instance, she underlined the fact that in *Macbeth,* sublime landscape plays a paramount role in giving a psychological outline of the main characters, especially the villains, who are assisted in their mischiefs by desolate heaths and troubled elements.

Sublime was a paramount element in Radcliffe's Gothic, and it is no coincidence that the vast majority of the pages of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is occupied by melancholic descriptions of sublime landscapes. In order to heighten the sense of suspense, Radcliffe heavily relied on indistinctness and obscurity. Distance was a decisive factor to foster "the illusions of imagination", it heightened the expectations of the observers, just to let them disappointed once they got closer and realise that "an object often flatters and charms at distance, which vanishes into nothing as we approach it; and 'tis well if it leave only disappointment in our hearts." Moreover, Radcliffe directly addressed Burke in order to discuss the sublime qualities of vastness, obscurity, and grandeur to excite strong feelings in her own terms:

> "The strong light which shows the mountains of a landscape in all their greatness, and with all their rugged sharpness, gives them nothing of the interest with which a more

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[269] Alan D. McKillop, 'Radcliffe on the Supernatural in Poetry' in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol.31, 3 (1932), 352-359, (p. 353).

[270] Ann Radcliffe, *On the Supernatural in Poetry. By the Late Mrs. Radcliffe*. Appendix I in *The Italian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) p. 398.

[271] Nick Groom, Appendix I *On the Supernatural in Poetry,* in *The Italian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) p. 396.

gloomy tint would invest their grandeur, dignifying, though it softens, and magnifying, while it obscures[272]."

Therefore, the opening scene of Hamlet seems to provide a fitting model for Radcliffe's sublime, since it combines darkness, uncertain shadows projected by flaming torches, a night watch in eerie atmosphere of anticipation, and palpitation for the appearance of the ghost – all of that "excite(s) forlorn, melancholy, and solemn feelings[273]". Radcliffe's enquiry on the grounds of Burkean sublime reached the peak with the question of contrast. Indeed, Radcliffe affirmed that terror could not express its fullest potential when suddenly occurring in a gay and light context – g.e. the appearance of Banquo's ghost in Macbeth. Hence, in order to obtain a long-lasting perturbing effect, those "deep and solemn feelings" must be excited under according circumstances, both in terms of time and place. Obscurity was a required element to instil feelings of terror and sublime elevation at once, and those who were not of the same advice were "men of very cold imaginations".

Terror and horror were posed as contrasting forces that operated at two opposite sides of the spectrum. Terror is a force that "[…] expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life", while horror "contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them." According to those definitions, "positive horror" could not act a source for sublime feelings, since only terror accompanied by uncertainty and obscurity could achieve them. Confusion is a negative quality that should be avoided while portraying a scene that is meant to inspire sublime feelings: "confusion is a thing as positive as distinctness […] and it may, by mingling and confounding one image with another, absolutely counteract the imagination , instead of exciting it." Therefore, confusion should be avoided inasmuch it involves definition and clarity, while obscurity or indistinctness should be preferred. In contrast to confusion, obscurity possesses the faculty to elevate the mind through the instigation of fears and doubts, which acquire a sense of magnificence: obscurity "[…] leaves the imagination to act upon few hints that truth reveals to it; […] Obscurity leaves something for the imagination to exaggerate" [274]. Terror, instead, acts upon the mind and imagination, helping to overcome fears and obstacles, and ends the state of passivity of the subject[275]. In conclusion, Radcliffe proposed her own personal development of the Burkean theory of sublime, and expanded the role of obscurity and indistinctness as powerful amplifiers of imagination. Thanks to omission, obscurity could work on imagination, and make it freely release all of its inauspicious and most fearful thoughts. That process finally lead to moral

[272] Ann Radcliffe, *On the Supernatural in Poetry,* pp. 400-401.
[273] Ibid. pp. 398-399-400-401.
[274] Ibid. pp. 403-404.
[275] Botting, *Gothic,* p. 68.

expansion and elevation. On the other hand, horror overloaded the mind with distinct images that could not be processed at once, therefore provoking a sudden block of the rational capacities. On the contrary, terror that occurred under the right circumstances could produce a long-lasting sensation of delight, which expanded the imagination and hinted the existence of a divine order[276].

### *2.5.3 The Taste for Melancholy Musings about Death and Loss: the Graveyard School and the Gothic melancholy*

Following the general taste for melancholy, a group of English poets of the first half of the eighteenth century centred their creative efforts around the representation of gloomy landscapes such as charnel houses, graveyards, tombs, and gloomy shades that constituted the core of Black melancholy. Due to those gloomy topics, that disorganised group was posthumously labelled as "Graveyard poets" by Victorian scholars, even if there was no general agreement on the matter. However, the Graveyard poets held the merit of uniting the pleasing aspects of melancholy with extreme Gothic landscapes, while discussing the moral implications of life[277]. The Graveyard school rose to popularity as a mean to counteract the balanced ideals of the Enlightenment, by means of delivering pessimistic musings on life, while contemplating night, ruins, death, ghosts, and naturally graveyards. Those poets adopted obscurity as a mean to contrast the light of reason, and to excite passions and emotions that were not part of the eighteenth-century rules of propriety[278]. The major works of Graveyard poetry were published between 1722 and 1751: Young's *Night Thoughts* (174-1745), Blair's *The Grave* (1743), Hervey's *Mediations among the Tombs* (1745-1747), Warton's *On the Pleasures of Melancholy* (1747) and Gray's *Elegy* in 1751[279].

In *Night-Piece on Death* (1722), Thomas Parnell offered an early example of the sepulchral tradition, which gathered all those elements that will be later developed by the following poets. In that rather gloomy piece, Parnell proposed an existential discussion about death and the secrets hidden beyond life, accompanied by a nightmarish paraphernalia that included charnel-houses, hollow groans, ravens, and tolling clocks[280]. Indeed, a proper Graveyard composition should possibly revolve around mournful musings on death and

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[276] Botting, *Gothic,* p. 69.

[277] *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, ed. By William Hughes, David Punter, and Andrew Smith (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), pp. 303-304-305.

[278]Botting, *Gothic,* p. 30.

[279] David Punter*, The Literature of Terror: a History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day. Vol.1: The Gothic Tradition* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1996), p. 30; *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic,* p. 305.

[280] Ibid. p. 34.

mortality, aroused by nocturnal walks under the moonlight, and enriched by a didactic and moralistic touch[281]. By virtue of those characters, the Graveyard poetry appeared to be the conjunction ring between the cult of melancholy and the Gothic revival. The Graveyard poets expressed the urge to explore ruins, or charnel houses, close to Gothic buildings in order to give voice to their sad thoughts[282]. Focusing his *Night-Thoughts* on the concept of forbidden knowledge, Edward Young described the human sadness, and the grief of not being able to fully grasp the meaning of death, which remains a source of anxiety and terror[283]. Although standing at the opposite of light and reason, darkness, gloom, and fear were the main attributes of night, which worked as a valid escape to deviate the preoccupations of ordinary life and as a source of creative thoughts[284]. Thomas Warton's *The Pleasure of Melancholy* presented an opposition between virtue and vice, city and wild nature, summer and winter, sunshine and fogs, gloom and rain. The preference of the poet for nocturnal solitude was a clear mark of virtue provided by melancholy[285] - a "nurse of virtue". In presenting the moralising qualities of melancholy, Warton used a series of Gothic elements of Elizabethan inspiration such as skulls, yew, ghosts, "sickly tapers", solitude, death, ruins, pensive joys, unsatisfactory human nature, and the illusiveness of pride and ambition[286]. Those macabre components were meant to dismiss the human traits of vice and vanity, and to encourage virtues through the mental elevation supplied by mournful landscapes such as ruins, tombstones and nocturnal gloom[287].

Thomas Gray's *Elegy* may provide the ultimate model for Graveyard poetry, as Sickels defines his poem as "pensive rather than deeply mournful, penetrated with a love of quiet and solitude and philosophic musings. Its favourite themes are death and mutability. Its favourite haunts are ivied ruins and yew-shaded churchyards. It loves twilight and silence and the notes of the sweet bird that shuns the noise of folly. Its basis is an intellectual contemplation of the instability of life and of fame, and its emotion is vague and diffuse and on the whole not unpleasant[288]." The whole poem, despite its late appearance that had completely passed the climax of the Graveyard production, takes a defensive stance towards

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[281] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist,* p. 16.
[282] The natural habitat for a Graveyard poet was an ensemble of English ruins with a Gothic taste. Ibid. pp. 34-35.
[283] Punter*, The Literature of Terror*, pp. 34-35.
[284] However, Young was still attached to the values of moral rectitude, a trait that was conserved by Gothic literature. Terror was considered as the ultimate defender of human sanity. Ibid. p. 36.
[285] Robert J. Griffin, 'The Eighteenth-Century Construction of Romanticism: Thomas Warton and the Pleasures of Melancholy' in *ELH*, Vol.59, 4 (1992), 799-815, p. 803.
[286] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist,* pp. 32, 36.
[287] Botting, *Gothic,* p. 22.
[288]Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist,* p. 11.

melancholy, and justifies that kind of sadness together with its creative perks[289]. To sum up, Graveyard poetry contributed in the revival of the interest in melancholy in art, and developed the tropes already introduced by the preceding authors, which included melancholy musings in a natural background, and a philosophical deliberation on the powers of imagination, combining them with the newly rediscovered theories of sublime and the crescent for Gothic taste. However, Gothic atmosphere was not generally associated with the gentle state of despondency of white melancholy, but with religious melancholy. The fear of eternal damnation, in effect, called to mind the macabre imaginary of black melancholy and superstition[290]. In that manner, Gothic revival and melancholy poetry became almost an inseparable pair, which portrayed dim cathedrals, midnight churchyards, ghastly charnel houses and gloomy monastic ruins, the theme of death (decomposition and ghosts), and the theme of sin[291]. Those elements will be developed in the following prose fiction, especially in the field of Gothic fiction.

*2.5.4 Walpole's melancholy: the Gloominess of Otranto*

As shown above, the taste for sepulchral landscapes and macabre paraphernalia arose from the sudden artistic urge to counteract the need for rationality of the Enlightenment with a medieval and barbarous aesthetic, which involved dark superstition and fear. However, those negative qualities glorified creativity and amplified the powers of imagination. Those themes were fully explored both in the philosophical and poetic fields, but they soon spread in prose fiction, entering the realm of the novel. After some sporadic episodes of barbaric and gloomy elements hinted in *The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count of Fathom* by Tobias Smollett, the Gothic was brought to prominence with Horace Walpole, who established the general features of Gothic fiction in terms of setting –time, place, natural background – and characters, since he explored the melancholic side of his protagonists. By mingling the old form of romance – an ancient type of prose fiction very popular in the Middle Ages – with the modern novel, *The Castle of Otranto* was set to achieve a new form of fiction. Walpole's main aims were to combine imagination with verisimilitude, in order to portray characters that moved, spoke, and thought like "the heroes and heroines of the ancient days"[292]. In the preface to the second edition of the novel, Walpole affirmed that:

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[289] Louise Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy,* pp. 1-2.
[290] John Gilbert Copper associated black melancholy, superstition, and death with funeral places of cypress, poison yews, and ruined tombs.
[291] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist,* pp. 158-159-160.
[292] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 42-43-44-45.

> The author of the following pages thought it possible to reconcile the two kinds. Desirous of leaving the powers of fancy at liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention, and thence of creating more interesting situations, he wished to conduct the mortal agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions[293]

In those lines, the author introduced the trope of the false document, which became established as a trademark of Gothic fiction. The preface, in effect, presents the story as a translation of an Italian document of the Middle Ages, more precisely dating back to the time of the Crusades, and published in 1529. In addition to that, Walpole gave an invaluable contribution in outlining other constituting elements of the Gothic novel, such as unexplainable supernatural events that provoke terror, and southern medieval settings that are supposed to convey the barbarous and superstitious atmosphere of the dark ages[294]. The supposed translator judges and comments the fictional events with a modern point of view. In that manner, he underlines that the distance of time is a requisite to discuss the ignorance of the past with the modern aesthetic taste. Moreover, the catholic southern setting is necessary to express the superiority of English Protestant culture over the ultraconservative and obscurantist Catholic church of Rome, using religious paraphernalia as a pretext for Gothic sublimity[295]. Furthermore, in order to achieve the latter, it is somewhat essential to portray excessive emotional reactions, even if the moral purpose remains unclear[296].

By all means, representing scenes of overwhelming passion and extreme violence might have been a suitable way to enquire the limits of reason, virtue, and honour, yet the irony and the general uncertainty that permeate the story failed to convince the contemporary readers of its moral worth[297].

#### *2.5.4.1 Gothic Setting*

The setting of the novel fully reflects the taste for melancholic environments, which adapts to the mournful and solemn feelings of the characters. The whole narrative is dominated by the castle of Otranto, which works a driving force engaging events, thanks to the ruined towers, the undergrounds vaults and passages, its medieval dungeons, and the gloomy courts and galleries. Similarly to the eerie landscapes portrayed in the Graveyard poems, the castle

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[293] Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, edited by Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 9.
[294] Botting, *Gothic,* p. 45.
[295] Ibid., p. 46.
[296] David B. Morris, 'Gothic Sublimity' in *New Literary History*, Vol.16, 2 (1985), 299-319 (p. 303).
[297] Botting, *Gothic,* pp. 48-49.

is encircled by wild valleys and gloomy forests, haunted by perpetual darkness and unsettling silence, which is occasionally broken by tolling bells or thunderclaps. The whole melancholic scene seems taken out of a picture of Salvator Rosa[298].

The terror produced by that scenery is defined as "the engine" of the novel, since it underlines the sublime feelings of the characters[299]. The castle is not describe in its very parts, it is left in eerie unclearness, quoting the court, the steps, the stairs, the window, the trapdoor, and the black tower; elements which belong to every castle of gothic tradition[300]. Darkness is another typical trait of *Otranto*, since it offers a pretext to diminish characters' field of vision. Indeed, obscurity plays a paramount role in the most thrilling passages of the novel, for instance, when Isabella wanders in the underground galleries while pursued by Manfred, or when Theodore meets Isabella in the "gloomiest shades" of the forest. It might seem important to underline the fact that those crucial events take place in two melancholic backgrounds, typically associated to both Gothic and Graveyard melancholy. Walpole also represented another trope of melancholic poetry, the solitary stroll under the moonlight, even if the scene could not embody the same level of pathos because Manfred, the hero-villain, seemed untouched by the natural circumstances surrounding him. Other characters such as Theodore or Matilda, appeared to be able to enjoy the pleasing despondency offered by a forest or a grotto, since those natural sceneries accord particularly with Theodore's mind[301].

In addition to the medieval setting and the mysterious atmosphere, *Otranto* introduced the main stock characters of Gothic fiction. In his story, Walpole portrays the young commoner hero of noble origins, the arrogant tyrant who yields to madness, the persecuted heroine fleeing from her oppressors, and loquacious and superstitious servants, who both release and enhance nervous tension[302]. Despite the superficial traits of those types, Walpole somewhat succeeded in providing an insight of their melancholic constitution, which varied from character to character.

#### *2.5.4.2 Melancholy Characters: Manfred, Theodore, Isabella, and Matilda*

Manfred prince of Otranto embodies the standard traits of a villain, yet he proves to be the real protagonist of the whole story. Acting as a true tyrant, Manfred is the last heir of a

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[298] John Riely, 'The Castle of Otranto Revisited' in The Yale University Library Gazette, Vol.53, 1 (1978), 1-17, (p. 7); J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800* (London: Methuen, 1932), p. 226.

[299] Robert B. Hamm Jr, '"Hamlet" and Horace Walpole's "The Castle of Otranto"' in *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, Vol.49, 3 (2009), 667-692 (p. 683).

[300] Maria Teresa Marnieri, 'Castles, Forests, and Literary Syncretism. An Analysis of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*' in *Revista de Lenguas Modernas*, 28 (2018), 43-58 (p. 46).

[301] Ibid. p. 49-50.

[302] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 226.

dynasty of the usurper who occupied the Dukedom of Otranto, while the real heir, Theodore, lies unaware of his noble origins, and grows up like a peasant. Manfred witnesses the tragic event of the death of his son and heir Conrad, crushed by a giant helmet on his wedding day. Such a supernatural event sets forth a wave of eerie and unexplainable events in *Otranto*, but also seals the beginning of Manfred's descent into melancholy. In effect, the death of Conrad does not only represent the loss of a son, but also the loss of eternal life trough lineage[303]. That is enough to throw the prince of Otranto into a state of melancholic despair and delirium. From that point on, Manfred will commit any action necessary to continue his dynasty, including the disownment of his wife Hippolyta and a an attempt to marry Isabella.

Walpole had already introduced his main villain as a tyrant, due to his character qualities of austerity and severity of temper[304], two features that were strictly connected to the saturnine character. In addition to that natural predisposition to melancholic temperament, the recent death of Conrad focuses all his mental faculties on a single idea, which is the survival of his lineage. The saturnine character and the fixation are not the only melancholic features embodied by Manfred's character. The prince is also subject to sudden mood swings, extreme passions that blind his more rational side, and gloomy moments in which he muses on his deeds and next steps. In those calmer moments, Manfred exhibits the classic temperament of a victim of melancholy, brooding with a sombre air while enveloped by a deep silence[305]. Another trait of Manfred's melancholy is his passivity towards the unfolding events. He might seem a strong-willed character who starts to counteract his fate as soon as possible, yet his frenzied actions are completely useless, as he is not able to produce any actual result, apart being frozen in action. Manfred cannot change his destiny, he remains completely passive.

The passivity of Manfred is also reflected in the labyrinthine passages of the castle, which are a metaphor for his immobility. Moving along those subterranean passages, the villain might seem in movement, yet he is completely immobile. He moves like a claustrophobic animal in cage[306], a condition which is connected to his state as an usurper[307]. Manfred is a natural-born saturnine, but not a natural-born tyrant. His unbending and stern character is

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[303] Manfred excessively doted upon in son, seeing in him the continuator of his dynasty, while completely neglecting his daughter Matilda. Fatima A. Msheik, 'Angelic Monsters: Psychoanalytic, Comparative Approach to Walpole's the Castle of Otranto and Shelley's Frankenstein' in *American Research Journal of English and Literature*, Vol.6, 1 (2020), 1-4 (p. 1).

[304] Carol M. Dole, 'Three Tyrants in *The Castel of Otranto*' in *English Language Notes* (1988), 26-35 (pp. 28, 30).

[305] Eino Railo, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 1927), pp. 28-29.

[306] Marnieri, 'Castles, Forests, and Literary Syncretism', pp. 48, 50.

[307] Msheik, 'Angelic Monsters', p. 2.

amplified by the knowledge of his tragic fate, a state of hopelessness that directly fuels his melancholy. The fact of dying without conserving his name, or his lineage, and the inability of changing his destiny, while behaving like a gloomy and lonely man possessed by a single thought[308], fully qualify him as a victim of melancholy.

Contrary to Manfred, Theodore possesses all the positive stock qualities of a hero. In fact, he is young and fascinating, a prince in disguise who discovers his lineage after a series of adventures, and who in the end regains his rightful position. Despite the fact of being a knight in shining armour who disposes of gentle manners and protects the damsel in distress, Theodore's character is afflicted by a strong sense of melancholy. Differently from Manfred, Theodore's melancholic experience belongs to the domain of white melancholy. Similarly to a poet, the hero possesses a delicate soul, which is prone to mellow sorrow. That mood is enhanced by the surrounding natural background, and it reaches its peak due to lovesickness.

Hence, Walpole portrays Theodore as a victim of lovesickness, which is prompted by the youngster's forbidden love for Matilda, Manfred's daughter[309]. For that reason, the hero displays an atrabiliar symptomatology that can be associated with both poetic and medical lore. In effect, Theodore shuns the company of his fellow creatures and searches for a lonely place to sigh and lament about his destitute condition; he enjoys indulging in the pleasing shades of gloomy trees and to listen to the sound of the flowing river[310]. In addition to the pleasing bittersweet melancholy, Theodore's soul proves to be susceptible to the sublime, as he expresses feelings of both terror and admiration towards the dark wild forest[311]. Gentle melancholy appears to be a constitutive element in Theodore's character since in the end he will be condemned to a "melancholy existence", which will be spent remembering his lost love Matilda, murdered by her father[312]:

> But Theodore's grief was too fresh to admit the thought of another love; and it was not until after frequent discourses with Isabella of his dear Matilda, that he was persuaded he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he could for ever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul[313].

Isabella, the main heroine, provides the perfect model for the persecuted maiden. Young, beautiful, and pure, she is called upon to preserve her virtue from Manfred's reiterated assaults. Her distress matches with the sublime scenery of the dark gloomy natural landscape

[308] Railo, *The Haunted Castle*, pp. 28-29.
[309] Ibidem.
[310] "[…] Theodore at length determined to repair to the forest that Matilda had pointed him out. Arriving there, he sought the gloomiest shades, as best suited to the pleasing melancholy that reigned in his mind." Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 69.
[311] Railo, *The Haunted Castle*, pp. 307-308; Marnieri, 'Castles, Forests, and Literary Syncretism', p. 50.
[312] Railo, *The Haunted Castle*, pp. 38-39.
[313] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, p. 105.

of the forest surrounding the castle of Otranto. Indeed, Isabella is portrayed as a young lady possessing an overdeveloped sensibility, therefore, she tends to exaggerate every natural or eerie happening with the power of her imagination. As a result, she is constantly expressing feelings of terror throughout the story. Her rather melancholy mood can be attributed to the patriarchal persecution at the hands of both her father and Manfred, who both desire to determine her future by leading her to an unwanted marriage. By the end of the narrative, Isabella will experience a relatively happy ending, as she will marry Theodore and become the princess of Otranto, although she will share Theodore's miserable destiny mourning Matilda. On the other hand, Matilda proves to be the real melancholic heroine of that narrative. Despite being neglected, and labelled as a useless child by her father – a daughter who could not inherit the title – Matilda grew up displaying a gentle and caring disposition, deeply attached to her family. That unrequited familiar affection fosters her melancholic sufferings, which is amplified by the death of her brother. Despite the personal sorrow, Matilda keeps caring for the others like a real sentimental and melancholic heroine. In effect, she also helps the hero and falls in love with him. Despite being reciprocated by the latter, Matilda knows that her love for Theodore is impossible, and she soon falls into the domain of love melancholy. Her tragic destiny will be sealed by her accidental death at the hands of Manfred, ending the whole story with a melancholic accent of despair, tender sadness, and regret for what is lost[314].

[314] Railo, *The Haunted Castle*, pp. 41, 291.

# 3. The Plurality of Melancholies in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

Gothic romance rightly deserves the title of most fashionable genre of the 1790s, opening new artistic possibilities for that literary current. The major writer of that decade was Ann Radcliffe, who was defined as, "the enchantress of Udolpho, Shakespeare of Romance-writers and first poetess of romantic fiction[315]". Radcliffe wrote two major novels of the Gothic tradition – *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), along with four other minor novels – *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and the posthumous *Gaston de Blondeville* (1826). Those works openly displayed her debt towards the past masters of melancholy literature – John Milton, Graveyard Poetry and Horace Walpole, combined with the great literature of sensibility[316].

As E. A. Baker remarks, the component of sensibility is quite relevant when it comes to Radcliffe's narratives[317], especially in the development of her characters. Radcliffe's heroines are generally regarded as the literary progeny of Clarissa Harlowe, even though they do not possess the same emotional depth of a Richardsonian heroine[318], they do own the same penchant for melancholy and depression. Emily St. Aubert and Ellena di Rosalba – the protagonists respectively of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian* – are both fond of tears; they cry on several occasions, which are connected to terror, sorrow, or happiness. Moreover, those girls tend to faint when overwhelmed by strong emotions of pain or fear[319]. Despite often falling prey of their oversensitive nature, Radcliffe's heroines prefer suffering due to this latter over renouncing it. That exasperated sorrow fills their heart with a singular pleasure that qualifies them as full-fledged melancholy ladies. For instance, Emily and Ellena enjoy indulging in the sadness provoked by the nostalgia of the old days and have a penchant for shedding tears while contemplating sublime landscapes. In such a context, it is not rare for heroines to take nocturnal walks in the woods to lament their lovesickness under the moonlight. Nevertheless, those heroines are liable to develop fixed ideas, obtrusive thoughts, causeless fears, hallucinations, and a certain degree of patriarchal anxiety.

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[315] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 248.
[316] Pierre Arnaud, *Ann Radcliffe et le Fantastique: Essai de Psychobiographie* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1976), p. 323; Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 243.
[317] Baker, Ernest A. *The History of English Novel, Vol. V, The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance,* (New York: Barnes&Nobles, 1957), pp. 203-204.
[318]Botting, Fred. *Gothic*, p. 58.
[319] Pierre Arnaud, *Ann Radcliffe et le Fantastique,* p. 325; Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: a Study of the Gothic Romance* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 46.

This chapter will focus on the portrayal of the features that qualify Emily St. Aubert as a melancholic character through her relationship with landscape, music, love and patriarchal rules.

## 3.1. Emily St. Aubert: the Hereditary Condition of melancholy between Genius and Taste

Emily St. Aubert is introduced as a typical Gothic heroine, a beautiful, young and orphaned girl relocated in a Southern Europe setting during an unspecified historical period. Abandoned in a hostile world, Emily is bound to be persecuted by a villain of a much older age, and is forced to face a series of appalling events that may endanger her life. Therefore, she is demanded to preserve her virtue through rationality and fortitude, and to avoid excessive passions. After being rescued by her friends, Emily finally marries her beloved Valancourt and is able to restore her virtue to the domestic dimension to which she belongs. The final message conveyed by such an ending consists of an edifying lesson of virtue rewarded in the guise of sentimental fiction, as the efforts of reason and endurance combined cannot go without a proper compensation[320]. Emily's main behavioural trait seems to be a "pensive melancholy", which is a leitmotif recurring all over the narrative. Whether caused by nostalgia, lovesickness, social impositions, or by nature, melancholy is an intrinsic element in Emily's nature, previously nurtured by St. Aubert.

### *3.1.1 St. Aubert's Melancholy*

Focusing on the first segment of the novel, it is possible to observe the importance of St. Aubert on Emily's early education, especially his insistence on the values of fortitude and sensibility[321], but also his melancholic character that worked as an influence on Emily's melancholy[322]. St. Aubert proves to be a natural victim of melancholy and a man of feeling, as he retired from the world in order to cope with his pain, generated by a familiar tragedy[323]. As a result, he indulges in the pleasing shades of the trees while brooding on his past inanity. According to that portrait, St. Aubert seems to fully embody the symptoms of melancholic

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[320] Baker, *The History of English Novel,* p. 204.

[321] According with St. Aubert "all excess is vicious", therefore he encouraged the development of a measured degree of sensibility counterbalanced by reason and fortitude. Marianna D'Ezio, '"As Like as Peppermint Water Is to Good French Brandy": Ann Radcliffe and Hester Lynch Salusbury (Thrale) Piozzi', *Women's Writing*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2015), 343-354 (p. 349).

[322] Brandy Lain Schillace, '"Temporary Failure of Mind": Déjà-vu and Epilepsy in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol.42, No. 2 (2009), 273-287 (p. 280).

[323] It will be revealed later in the narrative that St. Aubert sufferings were due to the death of his sister the Marchioness de Villeroi.

affliction, possessing a character that Claudia Johnson defines as "remarkable for insufficiency"[324]. In fact, that passivity towards life constitutes one of his main melancholic traits. In the first volume of the novel, he appears simply unable to react against the wrongs of life; St. Aubert is able neither to seek justice for the ill fate of his sister nor to prevent his family house from falling in the hands of the Quesnels, nor to avoid the aforementioned relatives when he needs to change the landscape of his house[325].

Moreover, despite teaching fortitude to his daughter, St. Aubert is represented as constantly crying and despairing over his past[326], especially on his familiar bereavement. He had tried to face the death of his children and of his wife by "restrain[ing] the expression of his own [grief], and endeavoured to bear it, as he meant, with philosophy, he had, in truth, no philosophy that could render him calm to such losses[327]." In those lines, it is possible to notice that St. Aubert is not able to follow the preaching he gave to his daughter[328], always melting into tears at the least unexpected occurrence. In order to compensate his lack of fortitude and to soothe his state of everlasting despondency, he retires from the world in his happy manor of La Vallée[329]. The estate of La Vallée establishes another significant influence on St. Aubert's melancholy, introducing the close relationship between pleasing sadness and nature, in the mood of the Graveyard poetry. Indeed, it is through nature that St. Aubert experienced melancholy for the first time in his life:

> The green pastures, along which he had so often bounded in the exultation of health and youthful freedom – the woods, under whose refreshing shade he had first indulged that *pensive melancholy which afterwards made a strong feature of his character* – the wild walks of the mountains, the river, on whose waves he had floated, and the distant plains, which seemed boundless as his early hopes – were never after remembered by St. Aubert but with enthusiasm and regret[330].

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[324] Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s: Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 98-99.

[325] "Good God" exclaimed St. Aubert, "you surely will not destroy that noble chestnut, which has flourished for centuries, the glory of the estate! It was in its maturity when the present mansion was built. How often, in my youth, have I climbed among its broad branches, and sat embowered amidst a world of leaves, while the heavy shower has pattered above, and not a rain-drop reached me! How often have I sat with my book in my hand, sometimes reading, and sometimes looking out between the branches upon the wide landscape, and setting sun, till twilight came, and brought the birds home to their little nests among the leaves! How often – but pardon me," added St. Aubert, recollecting that he was speaking to a man who could neither comprehend nor allow for his feelings, "I am talking of times and feelings as old-fashioned as the taste they would spare the venerable tree." Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* edited by Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), vol. I, p. 13; (thereafter quoted as M. U., followed by volume number and page).

[326] Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 99.

[327] M. U., I, p. 5.

[328] Mary Poovey, 'Ideology and "*The Mysteries of Udolpho*"', *Criticism: a Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, Vol.. 21, no. 4 (1979), 307-330 (p. 318).

[329] M. U., I, p 6. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 99.

[330] M. U., I, p 2.

La Vallée's natural scenery displays a series of element that were commonly attributed to white melancholy:

> "The deepest shades of twilight did not send him from his favourite plane-tree. He loved the soothing hour, when the last tints of light die away; when the stars, one by one, tremble through ether, and are reflected in the dark mirror of the waters; that hour which, of all others, inspires the mind with pensive tenderness, and often elevates it to sublime contemplation. When the moon shed her soft rays among the foliage, he still lingered, and his pastoral supper cream and fruits was often spread beneath it. Then, on the stillness of night, came the song of the nightingale breathing sweetness, *awakening melancholy*[331]*"*.

That narrative passage, which demonstrates Radcliffe's indebtedness to Milton's melancholic poetry[332], is crucial to describe St. Aubert's relationship with nature – the manner in which scenery both soothes and excites melancholy feelings. Moreover, melancholic contemplation of crepuscular landscape prompted mental elevation through sublime. Genius, in fact, is another melancholic attribute detected in St. Aubert. In the novel, the figure of that "faineant father" is presented as an intellectual[333]. St. Aubert is a fine man of culture who appreciates the pleasures of classic literature[334], and is able of composing some verses himself – usually inspired by the natural beauties of La Vallée. In addition to that, he is also a proficient player of oboe[335] and an amateur botanist[336]. It is possible to observe that all those melancholic traits are present in Emily too, whose "pensive enthusiasm" is hereditary as much as natural[337].

### *3.1.2 Emily St. Aubert: a Natural-born Melancholic Lady*

According to Elizabeth Napier, "melancholy and suffering become the highest expression of feeling" in the system of values of the novel. In compliance with Warton's thought, melancholy is presented as mark of genius and of outstanding perception that could turn into horrible hallucinations and dread when going to the dark side[338].

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[331] M. U., I, pp. 4-5.

[332] Sarah Gray-Panesi, 'Escaping Eden: Milton, Melancholy, and Radcliffe's Gothicism', *Scientia and Humanitas: A Journal of Student Research* (2014), 41-52 (p. 48-49).

[333] Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 222.

[334] M. U., I, pp. 3, 6. Radcliffe insists on describing St. Aubert's libraries at La Vallée in order to underline his love for literature.

[335] "[…] Sometimes too he brought music of his own, and awakened every fairy echo with the tender accent of his oboe;" M. U., I, p. 7.

[336] "[…] for one of St Aubert's amusements was study of botany, and among neighbouring mountains, which afforded luxurious feast to the mind of the naturalist […]" M. U., I, p. 3.

[337] Elizabeth Napier, *The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-century Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 103.

[338] Napier, *The Failure of Gothic*, pp. 101-102.

Emily's education[339] and her accomplishments in several fields of the art, and knowledge were precisely a mark of melancholic genius, in Aristotelian sense. Although Aristotle maintained that melancholic women could not boast intellectual enhancement, Emily was bestowed a cosmopolitan education – including English poets like Milton – and a natural creative genius. In first instance, St. Aubert turned to classics to train his daughter's critique sense of reason[340], self-control, and fortitude in order to inhibit Emily's most emotional side, and to avoid errors of sensibility[341]. Nevertheless, Emily clearly exhibits a creative side and an interest in books, poetry, music, and nature, common to any proper aristocratic young lady[342]. Not only does she enjoy listening to music, admiring landscape or reading poetry, but she also takes pleasure in creative process: she can play the lute and sing melancholy airs with pathos[343]; she can eternalize pleasing landscapes through painting; and she can also compose verses in the style of Graveyard poetry. For that reason, Emily's main interest lies in nature, especially in melancholy and gloomy scenes that acted as a main inspiration for her poems:

> It was on of Emily's earliest pleasures to ramble among the scenes of nature; nor was in the soft and glowing landscapes that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood-walks that skirted the mountain; and still more the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart, and lifted her thoughts to the GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. In scenes like these she would often linger alone, wrapt in a melancholy charm, till the last gleam of day faded from the west; […] Then, the gloom of the woods; the trembling of their leaves at intervals, in the breeze; the bat, flitting on the twilight; the cottage lights, now seen, and now lost – were circumstances that awakened her mind into effort, and led to enthusiasm[344].

Clearly, Emily is a melancholic of constitution who inherited a more complex trait thanks to St. Aubert's melancholic and retired disposition. Such an extreme dedication to white

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[339] Radcliffe wishes to clarify that Emily has received a "a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquittance with every part of elegant literature" – mainly Latin and English poets – and that she possesses "taste for work of genius". M. U., I, p. 6.

[340] Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s: Romantic Belongings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 20,22.

[341] Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, pp. 100-101; Orianne Smith, *Romantic Women Writers, Revolution, and Prophecy: Rebellious Daughters, 1786-1826* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 145.
Emily possesses an "uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affection and ready benevolence; but with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit lasting peace." James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 106.

[342] Ertugrul Koc, Tugba Karabulut, 'Ann Radcliffe's Life Described as "Helpless Maiden" and the "(Un)Conventional Woman" in *the Mysteries of Udolpho'*, *XLinguae Journal*, Vol.8, No. 1 (2015), 68-78 (p.71).

[343] Pierre Dubois, 'Music and the Feminine Sublime in Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho'*, *EA* Vol.67 (2014), 457-469 (p.465).

[344] M. U., I, p. 6.

melancholy and sublime landscape could develop into black melancholy. Presenting all the pathologic symptoms of the *humor melancholicus*, Emily will suffer from hallucinations and causeless terrors fostered by obscurity and limited visions.

## 3.2 Elements of White and Black Melancholy in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

Like most part of the Gothic heroines, Emily St. Aubert is called to face several calamities, being removed from her home and travelling all over Europe. The forced exile seems to work as a pretext to admire a variety of sublime landscapes that are fundamental to describe the heroine's emotional turmoil[345]. Indeed, in Radcliffe's novels, melancholy entertains a close relationship with sublime nature, as it could elevate the mind and trigger poetic instinct. On the other hand, melancholic disorder could inspire a gentle nostalgia of the past that easily rushed towards a state of causeless fear. In the central segment of the novel – the one dedicated to the travel in Italy – Emily's melancholy appears to follow a Burtonian trajectory, passing from a pleasing phase of gentle despondency to a depressive state tinged of madness and blackened hallucinations. Landscape and circumstances play a crucial role in arousing emotional states in general, and it is possible to affirm that Emily's melancholy suffers the influence of nature[346], passing from white to black according to time and place.

### *3.2.1 White Melancholy: Landscape and Gentle Mourning*

As shown above, Emily is a subject prone to enjoy the pleasures of white melancholy finding entertainment in scenes which remind of Graveyard poetry and Ossian[347]. Indeed, Radcliffe linked nature and melancholy, writing that "[t]hese scenes […] soften the heart like the notes of sweet music, and inspire that delicious melancholy which no person, who had felt it once, would resign for the gayest pleasure. They waken our best and purest feelings; disposing us to benevolence, pity and friendship[348]." Therefore, melancholy connected to landscape is a somewhat delightful experience, which is sought for by those

[345] After analyzing Radcliffe's memoirs, Havens affirmed that the description of breath-taking landscapes that the author had never seen in her life were fundamental to "heighten the romance, mystery melancholy or terror of the incidents." Raymond D. Havens, 'Ann Radcliffe's Nature Descriptions', *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (1951), 251-255 (p.253).
[346] Radcliffe's descriptions had an undeniable influence on her characters, especially on the main heroine; landscapes matched Emily's sense of melancholy and solitude. Ibid. p. 254.
[347] Eino Railo, *The Haunted Castle: a Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 1972), p. 19.
[348]M. U., I, p. 46.

gentle souls who could experience moral elevation through nature[349]. Melancholy therefore can be evoked or soothed by certain specific circumstances, that can both inspire creative impetus and charming visions, but ultimately fade into nostalgia and unpleasing suffering.

Emily's fits of melancholy generally start while musing in solitude, surrounded by natural sceneries that somewhat satisfy all the requirements of Graveyard poetry: mossy stones, solitary towers, and autumnal leaves are largely present in Radcliffe's novel, together with images of lonely and forgotten tombs in the twilight, which inspire images of gloomy sadness and desolated nocturnal sorrows[350].For that reason, Radcliffe's nature featured evocative elements such as nocturnal landscapes that allow the chance to muse over the current melancholic matters while admiring the sunset, completed by the newly rising moon and the eerie chants of birds in Miltonian guise[351]. That kind of crepuscular scenery seems to embody a pathetic fallacy[352], as it mirrors the pessimistic musings within Emily's bosom. Twilight, the "still hour of the evening which is so soothing to fancy and grief[353]", is a recurring theme in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, as it is configured as a specific moment in the day, suspended between night and day, in which the main heroine can get some relief from her melancholic disorder. Meanwhile, evening constitutes the perfect circumstance to express melancholy and passivity, meditating on death and the transience of life[354]. That is due principally to the fact that in that moment of the day sunlight fades into a sober grey hue, which impresses the mind with a pleasing sense of solitude and melancholy[355], heightened by the contrast with the last ray of light:

> the sun now threw a last yellow gleam on the waves of the Mediterranean, and the gloom of twilight spread fast over the scene, till only a melancholy ray appeared on the western horizon, marking the point where the sun had set amid the vapours of an autumnal evening[356].

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[349] Alison Milbank, 'Ways of seeing Ann Radcliffe's early fiction *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and *A Sicilian Romance* (1790)', in Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic, ed. by Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 85-99 (p. 91)
In the novel, melancholy is valued more than happiness and enjoyment since it constitutes a higher form of emotion, which makes its victim ethically above average by encouraging the contact with the innermost depths of soul. Dubois, 'Music and the Feminine Sublime', p. 466.
As a proof of this thesis, Emily is prone to leave parties or cheerful social events in order to indulge in melancholy pleasure while contemplating the landscape of Toulouse. M. U., I, p. 130.

[350] Railo, *The Haunted Castle,* pp. 22, 24-25.

[351] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist*, p.47 "[…] or [St. Aubert] came at the sweet evening hour to welcome the silent dusk, or to listen for the music of the nightingale" M. U., I, p. 7.

[352] Soothing landscapes that are meant to resonate with pathetic fallacy. Frits Noske, 'Sound and Sentiment: The Function of Music in the Gothic Novel', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (1981), 162-175 (p. 165).

[353] M. U., I, p. 72.

[354] Alison Milbank, Introduction to *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* by Ann Radcliffe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. xiv, xvi, xviii.

[355] M. U., I, p. 31.

[356] Ibid. p. 61.

Recurring elements that tend to describe Emily's melancholic state of mind, and to which they perfectly accord, are pines[357], Mediterranean shades, the quiet river[358], cliffs and mountains half hidden with vapours[359], the purple haze of twilight[360], autumnal gloom that spreads on forests[361], and trembling leaves[362].

Those solitary meditations somewhat disperse Emily's concerns, as she loses herself among moonlit sycamores and cypress groves[363], usually described with a musical vocabulary. As Noske points out, words like "harmony", "melody" and "cadence" are used to describe pleasing landscapes that support human emotions[364]. Sometimes music comes from peasants, whose simple melodies reverberate in Emily's melancholy: "The soft moon-light of an autumnal evening, and the distant music, which now sounded a plaintive strain, aided the melancholy of her mind[365]." The importance of music as a cure for atrabiliar affliction had already been pointed out in centuries of medical treaties, yet, in addition to that, Radcliffe makes tunes and harmonies an amplifier of gloomy feelings. Music is an important vessel for one's feelings[366], especially for melancholic feelings that are fully evoked and embraced thanks to the influence of music[367]. In that manner, music allegedly throws Emily in a state of "melancholic trance", in which she is lost in her depressive musings[368], and promotes her connection with the innermost depths of her soul[369]. On the other hand, Emily is able to alleviate some of her melancholic tension by performing music. Music, in fact, was considered extremely useful especially for performers, as they could heal themselves

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[357] "[…]The travelers soon found themselves among mountains covered from their bases nearly to their summits with forests of gloomy pine […]" M. U., I, p. 26.
[358] "The rivulet that had hitherto accompanied them, now expanded into a river; and flowing deeply and silently along, reflected as in a mirror the blackness of impending shades." M. U., I, p. 26.
[359] "Sometimes a cliff was seen lifting its bold head above the woods and the vapours that floated midway down the mountains;" M. U., I, p. 26.
[360] Ibid. II, p. 285.
[361] Ibid. III, p. 395.
[362] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist*, pp. 52-53.
Moreover, Emily's favourite season is said to be autumn, which is the dearest season to the Graveyard poets. Ibid. p. 241.
[363] M. U., II, p. 210.
[364] Noske, 'Sound and Sentiment', p. 165. "The plain to which declined, was coloured with the riches of cultivation, whose mingled hues were mellowed into harmony by an Italian sun." M. U., III, p. 413.
"[…]the wind whispering in the pines was "a kind of music more in unison with her feelings; it did not vibrate on the chords of unhappy memory, but was soothing to the heart as the voice of pity." M. U., I, p. 72.
[365] M. U., I, p. 67. Radcliffe's lines parallel Rousseau's ideal of the "music of the heart". Noske, 'Sound and Sentiment', p. 165.
[366] Schillace, '"Temporary Failure of Mind", pp. 281-282.
[367] Dubois, 'Music and the Feminine Sublime', p. 466.
[368] Schillace, '"Temporary Failure of Mind", pp. 281-282.
[369] Dubois, 'Music and the Feminine Sublime', p. 466.

through it[370]. Emily expresses her melancholy through her voice[371] while playing a lute[372], an activity that, in combination with a sublime scenery and the voices of the peasants, “would have subdued the goddess of spleen in her worst humour[373].”

Apart from music, Radcliffe expresses her heroine’s atrabiliar condition through poetry. On several occasions, the author directly reports Emily’s poetic compositions, which are evidently indebted to Graveyard poetry. Indeed, the main subjects of those writing are taken directly from her solitary walks in contemplation of the evening landscape. As a result, her sonnets generally revolve around pine woods, mountains, dark cliffs, and Autumnal winds[374]. One of the most outstanding poems in this sense is “*To Melancholy”* (M. U., IV, pp. 665-666), an ode that includes all those elements featured in crepuscular poems: the invocation to melancholy, a reference to tears in the twilight, with a backdrop of shadowy streams, sad music, gothic cloisters, pine-woods and mountains. Hence, in the tradition of Milton and of the Graveyard poetry, melancholy is evoked as a muse who brings gentle sadness and creativity[375], cementing the relationship between genius and sadness established by Marsilio Ficino. Sublime landscape is fundamental in supporting Emily’s melancholic nature, as her otherworldly vision of poetess is enhanced by both obscurity and vastness. In other words, the sublime terror provoked by nature appears to be a central element of creative creation through which it is possible to express melancholy[376]. As Beatrice Battaglia affirms, nature never holds frightening qualities[377], therefore Radcliffe’s sublime manages to preserve soothing qualities, which are made the subject of Emily’s pomes. Elements like “cheering freshness” and the “morning sun” can soothe her mind and make her “indulge in the pensive tranquillity which they inspired[378].” Soothing elements of the landscape are characterised by vivid colours and limpid shapes such as the blue of the sea, the gentle shades, the cream colour glow, the saffron glow, the melancholy of sea and waves, the

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[370] Starobinski, *Storia del Trattamento della Malinconia*, pp. 102-103.
[371] Noske, ‘Sound and Sentiment’, p. 167.
[372] Music is a mean through which melancholic characters are able to express their genius; St. Aubert is a proficient player of oboe while Emily is an average lute player whose skill lies in the expression of emotions. Ibidem.
[373] M. U., II, p. 177 Jakub Lipski, ‘The Perils of Aesthetic Pleasure in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*’, *Nordic Journal of English Studies,* Vol. 17, No. 1 (2018), 120-134 (p. 126).
[374] Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist*, p. 265.
[375] Gray-Panesi, ‘Escaping Eden’, pp. 49-50.
[376] Andrew Smith, ‘Radcliffe’s Aesthetics: Or, The Problem with Burke and Lewis’, *Women’s Writing*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2015), 317-330 (p. 320-321).
[377] Beatrice Battaglia, ‘The “Pieces of Poetry” in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*’ in *Romantic Women Poets: Genre and Gender,* ed. by Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli (Amsterdam – New York: Brill, 2007), p. 141.
[378] M. U., I, p. 73.

solemn cliffs, and light[379]. Yet, even in those circumstances, and even during a feast at the sea, she is still prone to pensive melancholy. She sits alone, isolated, listening to the sweet music, the breeze, observing the moon, the trees, and the Tuscan shores[380]. As Jakub Lipski writes, "Emily makes use of her imaginative faculties when trying to console herself in her plight[381]", underlying the fact that Emily tries to use her creative force combined with the landscape to cure her intrinsic melancholy, with little effect as her melancholy is too strong[382].

Besides inspiring musical and poetic genius, landscapes arouse dreamlike visions. That phenomenon, knew as the flights of imagination of the melancholics[383], is evident in the section of travel in Italy. The first vision occurs in Venice, where Emily is completely lost in the contemplation of the city. Here, the heroine is struggling against hardships, as she had just lost her father, abandoned her lover Valancourt and patiently endured the cruelty of her aunt – Mme Cheron[384] married to Montoni, the villain of the novel. Venice, a city of art and history built on water, is the perfect habitat for a melancholic genius like Emily, who is prone to lose herself in a reverie at every turn. She falls prey of pleasing hallucinations due to her powerful imagination, and to music, which carries her in a state of trance[385]. Venice is able to "expand the mind with novel ideas, that challenge the imagination with the unimaginable[…][386]." The city excites Emily's visionary quality, and inspires her several poems. That quality is defined by D'Ezio as the "transforming eye" inherited by St. Aubert,

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[379] M. U., III, p. 419.
[380] Ibid. p. 421.
[381] Lipski, 'The Perils of Aesthetic Pleasure', p. 122.
[382] The only temporary remedy seems to be attributed to nature seen as a divine manifestation: Nature is also a nexus that allowed Emily to achieve a divine dimension, to connect with God and his divine solace: the sublime and pleasing landscapes of Languedoc "lifted her thoughts to the GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH the Deity, whose works filled her mind with adoration." M. U., I, p. 6.
The divine sublimity of the landscape was a powerful provisional remedy for Emily, who felt relatively near God and possessed by the feeling of hope and resignation, two feelings completely stranger to the melancholy condition. Relying both on her aesthetic education and her religious faith, Emily is able to experience feelings of joy and freedom while aspiring to "that Great First Cause" , putting herself in the hands God and Providence to face the incoming hardships. However, Emily is not able to see clearly the nature in front of her, as her teary eye blurs the landscape and she cannot see nature in front of her.
[383] Minois, *Storia del Mal di Vivere* p. 110; Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, p. 134.
[384] Mme Cheron later Mme Montoni is outlined as the classic hypocrite lady of the world, who makes fun of St. Aubert's – and therefore Emily's – sensibility and is not sensible to the beauties of the landscape. She is the classic aunt stock character, unhealthily dominated by her frivolous appetite for fashion and opulence.
Angela Wright, '"To Live the Life of Hopeless Recollection". Mourning and Melancholia in Female Gothic, 1780-1800', *Gothic Studies* (2004), 19-29 (p.26); Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 207.
"Mme Cheron only shuddered as she looked down precipices near whose edge the chairmen trotted lightly[…]" M. U., II, p.166.
[385] Schillace, '"Temporary Failure of Mind", p. 277.
[386] Adam Edward Watkins, 'Environmental Self-making and the Urbanism of Ann Radcliffe's *Udolpho'*, *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (2017), 585-600 (p. 591).

so that Emily can fully understand and enjoy the visionary pleasures of Venice[387]. The city is always rich in music, and even the most distant sound of horns suffices to throw Emily in a trance like state, which mingles the fiction with the reality. Under similar circumstances, even the decorations of the gondolas are enough to evoke a procession of deities of the sea, "for Neptune, with Venice personified as his queen, came on the undulating waves, surrounded by tritons and sea-nymphs[388]". The tones of such a vision are similar to those provoked by melancholy[389]. Emily's visionary quality returns while witnessing another sublime landscape during the twilight, while peacefully cruising the river Brenta. Watching the setting sun in the cloudless sky, and facing the direction of Greece, is enough to prompt a comparison between the present quiet and the past scenes of mythological grandeur. The heroine's "imagination painted with melancholy touches the desert plain of Troy" in their current state of ruin[390], and inspires her the composition of a poem. As shown above, Emily's poetic imagery revolves around those elements that belong to the Graveyard tradition, therefore she focuses on the portrayal of solitary musings, moonlit ruins, and regret for the past[391]. In that sense, melancholy offered a different perspective to interpret reality, healing sorrow by the very act of vision[392].

Despite the fact that her white melancholy exhibits several positive aspects such as pathetic fallacy, creative genius, and visions, Emily St. Aubert's disordered mind tends to develop that pleasing state into a black melancholy. For instance, her decision to take a last walk through the landscapes of her childhood before leaving for Toulouse is issued by a white melancholic impetus, yet it soon turns to despair. The knowledge that she is soon to depart, mingled together with the lovely shades and the murmuring river, contributes to create a melancholic moment of anticipation of her exile[393]. Although she faces that dramatic moment with resignation in the deity, Emily's gaze converges towards the past moments of happiness that she lived in that mansion when her parents were alive. The novel is completely permeated by a sense of regret and nostalgia since every landscape is linked to past circumstances. In that regard, Adela Pinch observes that nature" […] looks back to a

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[387]D'Ezio, '"As Like as Peppermint Water Is to Good French Brandy"', p. 349.
[388] M. U., II, p. 178.
[389] Watkins, 'Environmental Self-making and the Urbanism of Ann Radcliffe's *Udolpho',* p. 591-592.
[390] M. U., II, p. 206.
[391] Ibid. pp. 206-207-208.
Poems were also employed as a means to describe lonely moments of pensive musings in the fashion of a Graveyard poetry, underlining the sense of overwhelming melancholy. Olivia Loksing Moy, 'Radcliffe's Poetic Legacy: female Confinement in the "Gothic Sonnet"', *Women's Writing*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2015), 376-396 (p. 376).
[392] Milbank, 'Ways of Seeing Ann Radcliffe's Warly Fiction', p. 92.
[393] M. U., I, p.114.

lost object in order to generate desire, inventing contexts for its own emotion." Landscape and music, in effect, can remind of a similar circumstance that occurred in the past, and trigger a sense of sadness[394] that soon develops into fixed ideas. Similar obsessions tend to depress Emily's spirits and make her prone to pathological fits of black melancholy.

### *3.2.2 Black Melancholy: Loss, Hallucinations and Terror*

Similarly to the twilights of which she is so fond of, Emily's pensive musings always foster a soft despondency that becomes more mournful and depressing as the light of the sun fades to black, leaving just obscurity and terror. In other words, Emily's fits of melancholy generally tend to degenerate into pathological disturbances, which worsen according to her succession of personal tragedies. The pain for the loss of her father is just the beginning of Emily's hardships, which are linked to her precarious state of mind and her disturbed imagination. Under similar circumstances, she cannot be soothed by landscape anymore. The heroine will become prey to dark hallucinations, unmotivated terrors fuelled by errors of judgement or lack of visibility, and paranoid thoughts. As Brandy Lain Schillace remarks, Emily's condition is quite pathological, especially when it comes to Udolpho. Here, she is constantly assailed by fits of anguish, visions, déjà-vu, failing senses, strange visions, and fainting fits. Emily suffers from excessive fear, provoked by concrete objects of terror, like Udolpho, but also by unknown and indefinable terrors located in her mind, which cause excessive emotional reactions. The heroine, in effect, suffers from a psychological disturbance attributable to her delicacy of mind, combined with a set of sensitive nerves[395]. Those disorders become most evident in the section dedicated to the castle of Udolpho, where Emily's already extra receptive fibres, which are already stressed by her losses and her solitude, surrender to melancholy and obsessive thoughts regarding the past.

This section will discuss Emily's faltering mind, whose episodes of terror can be fully attributed to the melancholic disorder of her mind.

The first episode in which landscape fails to soothe the heroine's state of mind is constituted by Emily and St. Aubert's travel in Languedoc. As per tradition, St. Aubert tries to cope with the loss of his wife by travelling in a region rich in nature and wonderful landscapes[396]. Nevertheless, a similar profusion of enchanting sceneries fails to positively impress his

[394] Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passions: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 117-118-119.
[395] Schillace, "'Temporary Failure of Mind"', pp. 275, 277, 279-280.
[396] According with Milbank, along with passivity and lack of initiative, travelling represents the only method to react against a loss. Milbank, Introduction to *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne,* p. xvi.

daughter, who experiments an adverse reaction to the mountainous landscape. Instead of regarding the mountains with sublime awe, Emily's fear for her own life freezes her intellective faculties and leaves her in the grip of horror[397]. Moreover, Emily's melancholic state deteriorated further due to her father's death, which makes her foster "a train of gloomy ideas" that "haunted her mind, till she fell asleep[398]." As a result of being left guideless in the world, the heroine suffers from "temporary failure(s) of mind", visions, "black" hallucinations, and unmotivated terrors attributed to the strong feelings of grief[399]. In effect, her imagination is so disturbed by the recent loss that she commences to have visions. Therefore, after veiling the body of her father, she:

> Retired to her lonely cabin, her melancholy thoughts still hovered round the body of her deceased parent; and when she sunk into a kind of slumber, the images of her waking mind still haunted her fancy. She thought she saw her father approaching her with a benign countenance[…][400].

Hence, her mind is completely occupied by sorrowful feelings for St. Aubert[401], which are bound to blacken all her impressions and ideas to the point that the landscape offers no comfort.

As a result, Emily is victim of fainting fits[402], and of episodes of causeless fear. For instance, when visiting the tomb of her father alone at night, she is seized by a sudden terror for no apparent reason. The moonlit tombs of the graveyard, combined with the overwhelming fixed idea of her father, make her see visions of figures gliding in the gloomy darkness of that place[403]. That happens because funeral monuments are considered as places that confirm the loss of the beloved ones, therefore they create strong emotive responses and craft images of the dead in the mind of the sufferers. For those reasons, Emily remains morbidly attached to St. Aubert's tomb. The strange symptoms experienced by the heroine, which include sadness, fixed ideas, fainting fits, insomnia, hallucinations, and sudden fears, are the first signs of an alarming atrabiliar disorder.

However, as Terry Castle remarks, landscape is a sort of "white canvas" on which the protagonist paints her mournful flight of fancy. Indeed, nature is considered an environment

[397] M. U., I, p. 30-31, 40.
[398] Ibid. p. 47.
[399] As previously mentioned, Cheyne recognised in chronical passions a deteriorating agent that damaged the nervous system. Sena, 'The English Malady', p. 103.
[400] M. U., I, p. 83.
[401] Ibid. p. 84.
[402] Ibid. p. 87.
[403] Ibid. p. 91.

for reveries and "phantasmagorical dreams"[404]. For that reason, Emily's melancholic condition is further aggravated by the familiar landscape of the countryside, especially the one of La Vallée.

Landscape is "possessed" by the idea of the departed to a degree that it recalls the last person with whom Emily witnessed it. Her pain resurfaces and makes her foster hallucinations of St. Aubert[405]. A similar phenomenon occurs at La Vallée since the whole landscape is a reason for grief and morning due to the presence of the past and the freshness of her loss. The whole estate is haunted by the image of the dead, and Emily results obsessed with the fixed idea of her long-gone parents. Every small object recalls the presence of the departed to her mind[406]: "She dreaded to see the objects, which would recall the full remembrance of her former happiness[407]." Here, the melancholy heroine walks in the graveyard of her past happiness, in which she tries to cope with her sorrow. Nevertheless, Emily tends to indulge in the same heart-breaking emotion whenever she sees an item belonging to her parents: "Emily sat for some time, given up to sorrow. Not an object, on which her eye glanced, but awakened some remembrance, that led immediately to the subject of her grief. […] every object gave force to new sorrow[408]". According to Castle, La Vallée is permeated by the idea of the dead at a degree that it produces hallucinations in Emily's dismal mind[409]. Those reveries and "tender images" issued by pleasing melancholy develop into gloomy hallucinations that are attributed to atrabiliar disorders[410]. Emily's sorrow is so strong that influences her reception of external reality. Therefore, she sees the ghost of St. Aubert sitting on his favourite chair: "the idea rose so distinctly to her mind, that she almost fancied she saw him before her[411]". That is not just the product of her melancholy mind, combined with her refined spirit, but also a symptom of her decaying nervous system. As Cheyne affirms, a situation of prolonged grief and melancholy wastes fibres and endangers the health of the subject[412]. Another access of pain inspired by nostalgia occurs when Emily

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[404] Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, pp. 123, 126, 133.
[405] M. U., I, p. 126.
The countryside "had the power to rouse her for a moment to deep melancholy, into which she was sunk, and, then they did, it was only to reminder her, that, on her last view, St. Aubert was at her side […]" M. U., I, p. 92.
[406] Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 126.
[407] M. U., I, p. 93
[408] Ibid. pp. 94-95.
[409] Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 123.
[410] Schillace, '"Temporary Failure of Mind"', p. 280.
[411]M. U., I, p. 95.
[412] Clark Lawlor, '"Long Grief, dark Melancholy, hopeless natural Love': Clarissa, Cheyne and Narratives of Body and Soul' in *Gesnerus* 63 (2005), 103-112, (pp. 104, 106-107-108).
That episode led way to more pain and sorrow; continuous malady deteriorates the nervous system and, as a result of melancholy, Emily starts to exaggerate the responses of her senses, which make her fear shadows and

visits the fishing house, one of St. Aubert's favourite places in his estate. Even if landscape might help her melancholy to fade into gentle despondency[413], Emily is not able to relieve her pathological disease. As Burton suggests, the heroine tries to cure her illness through occupation, yet she is not able to dispel those gloomy feelings issuing from solitary nostalgic broodings, which make her fall into a state of lethargy[414].

As the narrative unfolds, Emily's pathological melancholy increases in the form of causeless terrors. In such a mood, her refined senses exaggerate her responses to the surroundings of La Vallée, making her fear shadows and natural noises. Emily's melancholy further aggravates after leaving her ancestral home and following her aunt to Toulouse. The heroine perceives that estrangement as an exile, therefore adding nostalgia for home to her pre-existent nostalgia for her loved ones. Combined with a sense of anxiety for the uncertain future, similar concerns develop into hopelessness.

Radcliffe appears to be very proficient in expressing nostalgia through the melancholic description of the foreign landscape[415]. A good example is portrayed by Emily's nostalgic fit of melancholy on the bank of Brenta. Here, musing alone in the twilight, and separated from the lively cities, the heroine observes the shifting landscape of the river while listening to some sweet music. Under such circumstances, the heroine inevitably focuses on the past and compares the present landscape with the happy hours that she spent in La Vallée with her father. Consequently, she is assailed by a bleak prospect of her future, and suddenly believes will never see again neither her home nor her lover Valancourt[416]. The sense of hopelessness and the idea of having no future is a clear symptom of melancholy and a recurring element in Emily's thoughts[417]. Those disturbing ideas manifest for the first time before departing for Italy with Mme Montoni – Mme Cheron after her marriage with Montoni, as "her unquiet mind had during the night presented her with terrific images and obscure circumstances concerning her affection and her future life[418]." In other words, Emily is constantly occupied by negative thoughts concerning her future, and by thoughts that fuel her fits of causeless terror. For instance, after discussing her future marriage with Count Morano, Emily falls victim to a strong fit of melancholy. That happens since the prospect of

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natural noises. In the end, she is ashamed of her own disturbed imagination when she realizes that the bustle was provoked by her dog, Manchon. M. U., I, pp.95-96.

[413] M. U., I, p.100.

[414] Ibid. p. 102.

[415] Milbank, Introduction to *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, p. xvii.

[416] M. U., II, p. 209

[417] Melancholy is defined as "the conflict of facts with hope or expectation. Gary Kelly, ' "A Constant Vicissitude of Interesting Passions": Ann Radcliffe's Perplexed Narratives', *Ariel* (1979), 45-65 (p. 51)

[418] M. U., II, p. 161.

future unhappy life with a man that she does not love – and almost despises – fills her already distempered mind with groundless terrors and obscure hallucinations:

> Emily's long harassed mind gives way to groundless terror: "Her mind, long harassed by distress, now yielded to imaginary terrors; she trembled to look into the obscurity of her spacious chamber, an feared she knew not what; a state of mind, which continued so long, that she would have called up Annette, her aunt's woman, had her fears permitted her to rise from her chair, and to cross the apartment. These melancholy illusions at length began to disperse, and she retired to bed […][419].

Those unexplainable terrors construct the narrative core of the section set in the Castle of Udolpho. As one of the main rules of Radcliffe's novels appears to be that the physical environment directly conforms to the agitated emotional state of the heroines[420], Montoni's castle perched on the slopes of the Apennines works as the main source of pathological melancholy for Emily. In effect, Udolpho's unpleasing reality "[…] cannot compete with the pleasant projections of memory, love, and desire[421]." Here, the protagonist surrenders to the darkest drive of melancholy and experiences nameless terrors on a daily basis, which jeopardise her clarity of mind[422]. When in Udolpho, darkness and limited vision do not concur in creating uplifting sublime visions. On the contrary, they seem to provide only horrific experiences that freeze Emily's mental faculties. The heroine is unable to move, think or realise what she is so afraid of[423]. In that foreign ground, Emily's terrors come from within, yet they are amplified by the external circumstances in Udolpho[424]. In addition to nameless terrors and horrors, Emily is a victim of several unsettling experiences caused by her disordered imagination, which is another symptom of melancholy. Obscurity generally exaggerates Emily's apprehensions[425], as her imagination tends to distort her perceptions: "her imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify[426]." As James Watt points out, Emily succumbs to imaginary pains due to the excessive and prolonged sufferings that affect her already overdeveloped sensibility[427]. In

[419] M. U., II, p. 221.
[420] Elizabeth P. Broadwell, 'The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, Vol.40, No. 4 (1975), 76-87 (p. 76)
[421] Castle, *The Female Thermometer* , p. 133.
[422] "The common attribute of Emily's fears is their very namelessness; it is always an "uncertain kind of terror" that invades her mind, often attacking her reason as well as her Fortitude" Schillace, '"Temporary Failure of Mind"', p. 282
[423] M. U., II, p. 227.
[424] Schillace, '"Temporary Failure of Mind"', p. 283.
[425] Smith, 'Radcliffe's Aesthetics', p. 317. For instance, the nightlight "instead of dispelling her fear, assisted it; for, by its uncertain rays, she almost fancied she saw shapes flit past her curtains and glide into the remote obscurity of her chambers." M. U., II, p. 241.
[426] Ibid. p. 228.
[427] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, pp. 104-105.

that state, neither landscape nor the works of genius can help soothe her distressed mind[428]. The castle, which is a gloomy prison, is able to kill Emily's creative drive due to a lack of "the solace of the private space". As Olivia Loksing Moy defines it, the obscure melancholy arisen by Udolpho acts in the same manner as Anne Finch's spleen, limiting Emily's ability to enjoy or to find shelter in artistic creations like music and poetry[429]. On the contrary, a similar melancholy brings the girl to the brink of despair[430]. Since traditional remedies against melancholy do not seem to work properly, Emily is left with only one option to keep her mind occupied and satisfy her curiosity[431]. In Burtonian fashion[432], the heroine wanders in the labyrinthine hallways of the castle, in order to appease her restlessness and to find some form of distraction from her melancholic thoughts[433]. However, all that she is able to find is a sight that throws her into a state of horror.

The episode of the Black Veil constitutes one of the most popular passages of the novel, and it exemplifies how a restless melancholic mind, mislead by a lack of vision, can foster irrational and causeless panic. Emily's disordered imagination mistakes the waxen bodily shape in front of her for the rotting corpse of Signora Laurentini, the previous owner of the estate. As a reward for her curiosity, Emily experiences additional emotional shock and delusion. The conviction that Laurentini is dead, and that Montoni is a reckless murderer[434], produces an additional emotional excess that contributes to wear out her nervous system[435]. As Margaret Russett points out, Emily's research for truth is hindered by the illusions that come from her melancholic fancy and inflamed imagination. Her thoughts are polluted by her previous experiences of terror, and by her mournful imagination. For that reason, Emily precipitates into a paranoid state and fears what the other rooms might hide apart from the Black Veil[436]. As a result, her overactive mind crafts illusive terrors while wandering alone

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[428] M. U., II, p. 248.
[429] Loksing Moy, 'Radcliffe's Poetic Legacy, p. 378.
[430] Smith, 'Radcliffe's Aesthetics', p. 317.
[431] Devendra P. Varma, *The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England: Its Origins, Efflorescence, Disintegration, and Residuary Influences* (London: Arthur Baker, 1957), p. 104.
[432] It might be important to remember that curiosity, which in the eighteenth century was regarded as the first mobile of the Grand Tour and travel in general, was one of the symptoms and causes of melancholy detected by Burton. Female curiosity, in general, was regarded as an aimless activity – an infringement of the rules of knowledge, and therefore condemned. However, Gothic heroines are curious, especially Emily with her love for sublime landscapes and will to explore the dungeons. However, Emily's curiosity depends on the circumstances, therefore it is stronger and worse in Udolpho. Simone Broders, 'The Fast and the Curious: The Role of Curiosity in the Gothic Heroine's "Grand Tour of the Mind"', *English Studies*, Vol. 98, No. 8 (2017), 917-930 (pp. 917-918, 920).
[433] M. U., II, pp. 232-233-234.
[434] Ibid. pp. 249-250. Simone Broders, 'The Fast and the Curious', pp. 917-918.
[435] Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passions*, p. 115.
[436] M. U., II, p. 258.

in the dusky galleries of the castle, almost paralysed, and afraid of “scarcely she knew what”[437]. Again, her acute emotional distress makes her experiment feelings of loneliness and forsakenness. Similar feelings seem inevitable after having been removed from her home and having lost her parents[438], yet they belong to the melancholic experience.

Apart from those causeless terror and hopelessness, Emily is likely to experience real hallucinations in Udolpho, like after the episode of the failed poisoning of Montoni. Under such a circumstance, the heroine’s mind is confused and thrown into a state of chaos due to terror. She is not able to recollect what happened, she has sort of auditory hallucinations – clashing swords, and she is lost in a sequence of visions and memories[439]. Being possessed by the fixed idea of Mme Montoni’s destiny, who had been considered responsible for the poisoning, Emily does not seem able to understand what is happening, and she is plagued by visions springing from her nervous system. The incident of the turret can be ascribed to that causeless terror due to the melancholic condition as well. The scene opens with a gloomy description of the landscape in the style of a black melancholy poem, since obscure nature is not a mark of the sublime. Heavy clouds, strong winds, darkness, and gloom just increase Emily’s apprehension[440], together with the bleak gothic turret, which is immediately labelled as a “place of death” by the girl’s “melancholy fancy”. Those elements provide a sort of anticipation for the hallucinatory experience that Emily is about to live, in which she will see visions of her dead aunt[441]. Here, the reality is distorted by her imagination and fear; the blood that she perceives together with the body that she finds are identified as her aunt’s: “struck by the horrible conviction, she became for an instant, motionless and insensible[442].” Then, realising that the dead body belongs to a soldier, she tries to find a sign of her aunt; hearing but silence, Emily becomes possessed by the idea that her aunt is already dead[443]. Due to her atrabiliar disorder of imagination, Emily is prone to see corpses everywhere, and even the smallest track of blood is exaggerated by her mind, which makes her jump to the conclusion that Mme Montoni is dead[444].

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[437] M. U., II, pp. 308-309.
[438] Margaret Russett, ‘Narrative as Enchantment in “The Mysteries of Udolpho”’, *ELH*, Vol. 65, No.1 (1998), 159-186 (p. 168).
[439] M. U., II, pp. 315-316.
[440] Ibid. p. 322.
[441] Ibid. pp. 322-323.
[442] Ibid. p. 323.
[443] Ibid. p. 324.
[444] Russett, ‘Narrative as Enchantment’, pp. 172-173.

Despite being occupied by a series of oppressive thoughts that fuel her melancholic symptoms such as paranoia, hallucinations, and fear, Emily realises that her own condition is fuelled by her distressed spirit: "Long-suffering had made her spirits peculiarly sensible to terror, and liable to be liable to be affected by the illusions of superstition[445]." In another passage, "[s]he blamed herself for suffering her romantic imagination to carry her so far beyond the bounds of probability, and determined to endeavour to check its rapid flights lest they should[446] sometimes extend into madness". That happens because Udolpho constitutes the place of delusion and illusion, where Emily crafts her own states of terror and melancholic illness due to her failing imagination[447]. As Adam Watkins points out, that state of illness is principally due to the poor air quality of the place and to the lack of physical exercise[448], which contributes to enervate her nervous system. Another significant moment that mirrors Emily's melancholic state of delusion is constituted by Barnardine's attempted abduction. Again, the gloomy landscape anticipates the terrors that Emily will witness once inside the torture chamber. In effect, the ruins, the windows, the columns, and the ivy just produce a sense of fear, which gives the impression of death as the girl paints in her mind the picture of a grave[449]. The interior of the room, cluttered with torture gear, provokes horrid hallucinations in Emily, which are enhanced by the sight of another veil hiding another corpse. The heroine is firmly convinced that it belongs to her aunt and, after being assaulted by grim hallucinations concerning Mme Montoni's fate, she drops senseless on the floor. After recovering from that fainting fit, Emily falls in a state of lethargy issuing from melancholy, losing her own reason[450]. Hence, she remains passive and immobile due to an excess of terror so strong that succeeds in removing all that happened from her mind[451].

In the end, the moment of the death of Mme Montoni arrives during a dreary night of tempest, and Emily is completely overwhelmed by her sorrow. The girl's mind is occupied by the image of the corpse of her aunt, a thought that she is not able to disperse by contemplating the landscape. The night birds, the beauty of the ruins, or the bat cannot dispel Emily's grief[452]. That happens because the castle "gave her terrible ideas of imprisonment

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[445] M. U., II, p. 330.
[446] Ibid. III, p. 342.
[447] Russett, 'Narrative as Enchantment', p. 163.
Terror, which expands the mind, is to blame since it creates several experiences of visions based on the castle, which is a place of distorted imagination. M. U., II, p. 329; Watkins, 'Environmental Self-making and the Urbanism of Ann Radcliffe's *Udolpho'*, p 595
[448]M. U., III, p. 457; Watkins, 'Environmental Self-making ', p. 595.
[449] Ibid. pp. 344-345.
[450] Ibid. pp. 348, 350.
[451] Ibid. pp. 351, 354.
[452] Ibid. pp. 375, 377.

and suffering[453]", which could not be soothed by a beautiful landscape[454] nor by art[455]. Similarly to a British city, Udolpho is a place that fuels nervous disorders, ruins fibres and sensibility, and induces hallucinations and terror[456]. For that reason, Emily looks for fresh air whenever she can, in order to achieve a state of gentle melancholy[457].

In conclusion, Emily St. Aubert displays all the typical symptoms of a victim of pathologic melancholy, which are mainly triggered by the death of her father and the prolonged grief that she underwent in Udolpho. Being enervated, distempered, fainting, pale, and out of breath, Emily is constantly haunted by the grief concerning her dead loved ones. Those feelings, combined with the excesses of terror and preoccupation, give way to hopelessness, causeless terrors, misunderstood reality, and frightening hallucinations.

### 3.3 Female Melancholy: between Love Melancholy and Patriarchal Anxiety

At that point, it might be clear that Emily St. Aubert suffers from a melancholic disorder. That is partly due to hereditary features and partly attributed to the numerous tragedies and emotional shocks that she is demanded to endure. Despite the seriousness of her bereavement in the family, or of the gruelling experiences in Udolpho, Emily's melancholy can be considered as a blend of the latter together with lovesickness and "patriarchal anxiety". Robert Francis Brissenden includes Emily St. Aubert in the same group of sentimental heroines formed by Justine and Clarissa[458], hinting that Radcliffe's protagonist might be concerned by the same love problems. Both considered as paramount examples of virtue in distress, Clarissa and Emily are indeed demanded to endure a similar affliction caused by love melancholy and by the eighteenth-century familiar hierarchy, even if Emily is expected to deal with rougher circumstances due to her gothic environment. The heroine of Udolpho exhibits all the symptoms that were traditionally associated to love melancholy by a long tradition of literature, beginning with the separation from her lover Valancourt. In effect, tears, sighs, solitude, excessive fixation on the idea of the lover, and grief provoked by

[453] M. U., III, p. 424.

[454] "[…] solitary mountains, heavy clouds, crimson sky, vapours, black woods, the torrent roaring black forest of sycamores and cypresses in the dark increase Emily's fear." Ibid. p. 406.

[455] "She endeavoured to withdraw her thoughts from the anxiety, that preyed upon them, but they refused to controul; she could neither read, or draw, and the tones of her lute were so utterly discordant with the present state of feelings, that she could not endure them for a moment." Twilight as well is not soothing nor friendly: it sprays a melancholy purple over the mountains, spreading gloom and darkness over the landscape and over Emily's chamber: this nurtures fearful thoughts, increasing her concern for he aunt: this provokes a series of "thousand vague images of fear floated on her mind." Ibid. p. 319.

[456] Watkins, 'Environmental Self-making and the Urbanism of Ann Radcliffe's *Udolpho'*, p. 596.

[457] Ibid. p. 596.

[458] Robert Francis Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1974) p.94, 137.

unsatisfied love are developed as the narrative unfolds. Due to the extreme external circumstances of Udolpho, and to her already melancholic character, Emily's lovesickness takes a darker turn, which fosters grim conviction and hallucinations

In addition to that, that sentimental affliction is aggravated by the tyrannical hierarchic system of family, here represented by her uncle by marriage Monsieur Montoni, the man who holds complete legal power over her person. By using the girl for his sinister plans to acquire wealth, Montoni worsens Emily's love melancholy by threatening her with forced marriages or rape, which provoke hallucinations and irrational fears.

### *3.3.1 Love Melancholy: Valancourt*

As a young and beautiful heroine endowed with an uncommonly refined sensibility, and a predisposition for melancholy which both realise in the act of contemplating nature, Emily is expected to fall in love with her male equivalent. Monsieur Valancourt embodies the sentimental stereotype of the young and handsome hero of aristocracy, blessed with a handsome aspect, and an extraordinary fondness of nature[459]. Being Emily's masculine counterpart, Valancourt is inevitably a melancholic hero, who resembles to St. Aubert, as he declares that the moonlit Alps and akin views can:

> "[…] soften the heart like the notes of sweet music, and inspire that *delicious melancholy* which no person, who has felt it once, would resign for the gayest pleasure. They awaken our beat and purest feelings; disposing us to benevolence, pity, and friendship[460]."

Valancourt demonstrates to be a melancholic soul that can be touched by nature, which is a sublime force that can elevate his mind to new ethical heights while promoting a moment of meditation[461]. In addition to that, Daniel Cottom observes that landscape in Radcliffe's novels plays a key role in revealing hidden features of her characters. Indeed, her protagonists may have difficulty in distinguishing their characters from natural components. For instance, at a certain point, Emily sees Valancourt in a far more interesting light due to his mind and soul mirroring the mountains[462], underlining the importance of landscape in their love relationship.

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[459] Brissenden identifies Valancourt with the "noble savage", a young nobleman who refuses to spend his time with his fashionable fellow aristocrats in the city, preferring to wander among sublime landscapes while enjoying the simple life of peasants. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress,* pp. 71-72.
[460] M. U., I, p. 46.
[461] Dubois, 'Music and the Feminine Sublime', p. 466.
[462] Daniel Cottom, *The Civilized Imagination: a study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 35.

It may be possible to observe that Emily and Valancourt's emotional bond blooms among the natural views of Languedoc, an element that underlines the purity of their mutual feelings, and consequently the ethical and cultural elevation deriving from their melancholic souls:

> St. Aubert, as he sometimes lingered to examine the wild plants in his path, often looked forward with pleasure to Emily and Valancourt, as they strolled on together; he, with a countenance of animated delight, pointing to her attention some grand feature of the scene; and she, listening and observing with a look of tender seriousness, that spoke the elevation of her mind. They appeared like two lovers who had never strayed beyond these their native mountains; whose situation had secluded them from the frivolities of common life, whose ideas were simple and grand, like the landscapes among which they moved, and who knew no other happiness, than in the union of pure and affectionate hearts[463].

In order to be a perfect match for Emily, Valancourt exhibits a remarkable interest in poetry along with his interest in nature, reciting the verses of the greatest Italian and Latin poets[464]. Literature, in fact, provides the ground for one of the first clichés connected to love melancholy. While reading a volume of Petrarchan sonnets, Emily realises that she is reading one of Valancourt's favourite books, "dwellings on the passages he had admired[465]." That ethical and intellectual connection based on melancholic sensibility is bound to quickly grow into sentimental attachment, and then into love, which will become one of Emily's main melancholic worries in the central section of the novel. For that reason, as the most unsettling events of the narrative unfold, the heroine is victim of fits of nostalgia that bring her back to the times in which she was happy with Valancourt.

Proper love melancholy is triggered by the trope of separation, which occurs in the section of the novel set in Toulouse. Here, Emily's prospect of perpetual happiness offered by her engagement with Valancourt is shattered by Madame Cheron. Emily's aunt and legal tutor plays the part of "the cruel parent" in the literary pattern of love melancholy, who, blinded by her own greediness, follows Montoni to his estate in Italy, in order to realise her illusions of grandeur, and become "little less than a princess[466]". The separation scene comprises a long sequence in which Emily is forced to display her strength of resolution by refusing

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[463] M. U., I, p. 49.
[464] "St. Aubert sometimes amused himself with botanizing, while Valancourt and Emily strolled on; he pointing out to her notice the objects that particularly charmed him, and reciting beautiful passages from such of the Latin and Italian poets as he had heard her admire." Ibid. p. 42.
[465] Castle, *The Female Thermometer,* p. 126.
[466] M. U., II, p. 166.

Valancourt's proposal of elopement while falling into a lethargic state of sadness[467]. That passage constitutes another genuine emotional shock for Radcliffe's heroine[468], who, from that moment on, will experiment all the disorders attributed to love melancholy. Emily's plethora of ailments includes insomnia – "[…] and then hurried to her chamber. To seek repose, which, alas! Was fled from her wretchedness[469]." – hopelessness, obsessive thoughts focused on her object of desire, grim premonitions of death, and hallucinations. One of the first symptoms to manifest is hopelessness, which appears relatively as soon as Emily is leaving her aunt's estate in Toulouse: "Recollecting that she had parted with Valancourt, perhaps forever, her heart sickened as the memory revived[470]." When dwelling in that state, Emily is persecuted by the omen that she will never see Valancourt again, developing pessimistic thoughts of melancholic origin.

As the narrative unfolds, Emily's dismay musings become more frequent due to the prolonged distance. At that point, she even includes comparisons between the bright happy past and the gloom depressive present in which she is entrapped: "it now seemed to her oppressed mind, that she had taken leave from him forever […][471]." Separation and dark forebodings are expected to evolve into unrequited love, as the prolonged distance from the desired object is enough to question the feelings expressed by the latter[472] during the moment of farewell. Such an unpleasing condition of uncertainty, doubt, and melancholy is kindled by the romantic landscape, which brings to the heroine's mind the merry moments lived with her paramour. For instance, the Alps resemble to the Pyrenees previously witnessed with Valancourt, and such a thought is enough to initiate a fit of love melancholy, in which Emily even paints the young gentleman in her mind[473]. In that sense, landscapes are similar to one another, constantly reminding Emily of her lost lover[474]. Moreover, sublime sceneries throw her into a state of melancholy magnified by gloom and vastness. Hence, a typical fit proceeds

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467 M. U., I, pp. 159-160; JoEllen De Lucia, 'From the Female Gothic to a Feminist Theory of History: Ann Radcliffe and the Scottish Enlightenment,' *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol.50, No. 1 (2009) 101-115 (p.106).
468 Schillace, '"Temporary Failure of Mind"', p. 284.
469 Ibid. p. 160.
470 Ibid. II, p. 161.
471 Ibid. II, p. 209.
472 Ibid. II, p. 192.
473 "With what emotions of sublimity, softened by tenderness, did she meet Valancourt in thought, at the customary hour of sun-set, when, wandering among the Alps, she watched the glorious orb sink amid their summits, his last tints die away on their snowy points, and a solemn obscurity steal over the scene! And when the last gleam had faded, she turned her eyes from the west with somewhat of the melancholy regret that is experienced after the departure of a beloved friend; while these lonely feelings were heightened by the spreading gloom, and by the low sounds, heard only when darkness confines attention, which make the general stillness more impressive leaves shook by the air, the last sigh of the breeze that lingers after sun-set, or the murmur of distant streams." M. U., II, pp. 163-164.
474 Castle, *The Female Thermometer,* p. 126.

from the contemplation of nature in solitude in order to achieve an exquisite sadness, which constitutes a mark of moral elevation. The sorrow issuing from the distance is so strong that nature ceases to exert its influence on Emily:

> In the present scenes her fancy often gave her the figure of Valancourt, whom she saw on a point of the cliffs, gazing with awe and admiration on the imagery around him; or wandering pensively along the vale below, frequently pausing to look back upon the scenery, and then, his countenance glowing with the poet's fire, pursuing his way to some overhanging heights. When she again considered the time and the distance that were to separate them, that every step she now took lengthened this distance, her heart sunk, and the surrounding landscape charmed her no more[475].

Hence, the only remedy for Emily's anxiety about the veracity of Valancourt's feelings is a letter from the latter, in which he renovates his feelings of love and affection for her[476].

Emily tries to counteract those symptoms of love melancholy by clinging to the reassuring tone of the message, while reading it several times, in order to dry her tears and tranquilise her sobs[477].

In a similar manner to the rest of her vital and rational function, even Emily's love melancholy starts to decline towards a pathologic phase when approaching the menacing castle of Udolpho, which is considered as the place of "debility, infirmity and loss of reason"[478].. Here, as Gary Kelly affirms, Valancourt "figures […] as a source of melancholy reminiscence[479]", which acts as an aggravating agent for Emily's melancholic attitude. Indeed, lovesickness constitutes one of the focuses around which revolves Emily's melancholic degeneration, causing sudden and irrational fear, dark convictions, and grim hallucinations[480]. As a consequence, Emily's symptoms of love melancholy appear amplified during her first night in Udolpho:

> From the contemplation of this scene, Emily's mind proceeded to the apprehension of what she might suffer in it, till the remembrance of Valancourt, far, far distant! came to her heart, and softened it into sorrow. A heavy sigh escaped her: but, trying to conceal her tears, she walked away to one of the high windows, that opened upon the ramparts, below which, spread the woods she had passed in her approach to the castle. But the night-shade sat deeply on the mountains beyond, and their indented outline

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[475] M. U., II, p. 168.
[476] Ibid. pp. 192,194.
[477] "Leaving the gay scenes of Paris, we return to those of the gloomy Apennine, where Emily's thoughts were still faithful to Valancourt. Looking to him as to her only hope, she recollected, with jealous exactness, every assurance and every proof she had witnessed of his affection; read again and again the letters she had received from him; weighed, with intense anxiety, the force of every word, that spoke of his attachment; and dried her tears, as she trusted in his truth" M. U., II, p. 295.
[478] Napier, *The Failure of Gothic,* p. 109.
[479] Kelly, ' "A Constant Vicissitude of Interesting Passions"', p. 58.
[480] Napier, *The Failure of Gothic,* p. 109.

alone could be faintly traced on the horizon, where a red streak yet glimmered in the west. The valley between was sunk in darkness[481].

In the aforementioned passage, the sudden fear of not seeing her lover anymore blends together with tears, sighing, and the solitary contemplation of the landscape. A similar terror can provoke a strong atrabiliar attack that cannot be soothed by the contemplation of nature, due to the thick veil of darkness enveloping the Apennines. As a result of that extreme emotional distress, combined with the limitation of sight attributed to darkness, Emily is prone to recreate Valancourt through her deluded imagination[482]. For that reason, the ghostly figure that appears at bight in Udolpho, accompanied by sweet music from Gascony, can only be Valancourt, for her mind there is no other alternative available:

> She sat down by the casement, breathless, and overcome with the alternate emotions of hope and fear; then rose again, leaned from the window, that she might catch a nearer sound, listened, now doubting and then believing, softly exclaimed the name of Valancourt, and then sunk again into the chair. Yes, it was possible, that Valancourt was near her, and she recollected circumstances, which induced her to believe it was his voice she had just heard[483].

Emily's love melancholy is directly responsible for that delusion since her intellect is completely occupied by the fixed idea of her paramour. While discovering the presence of a stranger in the castle due to her curiosity[484], Emily falls prey to what Terry Castle defines as an "access of yearning"[485]. In effect, her oppressed mind combines a series of elements that might suggest the presence of Valancourt[486], therefore she interprets them as the absolute reality. The alleged presence of her paramour is enough to raise feelings of hope and joy in the heroine's bosom, yet it soon evolves into an additional source of concern for Emily, especially when evacuating Udolpho by order of Montoni[487]. Despite the wave of positive feelings coming from that delusion, Emily is plunged again into lovesickness, bursting into

[481] M. U., II, p. 229.
[482] Patricia Whiting, 'Literal and Literary Representation of the Family in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* , Vol. 8, No. 4 (1996), 485-501(p. 488).
[483] M. U., III, p. 387.

[484] "Without her determination to find the origin of the mysterious music she hears at night, the presence of Valancourt at Udolpho would have remained undiscovered." Broders, 'The Fast and the Curious', p. 922.

[485] Castle, *The Female Thermometer* , p. 124.
[486] The arrival of a stranger in the fortress who is detained in the dungeon, the music of Gascony and the songs sang in French.
[487] Signor Montoni dismissed Emily from the castle due to the imminent battle that will be consumed within the walls of the fortress. Sandro Jung, 'Sensibility, the Servant and Comedy in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho'*, *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2010), 1-12 (p. 3).

tears when she discovers that the French prisoner is not Valancourt but Monsieur Du Pont, another suitor of hers[488].

In the last section of the novel, Emily is expected to reunite with her lover and finally live happily forever after. Yet, the narration takes a sudden turn due to a major inconvenience concerning the young hero. Arrived in France and comforted by the family of the count de Villefort, Emily is forced to renounce Valancourt due to a loss of respectability after his gambling bouts in Paris[489]. Seeing her hopes and dreams shattered, Emily is possessed by a stronger wave of love melancholy that induces gloomy hallucinations and grim delusions about Valancourt's health. Therefore, after a second farewell scene filled with tears and invocations to fortitude[490], Emily is so possessed by the idea of her paramour[491] that she forgets the rest of her incumbencies. Indeed, her mental and physical energies are monopolized by an ongoing psychomachia opposing love and reason[492]. The result of that excessive intellectual effort is a relapse of love melancholy encompassing all the typical symptoms such as oppression of the heart, lack of breath, tears, self-doubt, insomnia, and physical illness. In order to find some relief to her situation, Emily tries to occupy her mind with three traditional remedies, occupation, cheerful conversation in the company of good friends, and the contemplation of the natural landscape[493]. On the other hand, parties and cheerful crowds leave her "oppressed by a melancholy that, which she perceived that no kind of what is called amusement can dissipate[494]", therefore the only way to cope with her grief is lonely meditation on a deserted watchtower.

Although being traditionally associated with pleasing feelings of white melancholy, the watch-tower and its natural background seem not to hold any positive influence on Emily's dejection. On the contrary, her lovesickness increases after the discovery of a poem left by Valancourt[495]. Hence that kind of landscape encourages Emily to express all her sorrow for

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[488] M. U., III, p. 447.
[489] Ibid. pp. 505-506.
[490] Ibid. IIII, p. 513-516.
[491] "She could not expel the remembrance of the late scene with Valancourt" Ibid. p. 517.
[492] "With the latter it was a sleepless and dismal night; the more she suffered her memory to dwell on the late scenes with Valancourt, the more her resolution declined, and she was obliged to collect all the arguments, which the Count had made use of to strengthen it, and all the precepts, which she had received from her deceased father, on the subject of self-command, to enable her to act, with prudence and dignity, on this the most severe occasion of her life. There were moments, when all her fortitude forsook her, and when, remembering the confidence of former times, she thought it impossible, that she could renounce Valancourt. [...] Thus passed the night in ineffectual struggles between affection and reason, and she rose, in the morning, with a mind, weakened and irresolute, and a frame, trembling with illness." Ibid. p. 518.
[493] Ibid. p. 523.
[494] Ibid. p. 539.
[495] Marek Blaszak, 'Ann Radcliffe's Gothic Romances and the Sea' in *Explorations: a Journal of Language and Literature,* No. 9 (2021), 30-42 (p. 38).

the loss of her lover[496] and to remember the past moments of happiness that now are too painful to bear[497]. Landscapes from the past, such as the ones in Toulouse or La Vallée, pose a more dangerous threat to Emily's mental health. That happens because they recall to her mind her late father, and her lost paramour at once. However, Toulouse's natural landscape can be considered a bringer of wisdom, which is useful to break one of the clichés of love melancholy. While observing the French countryside, Emily realises that Valancourt is not the perfect gentleman that she thought him to be[498]. On the contrary, he has flaws, and he can commit errors of judgement as well.

On the other hand, despite that process of demystification, Emily is still trapped in a sort of delusional state provoked by her tender feelings for Valancourt, therefore she continues to hallucinate visions of what her future with him could have been[499]. La Vallée offers ground for an even worse overlapping of melancholies, since its scenery inevitably opens old wounds concerning the death of her parents, and she associates the same fatal omen to Valancourt. Being caught in a causeless access of concern about the hero's state of health[500], Emily is induced to believe that he is dead by the mournful autumnal landscape of la Vallée. In such a mood, she pictures his death in a hallucinatory moment:

> In the evening, therefore, Emily set out alone for the cottage, with a melancholy foreboding, concerning Valancourt, while, perhaps, the gloom of the hour might contribute to depress her spirits. It was a grey autumnal evening towards the close of the season; heavy mists partially obscured the mountains, and a chilling breeze, that sighed among the beech woods, strewed her path with some of their last yellow leaves. These, circling in the blast and foretelling the death of the year, gave an image of desolation to her mind, and, in her fancy, seemed to announce the death of Valancourt. Of this she had, indeed, more than once so strong a presentiment, that she was on the point of returning home, feeling herself unequal to an encounter with the certainty she anticipated, but, contending with her emotions, she so far commanded them, as to be able to proceed[501].

By abandoning herself to the typical groundless terror of a love malcontent, Emily is deeply convinced that her lover is dead, falling into a melancholic crisis[502]. Nevertheless, Valancourt is alive, and groaning for love. In order to cope with her own lovesickness, Emily once again addresses music and occupation to dispel the image of Valancourt from her

[496] Gray-Panesi, 'Escaping Eden', p. 49.
[497] M. U., IIII, p. 558.
[498] Ibid. p. 581.
[499] Ibid. p. 582.
[500] Ibid. pp. 595, 618.
[501] Ibid. pp. 618-619.
[502] Ibid. pp. 619-620.

oppressed imagination. On one hand, the latter reveals to be counterproductive, as the satisfaction of her curiosity regarding the mysterious music heard at night at the beginning of the novel[503] hides the gruesome story of Signora Laurentini of Udolpho[504], a circumstance which aggravates Emily's dejection. On the other hand, music proves to be powerless against the heroine's deep-rooted sense of melancholy[505], and it can simply support the gloom enveloping her mind[506].

In the end, the only remedy to Emily's love melancholy, and apparently also to her pathologic atrabiliar disorder, lies neither in the contemplation of nature nor in cheerful company or music. In a very Burtonian fashion, Radcliffe establishes marriage, and the consequent satisfaction of love desire, as the final cure for Emily St. Aubert, who is able to fulfil the dream of any well-to-do eighteenth-century middle-class woman[507]. By marrying Valancourt, Emily is able to free herself from the melancholic sorrow coming from the traumas that she endured along the narrative, realising what Emma Clery defines as "a utopian *rapprochement* to dispel preceding horrors[508]."

In other words, by re-establishing the preceding pastoral atmosphere of La Vallée, Emily St. Aubert and Valancourt abandon melancholy musings and guarantee a bright future of rational happiness and enlightened company[509].

### *3.3.2 Patriarchal Hierarchy: Monsieur Montoni and the Castle of Udolpho*

As shown above, Emily St. Aubert is a descendant of Clarissa and Pamela, and, therefore, one of the main focuses of the novel lies in the metaphorical imprisonment of women perpetrated by the English patriarchal-oriented society[510]. That forced subjugation to a male-dominated society constitutes an additional cause of melancholy since literary heroines are constantly afraid to be seduced, raped, brutalised, and abandoned[511]. In *The Mysteries of*

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[503] M. U., I, p. 70.
[504] The storyline of Signora Laurentini shows the most extreme consequences of love melancholy, as unrequited love leads the mistress of Udolpho to crime and later to madness, which is realised under the form of playing the guitar at night in the woods.
[505] M. U., IIII, pp. 666-667.
[506] Ibid. pp. 664-665.
[507] Jerrold E. Hogle *'"Gothic" Romance: Its Origins and Cultural Functions' in A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary* edited by Corinne Saunders (Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), p. 226.
[508] E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction: 1762-1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 123.
[509] Ertugrul Koc, Tugba Karabulut, 'Ann Radcliffe's Life Described as "Helpless Maiden" and the "(Un)Conventional Woman" in The Mysteries of Udolpho', p. 27.
[510] Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 225.
Richter compares Emily's state to Pamela's misadventures, as both heroines were removed from their own native environment and fell at the mercy of a ruthless man. David H. Richter, *Reading the Eighteenth-century Novel* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), p. 141.
[511] Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 237.

*Udolpho,* the patriarchal threat is embodied by the ruthless Monsieur Montoni, the main villain of the novel. Indeed, the plans that he has for Emily clash with the dreams of love of the young heroine, therefore exacerbating her love melancholy. Emily's despair in Italy, which is constituted by the exaggerations of Udolpho and the distance from Valancourt, is reinforced by Montoni.

The villain tries to make a profit at her expenses, even if, according to Emily's hallucinated mind, he is perceived as more than a bankrupt leader of *condottieri.*

Montoni is described as a man of gloomy temper[512] and of no feelings, extremely manly to the point of misogyny. As observed by Claudia L. Johnson, Montoni stands in open contrast with sentimental men such as Valancourt and St. Aubert, representing a raw male force that oscillates between cruelty and extreme rationality[513]. In order to satiate his desire for money and power[514], he decides to marry a rich woman, Madame Cheron, and employ his newly acquired niece for his purposes. Acting as an egoist guardian, Montoni first tries to marry Emily off to Count Morano, a Venetian aristocrat , and then proceeds to threaten her in order to have her resign her estates, so he can pay his debts contracted by gambling[515]. The posed threats are perceived as real by Emily inasmuch as by the law and English understanding of familiar hierarchy[516]. Montoni's project of nuptials with Morano works as an active source of melancholy for Emily since it aggravates her lovesickness. The thought of Morano becomes a fixed idea that springs terror in Emily's mind, to the point that the mere arrival of some strangers in Udolpho is enough to trigger hallucinations of the Venetian Count, which throw her in a state of terror[517]. That nuptial project with Morano is an additional obstacle to Emily's aspiration of marrying Valancourt[518], and a supposed sign of the almighty power that Montoni holds over her.

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[512] Lipski, 'The Perils of Aesthetic Pleasure in Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*', p. 125.

[513] Montoni compensates his cruelty and non-sentimentality with an overdeveloped sense of rationality, considering emotions a deviation from the norm and the dictates of reason. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, pp. 98-99, 103

[514] Montoni is described as the typical selfish villain who always acts on the basis of his own self-interest to increase his fortune and his social influence. Steven Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 42.

[515] Charlie Bondhus, 'Sublime Patriarchs and the Problems of the New Middle Class in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*', *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2010), 13-32 (p. 17).

[516] Whiting, 'Literal and Literary Representation of the Family in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*', p. 489.

[517] "She saw them at the extremities of the arcades, and immediately retreated; but the agitation of her spirits, and the extent and duskiness of the hall, had prevented her from distinguishing the persons of the strangers. Her fears, however, had but one object, and they had called up that object to her fancy:—she believed that she had seen Count Morano." M. U., II, p. 245.

[518] "Emily, in her own apartment, considered with intense anxiety all the unjust and tyrannical conduct of Montoni, the dauntless perseverance of Morano, and her own desolate situation, removed from her friends and country. She looked in vain to Valancourt, confined by his profession to a distant kingdom, as her protector; but it gave her comfort to know, that there was, at least, one person in the world, who would sympathize in her

Emily is demanded to resist the threat represented by the *condottiero*, yet her understanding of Montoni's offensive power is abundantly exaggerated by her disturbed imagination[519], which is a direct consequence of her melancholic disorder. As Michasiw points out, "A petty condottieri captain becomes a figure imbued with supernatural power, a transformation effected almost entirely by Emily and her aunt[520]." Although Montoni's authority in Udolpho is unquestionable, it turns out that that almighty halo of which he is encircled is just a process of "process of mystification"[521] due to Emily's melancholic imagination. She is constantly afraid of his "terrible vengeance" that consists in murdering her in order to obtain her properties[522]. A similar fear derives also from Emily's delusions of the mind, on the account of a man that can murder a woman and leave her rotting corpse behind a veil for almost 18 years like a memento is capable of everything[523]. In other words, in the prison of Udolpho, Montoni might seem an overpowering tyrant, meanwhile, out in the real world of the novel, he is just a miserable indebted criminal[524].

Montoni attacks Emily's powers of rationality, sustaining that she is a slave of her own illusions, associating her with the heroines of the novels[525]. Although being paralysed in horror at the bare thought of him, Emily is able to face him, pushed by her own love melancholy, which is morally elevated by her suffering[526]. In the end, she discovers that Montoni is a human just like the others, and that "[he] had no longer the power or the will

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afflictions, and whose wishes would fly eagerly to release her. Yet she determined not to give him unavailing pain by relating the reasons she had to regret the having rejected his better judgment concerning Montoni; reasons, however, which could not induce her to lament the delicacy and disinterested affection that had made her reject his proposal for a clandestine marriage." M. U., II, p. 202.

[519] Richter, *Reading the Eighteenth-century Novel*, p. 141.

[520] Kim Ian Michasiw, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol.6, No. 4 (1994), 327-346 (p. 334).

[521] Michasiw, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power, p. 334. "[…] that she might be released from the power of Montoni, whose particularly oppressive conduct towards herself, and general character as to others, were justly terrible to her imagination." M. U., II, p. 203.

[522] M. U., III, p. 367

[523] Johnson, *Equivocal Beings,* p. 95.
After the second discussion with Montoni, Emily is removed from the castle for security concerns, yet her mind is induced to think that she is about to be murdered. Influenced by the natural scenery and the horrible night of travel, Emily pictures Montoni's servants as assassins and hallucinates about her death. M. U., IIII, pp. 404, 406 .

[524] Richter, *Reading the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 147.

[525] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 118-119.

[526] "To her own solitary chamber she once more returned, and there thought again of the late conversation with Montoni, and of the evil she might expect from opposition to his will. But his power did not appear so terrible to her imagination, as it was wont to do: a sacred pride was in her heart, that taught it to swell against the pressure of injustice, and almost to glory in the quiet sufferance of ills, in a cause, which had also the interest of Valancourt for its object. For the first time, she felt the full extent of her own superiority to Montoni, and despised the authority, which, till now, she had only feared." M. U., III, pp. 367 381.

to afflict"[527]. Once she escapes from Udolpho, she is free to recover both her properties and the freedom to marry the man she loves.

In conclusion, Radcliffe embodies all the traditional aspects of melancholy within the character of Emily St. Aubert. Exhibiting a large range of symptoms that change on the basis of the circumstances of time and place, the narrative of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* allows the main heroine to express the descending spiral of her melancholic affliction. Starting from a tender dejection associated with her hereditary genes and natural genius, Emily first experiments the pleasing sadness of nature and art proper to white melancholy, and then she slowly slips towards a pathological condition akin to black melancholy, fostered by a prolonged state of grief – including disordered imagination, causeless terrors and hallucinations. At the same time, that illness is followed by Emily's lovesickness, the literary-related kind of melancholy fostered by nostalgia and unrequited love, combined together with the social threat represented by Monsieur Montoni, the patriarch of her new family. Hallucinations and terrors, which are provoked by those combined kinds of melancholy, cannot be cured by the traditional remedies of art, music, poetry, and drawing, or by social occupations, parties, society meetings, and cheerful conversation. After a series of traumas, sorrows, and frightful experiences, mostly created by Emily's melancholic affliction, the only permanent remedy is represented by the heroine's marriage with Valancourt, in a true Burtonian fashion.

[527] M. U., IIII, pp. 581

# 4. Three Varieties of Melancholy Compared in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*: Ellena di Rosalba, Vincentio di Vivaldi, and Father Schedoni

Appearing for the first time in 1797 as a foil to Mathew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk*, *The Italian* constitutes the last novel released in Radcliffe's lifetime, before her departure from the scenes of English literature. The general plot follows a framework similar to *Udolpho*, as the focus of the story revolves around the sentimental torture of a star-crossed couple of lovers, divided by issues regarding social order while being persecuted by a reckless Machiavellian villain[528]. Despite that monotonous storyline, Daniel Cottom observes that the novel introduces absolute novelties in Radcliffe's fiction in terms of character development. Indeed, Radcliffe appears to have surpassed the two-dimensional division of characters in the categories of the innocent and the corrupted, delivering a multifaceted portrait of the three leading characters: Ellena di Rosalba, Vincentio de Vivaldi, and the monk Father Schedoni[529]. While providing three different psychological insights, Radcliffe made clear that the most distinctive trait of her characters is a melancholic affliction, an illness that haunts the three characters to different degrees.

Ellena di Rosalba, similarly to her predecessors, represents the melancholic maid, saddened due to her sensible constitution and artistic genius, who finds solace in nature and art; Vincentio de Vivaldi – the real innovation in Radcliffe's fiction, is a well-developed hero that falls prey of lovesickness, and due to the latter becomes a melancholic traveller; Father Schedoni – the most intriguing figure of the novel, who is a splenetic villain that embodies all those features attributed to the saturnine constitution. Similarly to *Udolpho,* natural landscapes and circumstances hold a certain influence on melancholy, yet the feeling is more refined. Moreover, that is connected with the psyche of the characters, since they impose their grief directly on their own[530].

This chapter will focus on those three different varieties of melancholy, analysing characters' personal disposition to despondency, and their responsiveness to the surrounding circumstances and to the other characters.

[528] Baker, Ernest A. *The History of English Novel*, pp. 200-201.
[529] Cottom, Daniel. *The Civilized Imagination,* p. 51.
[530] Chandler, Anne. 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2006), pp. 133-153 (p.149).

## 4.1 The Melancholic Heroine: Ellena di Rosalba

Young, beautiful, delicate and orphaned, Ellena di Rosalba embodies the canonical traits of Radcliffe's heroines, undergoing the usual discovery process relating to her true identity like Emily St. Aubert or Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest*. Along with the aforementioned characters, Ellena di Rosalba displays symptoms of melancholic natural constitution and manifests an extreme sensibility of feelings mingled together with extraordinary artistic qualities. A similar sensibility allows her to achieve a privileged connection with Italian natural landscapes, which usually reverberate her melancholic feelings. Nature can both soothe or elicit melancholy, giving way to episodes of paranoia and terror. In effect, Ellena's mind has to face several shocks and strong emotions, which are likely to unleash a wave of black melancholy. Moreover, Ellena's melancholy is also connected to lovesickness for Vivaldi; the impossibility of their love, and the successions of incidents that divide them, work as a trigger of melancholy symptoms.

This section will focus on the heroine's natural inclination to despondency and will explore the positive side connected to art and nature. Nevertheless, it will focus on the pathologic side as well, with an excursus on love melancholy.

### *4.1.1 A New Model of Genius*

Although sharing similar behavioural traits with Emily St. Aubert and Adeline de Montralt (constituted of blue eyes, beauty according to classic standards and delicacy), Ellena di Rosalba embodies a new model of heroine, and therefore a new kind of melancholic genius. Naturally, Ellena is a fine illustrator and a skilled lute player; she enjoys reading the masterpieces of both Italian and English literature[531]. Nevertheless, the Italianate heroine does not seem able to compose original poems during her gloomy ravings while contemplating the twilight[532]. In contrast, Ellena appears to possess an outstanding voice[533] and impressive embroidery skills.

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[531] Ellena includes both Torquato Tasso and John Milton. *The Italian,* pp. 91, 118.

[532] Radcliffe most certainly read the article on *British Criticism* that defined the poems in *Udolpho* as 'impertinent' and 'misplaced', avoiding to include original poems in *The Italian.*
Townshend, Dale and Wright, Angela. 'Gothic and Romantic engagements. The critical reception of Ann Radcliffe, 1789-1850', in *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic*, ed. by Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3-32 (p. 10).

[533] Her voice is so sweet and enchanting that made Vivaldi fall in love with her without the classic cliché of sight.
Arnaud, Pierre. *Ann Radcliffe et le Fantastique,* p. 233.

In spite of engaging in different activities from her forerunners, Ellena can be considered a true genius[534], a trait which underlines her melancholic essence. According to Ada Sharpe, Ellena has been "charged in her youth with financial and emotional responsibilities unknown to her precursors[535]" due to her humble social stance. In contrast to the rest of Radcliffe's heroines, Ellena's education had not been supervised by a benign patriarch, therefore she has been educated from an early age with the values of morality and self-dependence by her aunt Signora Bianchi, who proudly thought her to rely on her hard work to earn their own living[536]. The genius behind Di Rosalba's work is evident to the whole city of Naples; her pieces are sold by the nuns of *Santa Maria della Pietà* and are extremely popular among the Neapolitan upper class (to the extent that even evil Marchesa di Vivaldi unconsciously wears Ellena's designs[537]). That mechanical activity of embroidering not only represents a mark of melancholy but also offers a distraction to Ellena's sadness and grief. Domestic occupation acts as a sort of sanctuary, a tranquillizing work that contributes to dispelling anguish[538]. In such a context, Ellena's industry appears to be an effective way to overcome melancholy, since her creativity is a Burtonian remedy to anxiety[539], especially the one caused by the presence of Vivaldi[540]:

> But she was cautious of admitting a sentiment more tender than admiration, and endeavoured to dismiss his image from her mind, and by engaging in her usual occupations, to recover the state of tranquillity, which his appearance had somewhat interrupted[541].

In conclusion, despite the evident differences between Emily St. Aubert's abstract genius and Ellena di Rosalba's handicraft, it is possible to affirm that the latter represents a new type of melancholic genius, as her sadness is evident in the secluded life that she leads in

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[534] Radcliffe, Ann. *The Italian or The Confessional of Black Penitents*, ed. by Frederick Garber, Revised and with an Introduction and Notes by Nick Groom (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 364.
"It was a copy from Herculaneum, and, though a copy, was touched with the spirit of original genius." *The Italian*, pp. 24-25.
[535] Sharpe, Ada. 'Orphan, Embroiderer, Insect, Queen: The "Elegant and Ingenious" Art of Being Ellena in Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1796)', in *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2012), pp. 123-140 (p. 134).
[536] Batchelor, Rhonda. 'The Rise and Fall of the Eighteenth Century's Authentic Feminine Voice', in *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1994), pp. 347-368, (p. 351).
[537] When Ellena was of an age to assist her, she resigned much of the employment and the profit to her niece, whose genius having unfolded itself, the beauty of her designs and the elegance of her execution, both in drawings and embroidery, were so highly valued by the purchasers at the grate of the convent, that Bianchi committed to Ellena altogether the exercise of her art. *The Italian*, p. 364.
[538] Sharpe, 'Orphan, Embroiderer, Insect, Queen', p. 133.
[539] Ibid. p. 137.
[540]Warren, Andrew. 'Designing and Undrawing Veils: Anxiety and Authorship in Radcliffe's *The Italian*', in *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 54, No.4 (2013), pp. 521-544, (p. 522).
[541] *The Italian*, p. 11.

order to fulfil her chores[542]. Through her creative work, Ellena is able to express her melancholic feelings like Emily did with her poems and to maintain her tranquillity by banning melancholic affliction[543].

### *4.1.2 Pathetic Fallacy and Religious Terror: Landscape's Effects on Ellena's Melancholy*

Besides genius, Ellena di Rosalba's melancholic attitude appears clearer whenever she comes into contact with nature. In that sense, Ellena shares a common ground with Emily, since both heroines are caught contemplating beautiful landscapes that satisfy their need for pathetic fallacy, but that at the same time promote white melancholy-like meditations. As previously observed in the analysis of *Udolpho,* grim circumstances are meant to provoke more depressive meditations that, combined together with the extreme grief which underlies every heroine's narrative, yield to black melancholic symptomatology. Unlike her predecessor, Ellena di Rosalba's inner melancholy is not juxtaposed to the surrounding scenery by the narrative, but that process happens inside the heroine's head. Indeed, the girl is able, she is able to interpret the attributes of the landform herself, and connect them to her sorrowful feelings[544]. In addition to that novelty, Radcliffe introduced the negative sublime induced by the Catholic aesthetic, which works as one of the main sources of despair and dejection for several characters, including Ellena. The excess of grief, combined with the anguish coming from inhospitable nature, Catholic gloom, and nocturnal ruins are likely to push Ellena's melancholy to the verge of paranoia. In similar conditions, the heroine fosters causeless terror, both caused by the illusions of her disordered imagination and by the lack of vision in darkness[545].

#### *4.1.2.1 The Italian Landscape: Dreadful Pleasure and Gentle Despondency*

Compared to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Italian* might seem poorer in terms of scenic descriptions, as Radcliffe again proved to be an author attentive to criticism. Therefore, after the mixed reviews received concerning the excessive presence of natural descriptions, Radcliffe notably reduced the presence of the above-mentioned[546]. Such a reduction does not correspond to a lack of quality, since the melancholic emotions matching the landscape

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[542] This kind of lifestyle results in passivity, which is another indicator of melancholy, Ellena does not take part in the lively social life of the metropolis, dedicating herself to her work.
Schmitt, Cannon. 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*', in *ELH* Vol. 61, No. 4 (1994), 853-876 (p. 860).
[543] Warren, 'Designing and Undrawing Veils', p. 522.
[544] Chandler, 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', p. 149.
[545] Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality', pp. 867-868.
[546] Townshend, Wright, 'Gothic and Romantic engagements', p. 10.

acquire a previously unknown liveliness. In the novel, nature plays the main role in soothing the heroine's despair, transforming her gloomy thoughts into a sort of dreadful pleasure, which corresponds to the early stages of melancholic disorder. A similar soothing quality sets after major traumatic events, such as abductions and imprisonments, and it is made possible by Ellena's melancholic sensibility, which allows her to enter a superior reality[547]. For example, while travelling toward the convent of *Santo Stefano*, Ellena asks her abductors to open the windows of her carriage, in order to admire the mountainous landscape[548]. The picture presented here, composed of all those elements previously listed in *Udolpho[549],* is enough to appease Ellena's melancholic brooding issuing by her uncertain situation:

> Ellena, after having been so long shut in darkness, and brooding over her own alarming circumstances, found temporary, though feeble, relief in once more looking upon the face of nature; till, her spirits being gradually revived and elevated by the grandeur of the images around her […][550]

In addition to that, as discussed above, Ellena possesses such a roundness of character that allows her to first hand express her melancholic thoughts, which shift slowly towards a pensive tranquillity tinged by devotion to a natural God:

> "If I am condemned to misery, surely I could endure it with more fortitude in scenes like these, than amidst the tamer landscapes of nature! Here, the objects seem to impart somewhat of their own force, their own sublimity, to the soul. It is scarcely possible to yield to the pressure of misfortune while we walk, as with the Deity, amidst his most stupendous works[551]!"

As a result, crepuscular light, combined together with the view of the mountains, excites in Ellena a solemn awe that develops into Miltonian dreadful pleasure. Such an atmosphere,

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[547] Being a character of sensibility, Ellena is granted access to the realm of the sublime through her extreme feelings, enjoying an enhanced delight in nature.
Johnson, Claudia L.. *Equivocal Beings*, p. 117.
Broadwell, 'The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', p.83.

[548] […] entreated that the windows might be open, when the men, in compliance with their own necessity rather than with her request, lowered the blinds, and she had a glimpse of the lofty region of the mountains, but of no object that could direct her conjecture concerning where she was. She saw only pinnacles and vast precipices of various-tinted marbles, intermingled with scanty vegetation, such as stunted pinasters, dwarf oak and holly, which gave dark touches to the many-coloured cliffs, and sometimes stretched in shadowy masses to the deep vallies, that, winding into obscurity, seemed to invite curiosity to explore the scenes beyond. Below these bold precipices extended the gloomy region of olive-trees, and lower still other rocky steeps sunk towards the plains, bearing terraces crowned with vines, and where often the artificial soil was propped by thickets of juniper, pomegranate and oleander. *The Italian*, p. 61.

[550] *The Italian*, p. 61

[551] Ibidem.

which accords with her melancholic mind, is effective in dispelling Ellena's darkest musings[552].

Regarding that aspect, one of the most emblematic episodes of the narrative is constituted by Ellena's musing in *Santo Stefano*. Here, imprisoned like her Gothic predecessors, the Italian heroine is occupied by a melancholic train of thoughts concerning her sorrowful circumstances. Nevertheless, the girl is able to retrieve some hope from the contemplation of the landscape expanding out of the window[553]:

> To Ellena, whose mind was capable of being highly elevated, or sweetly soothed, by scenes of nature, the discovery of this little turret was an important circumstance. Hither she could come, and her soul, refreshed by the views it afforded, would acquire strength to bear her, with equanimity, thro' the persecutions that might await her. Here, gazing upon the stupendous imagery around her, looking, as it were, beyond the awful veil which obscures the features of the Deity, and conceals Him from the eyes of his creatures, dwelling as with a present God in the midst of his sublime works; with a mind thus elevated, how insignificant would appear to her the transactions, and the sufferings of this world! How poor the boasted power of man, when the fall of a single cliff from these mountains would with ease destroy thousands of his race assembled on the plains below! How would it avail them, that they were accoutred for battle, armed with all the instruments of destruction that human invention ever fashioned? Thus man, the giant who now held her in captivity, would shrink to the diminutiveness of a fairy; and she would experience, that his utmost force was unable to enchain her soul, or compel her to fear him, while he was destitute of virtue[554].

Where religious functions fail both to elevate her mind and to ease her melancholic suffering (partially due to the gloomy corruption of the whole body of the Church of Rome)[555], nature seems able to elevate Ellena's spirit through a direct contact with God, and disperses her despair[556]. In addition to that, the view inspires a dreadful pleasure[557], which is conveyed directly by sublime elements that react with Ellena's melancholy. Indeed, cliffs, precipices, mountains, pines, chestnuts, and dark forests of almonds and olive trees expand their

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552 *The Italian*, p. 62.
Twilight here absorbs the colours, as they blend together and then disappear.
Sedgwick, Kosofsky Eve. 'The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel' in *PMLA*, Vol.96, No. 2 (1981), pp. 255-270 (p. 264).
Napier, Elizabeth. *The Failure of Gothic*, p. 137.
553 Girten, Kristin M. '"Sublime Luxuries" of the Gothic Edifice: Immersive Aesthetics and Kantian Freedom in the Novels of Ann Radcliffe', Eighteenth-Century Fiction, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2016), pp. 713-738 (pp. 723-724).
554 *The Italian*, p. 87.
555 Chandler, 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', p. 148.
556 Girten, "Sublime Luxuries", p. 732; Mayhew, Robert J. 'Gothic Trajectories: Latitudinarian Theology and the Novels of Ann Radcliffe', in Eighteenth-Century Fiction, Vol. 15, No. 3-4 (2003), pp. 583-613 (pp. 599, 605).
557 Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror,* p. 74.

influence on the heroine's mind[558], providing consolation, hope, joy, and a pleasing melancholy[559].

The pleasing indulgence in white melancholy seems to be directly related to Milton since Ellena is a self-declared estimator of Miltonian poetry:

> Ellena retired to her turret, to soothe her spirits with a view of serene and majestic nature, a recourse which seldom failed to elevate her mind and soften the asperities of affliction. It was to her like sweet and solemn music, breathing peace over the soul — like the oaten stop of Milton's Spirit,
>
> > "Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song, Well knew to still the wild winds when they roar And hush the waving woods."
>
> While she sat before a window, observing the evening light beaming up the valley, and touching all the distant mountains with misty purple, a reed as sweet, though not as fanciful, sounded from among the rocks below. The instrument and the character of the strain were such as she had been unaccustomed to hear within the walls of San Stefano, and the tone diffused over her spirits a pleasing melancholy, that rapt all her attention[560].

Here, Ellena tries to alleviate her anguish by contemplating the natural spectacle of God. A simple background of music, combined with the Italian view of mountains, creates a gentle despondency that is directly associated with Milton's *Comus*. On the other hand, the landscape also promoted a "luxurious and solemn kind of melancholy", which "a view of stupendous object inspires." Such a view:

> […]overlooked the whole extent of plains, of which she had before caught partial scenes, with the vast chain of mountains, which seemed to form an insurmountable rampart to the rich landscape at their feet. Their towering and fantastic summits, crowding together into dusky air, like flames tapering to a point, exhibited images of peculiar grandeur, while each minuter line and feature withdrawing, at this evening hour from observation, seemed to resolve itself into the more gigantic masses, to which the dubious tint, the solemn obscurity, that began to prevail over them, gave force and loftier character. The silence and deep repose of the landscape, served to impress this character more awfully on the heart, and while Ellena sat wrapt in the thoughtfulness it promoted […][561].

That passage marks a clear transition from nature described as a soothing entity capable of bringing joy, to an unsettling presence that, combining the sublime traits of obscurity and grandeur, fosters melancholic musings of pathologic origin. Ellena is completely wrapped

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[558]Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 68-69; *The Italian*, p. 86-87.
[559] Piwowarska, Joanna. 'The Category of Space in the Gothic Novel: *The Italian* by Ann Radcliffe', in *The legacy of history : English and American studies and the significance of the past,* ed. by Mazur Zygmunt and Bela Teresa (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2003), pp. 186-196 (p.191).
[560] *The Italian*, p. 118.
[561] Ibid. p. 63.

in a cape of obtrusive thoughts concerning her own condition; she indulges in sorrowful reflections about her grim future and lingers in a black melancholy-like state.

#### *4.1.2.2 Gloomy Churches and Solitary Prisons: the Paranoid Side of Nature*

Despite the large presence of positive responses to landscape, nature, in a similar manner to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, is prone to show its less benign side. Those circumstances are likely to verify in conjunction with the tensest and most unsettling passages of the narrative. As a result of the several shocks suffered by Ellena, her nervous system is overcharged with a prolonged feeling of pain, altering her perception of reality. In a similar manner to Emily St. Aubert, Ellena's natural melancholy tends to degenerate into illness whenever the course of her life does not meet her hopes and her desires[562], such as for example in the case of the abductions and imprisonments. Indeed, Ellena is a victim of paranoia, which increases whenever she comes in close contact with Gothic circumstances, such as gloomy locations and prisons[563]. Similar environments create a wave of negative emotions, which are strong enough to provoke hallucinations and obsessive thoughts[564]. In contrast to *Udolpho*, that disorder not only is provoked by crepuscular landscapes such as ruins or unsettling castles but also by monasteries and Catholic places of worship, expressing an ill-concealed intolerance towards the Church of Rome by Radcliffe. Immersed in such a sanctimonious environment, Ellena is prone to develop doubts about the order she had always known, starting from her imprisonment in the monastery, among vicious monks and nuns. Due to that condition, her vision and her hearing are unreliable; she becomes unable to understand the reality around her and falls prey of hallucinations attributed to melancholy[565].

Indeed, the first hints of dejection are embodied in that passage, in which nature fails to soothe Ellena's melancholic mind, as she approaches the convent of *San Stefano*. Her uncertain fate, combined with her current concern, cannot allow her to appreciate the surrounding scenery:

> At every step were objects which would have afforded pleasure to a tranquil mind; the beautifully variegated marbles, that formed the cliffs immediately above, their fractured masses embossed with mosses and flowers of every vivid hue that paints the rainbow; the elegance of the shrubs that tufted, and the majestic grace of the palms

[562] Kelly, Gary. ' "A Constant Vicissitude of Interesting Passions": Ann Radcliffe's Perplexed Narratives', Ariel (1979), 45-65 (p. 51).
[563] Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality ', p. 867.
[564] Confinement is important as it fosters a paranoia connected to melancholy, which is likely to develop into nameless terrors.
Watt, James. *Contesting the Gothic*, p.105.
[565]Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality', p. 867.

which waved over them, would have charmed almost any other eye than Ellena's, whose spirit was wrapt in care, or than those of her companions, whose hearts were dead to feeling. Partial features of the vast edifice she was approaching, appeared now and then between the trees; the tall west window of the cathedral with the spires that overtopped it; the narrow pointed roofs of the cloisters; angles of the insurmountable walls, which fenced the garden from the precipices below, and the dark portal leading into the chief court; each of these, seen at intervals beneath the gloom of cypress and spreading cedar, seemed as if menacing the unhappy Ellena with hints of future suffering[566].

Hence, even a graceful landscape featuring flowers, moss, and cliffs cannot distract Ellena from her brooding melancholic silence. In addition to that, the presence of a Gothic-style Catholic cathedral, combined with gloomy cypresses, and entwined together with cedars ( a legacy of the Graveyard poetry), further sinks Ellena's spirit by foreshadowing her future torments.

Imprisonment, together with the repeated vexations endured by the heroine inside *San Stefano*, leaves the heroine in a state of weak health, whose symptoms are compatible with melancholic affliction: "indisposition, the consequence of the long and severe anxiety she had suffered, compelled her to remain. A fever was on her spirits, and an universal lassitude prevailed over her frame; which became the more effectual, from her very solicitude to conquer it[567]." Another moment in which is possible to observe Ellena's descent into paranoia is constituted by the forced marriage. Self-reproaching for her supposed weakness, ingratitude and vice, the heroine agrees to a marriage that goes against her moral values. As a result, her mind is plagued by psychomachia, which leads to one of the most depressive episodes of the novel[568]. There, in order to demonstrate her gratitude to Vivaldi, who had just risked his life to rescue her from *San Stefano,* Ellena agrees to a clandestine marriage that fills her mind with anxiety, since it goes against her desires[569]:

As the appointed hour drew near, her spirits sunk, and she watched with melancholy foreboding, the sun retiring amidst stormy clouds, and his rays fading from the highest points of the mountains, till the gloom of twilight prevailed over the scene. […]The scene appeared to sympathize with the spirits of Ellena. It was a gloomy evening, and

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566 *The Italian*, pp. 62-63.
567 Ibid. pp. 171-172
568 Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality', p. 868.
569 Broders, Simone. 'The Fast and the Curious: The Role of Curiosity in the Gothic Heroine's "Grand Tour of the Mind"', *English Studies*, Vol. 98, No. 8 (2017), 917-930 (p. 923).
Ellena is so influenced by Vivaldi's sufferance that she arrives to question her own moral values, including her detached affection and her delicacy; she is ready to recognise those qualities as vices in the moment that they make her lover suffer. Andonova-Kalapsazova, Elena D. 'Emotions Vocabulary and the Reconceptualisation of Emotions in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents"', in *English Studies at NBU*, Vol.5, No. 1 (2019), pp. 40-58, (p. 52).

> the lake, which broke in dark waves upon the shore, mingled its hollow sounds with those of the wind, that bowed the lofty pines, and swept in gusts among the rocks. She observed with alarm the heavy thunder clouds, that rolled along the sides of the mountains, and the birds circling swiftly over the waters, and scudding away to their nests among the cliffs; and she noticed to Vivaldi, that, as a storm seemed approaching, she wished to avoid crossing the lake. […] . As they approached the chapel, Ellena fixed her eyes on the mournful cypresses which waved over it, and sighed. "Those," she said, "are funereal mementos — not such as should grace the altar of marriage! Vivaldi, I could be superstitious. — Think you not they are portentous of future misfortune? But forgive me; my spirits are weak[570]."

Hence, nature is supposed to represent the paranoid nature of Ellena's feelings for Vivaldi. The heroine's melancholic feeling of dejection is embodied by the gloomy features of the mountainous landscape and the dark lake, meanwhile, her restlessness is fully portrayed by the impending storm. Moreover, she directly projects her negative forebodings both on the cypresses and "sepulchral air" of the chapel, acknowledging the fact that such a location is not fit for a wedding ceremony[571].

The description of the gloomy landscape is so vivid that almost resembles a painting. Indeed, the rolling clouds that trouble Ellena are extremely similar to the clouds portrayed by Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg in *Horseman and Cattle in Thunderstorm*. The painting illustrates a storm among the mountains, which is neither sublime nor soothing for the horsemen and the cattle. In the same manner, the heroine is deeply troubled by the surrounding environment, and by the ominous implications of such weather. Those unfavourable signs prove not to be only the product of Ellena's paranoid psyche, but an actual premonition of what will happen shortly after. Indeed, just a few moments later, the girl will be abducted by Schedoni's hirelings, while Vivaldi will be left behind beaten and bleeding. That paranoid behaviour intensifies in the following sequences of the novel, culminating in the section set in the sea cottage of Spalatro. Since the sense of danger is real, every object that Ellena encounters in the house – starting from the owner's face and finishing with her room – holds a notable influence on her melancholic imagination, and excites an excess of anguish[572]. As a consequence, the heroine is prone to fall into illusory fears, which are fuelled by her state of agitation and by her melancholy[573]. The scene of the night terror provides a fitting example, since Ellena's disordered psyche creates

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570 *The Italian*, pp. 175-176.
571 Piwowarska, 'The Category of Space in the Gothic Novel', pp. 190-191.
572 Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality', p. 869; Michasiw, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power', p. 338.
573 Michasiw, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power', p. 338.

hallucinations that are enhanced by the limited vision of the night, and therefore create what Schmitt defines as "levels of Paranoia"[574]. Therefore, during her first night at the cottage, "conviction struck like lightning upon her heart; and, believing she was brought hither to be assassinated, horror chilled all her frame, and her senses forsook her[575]."

Segregated in a room, which is barred to all extents to avoid her escape, Ellena tries to mitigate her affliction by means of prayer. Nevertheless, it seems impossible due to her desperate situation. Left alone in the dark, the heroine starts to foster a series of obtrusive thoughts "lost in sad reflection", which trigger a melancholic fit that cannot be treated by reason and fortitude. As a result of brooding on the fact Marchesa di Vivaldi condemned her to death, the girl exhibits physical symptoms fully corresponding to the melancholic pattern: insomnia, fits of tears, trembling limbs, sickness of heart, and a state of universal horror[576]. In addition to those marks of illness, Ellena develops mental disorders as well, since her mind generates both visual and auditory hallucinations. For instance, while in such an altered state, Ellena thinks to hear several threatening noises, such as ominous steps and whispers, emitted by her captors; her imagination conjures up images of murder, and she even pictures the frame of Spalatro with a stiletto in his hand ready to kill her[577].

In addition to those comprehensible terrors, which are relatively close to reality, Ellena's mind starts to foster illusory terrors in the dark. Hence, her melancholic imagination makes her see an assassin ready to kill her behind the shadows[578]. The moonlit view of the sea might offer a temporary remedy to her condition, but her melancholic terrors remain. That happens due to the sublimity of the nocturnal scenery, which calls to the mind J. M. W. Turner's *Fisherman at Sea (1796)*. The oppressing atmosphere portrayed in that painting matches the gloomy feelings of Ellena, who is forced to confront the darkness and vastness of the sea at night; the sublime qualities that are enhanced by the contrast with the pale rays of moonlight. The following morning, the heroine is still in the grip of melancholy: "Such sickness of the heart returned with those convictions, such faintness and terror, that unable

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[574] Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality', p. 869.
[575] *The Italian*, p. 201.
[576] Ibid. p. 203.
[577] Ibid. p. 204.
[578] The gleam, which a rising moon threw between the bars of her window, now began to shew many shadowy objects in the chamber, which she did not recollect to have observed while the lamp was there. More than once, she fancied she saw something glide along towards the place where the mattress was laid, and, almost congealed with terror, she stood still to watch it; but the illusion, if such it was, disappeared where the moon-light faded, and even her fears could not give shape to it beyond. Had she not known that her chamber-door remained strongly barred, she would have believed this was an assassin stealing to the bed where it might be supposed she slept. Even now the thought occurred to her, and vague as it was, had power to strike an anguish, almost deadly, through her heart, while she considered that her immediate situation was nearly as perilous as the one she had imaged. *The Italian,* pp. 204-205.

to support her trembling frame, she sunk again upon the mattress, without demanding the reason of this abrupt intrusion[579]."

Paranoid illusions proceed while the plot unfolds. After the discovery that Schedoni is her alleged father, Ellena willfully stops to interpret reality as it is, and subverts the signals that she receives. In her view, Schedoni wants to protect her, in virtue of the fact of being her father, while she project's the monk's evil intention on Spalatro[580]. Like Emily St. Aubert, Ellena appears to misinterpret the stimuli of reality due to her disordered mind, which like a veil, covers her eyes and alters her vision[581]. A similar process is rather evident in the sequence of the ruins of Cambrusca. Ruins, in effect, are fundamental to set the general mood of the scene, as their presence summons melancholic feelings. Indeed, the long-gone usefulness of those places, which now are associated with natural scenery, produces fear and sadness, regret towards the past[582], and provokes fancies and visions[583]. For that reason, a similar location produces a mixed effect on Ellena, since the moonlit ruins both provoke sublime awe and nameless terror. As a result, the heroine hallucinates about shadows and men covered in blood, which do not correspond with reality[584]. Despite "no human stole upon the vacancy" of the ruins, "the apt fears of Ellena almost imagined the form of Spalatro gliding behind the columns", shivering until she understood that the noise she was hearing was not the one of steps[585]. And then, "[a]t the extravagance of her suspicions, however, and the weakness of her terrors, she blushed, and endeavoured to resist that propensity to fear, which nerves long pressed upon had occasioned in her mind[586]." Ellena's fancy is influenced by the ruins, and she continues to see Spalatro:

> Ellena shuddered while she gazed upon this destructive mass. A groan from Schedoni startled her, and she turned towards him, but, as he appeared shrouded in meditation, she again directed her attention to this awful memorial. As her eye passed upon the neighbouring arch, she was struck with the grandeur of its proportions, and with its singular appearance, now that the evening rays glanced upon the overhanging shrubs, and darted a line of partial light athwart the avenue beyond. But what was her emotion, when she perceived a person gliding away in the perspective of the avenue, and, as he crosled where the gleam fell, distinguished the figure and countenance of Spalatro! She had scarcely power faintly to exclaim, "Steps go there!" before he had

[579] *The Italian,* p. 205.
[580] Ellena's character is pure and benevolent at the point that she fails to interpret human evil. For this reason, the heroine is not able to read through Schedoni's real intentions. Broadwell, 'The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', p. 80.
[581] Ibidem.
[582] Piwowarska, 'The Category of Space in the Gothic Novel', p. 193.
[583] Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s*, p. 39.
[584] Broadwell, The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', p. 81.
[585] *The Italian*, p. 248.
[586] Ibidem.

disappeared; and, when Schedoni looked round, the vacuity and silence of solitude every where prevailed[587].

Ellena knows that her spirit is crushed, and her mind suffers from extreme anxiety, therefore she acknowledges her pathologic condition[588].

In spite of the large number of ordeals that gothic heroines have to undergo, the thought of happy marriage is the only thing that lies behind their fortitude, which provides a source of courage and vigour[589]. In Ellena's case, the hope of love turns to the dark side due to her melancholic constitution, ad develops into love melancholy.

### *4.1.3. An Internal Motion of Contrasting Feelings: Ellena di Rosalba's Love Melancholy*

Even though the possibility of elopement is presented several times in the course of the novel, Ellena di Rosalba firmly refuses Vivaldi's proposals, and when she is forced to accept to marry him out of gratitude, she manifests symptoms of melancholic depression[590]. Indeed, lovesickness is another means through which Ellena exhibits another trait of her melancholic nature, which is equally shared with her lover Vivaldi. The two are often referred to as "Gothic Romeo and Juliet" in virtue of the fact that their love story is opposed by their families, as Ellena is removed from Vivaldi due to the norms of respectability in a very Clarissa-like manner, as Hogle points out[591]. Indeed, the trope of cruel fate separating the lovers here is declined in the key of the cruel parents that need to safeguard their superior social status. Marchesa di Vivaldi, in effect, cannot risk polluting her family's ancient noble lineage with a bourgeois like Ellena di Rosalba. In her view, plotting deceitful acts such as abductions and murders is a necessary measure to protect both social order and the public good[592]. On the other hand, Ellena's lovesickness is attributed to her awareness of Vivaldi's lineage and "pride of birth", which determines the impossibility of their union. In order not to suffer, the humble heroine undergoes a psychomachia, in which contrasting emotions fight over her passion for Vivaldi. That happens because she is well aware of the difference

[587] *The Italian*, p. 251.
[588] Ibid. p. 273.
[589] Bondhus, Charlie. 'Sublime Patriarchs and the Problems of the New Middle Class in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*', Gothic Studies, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2010), 13-32 (p. 26).
[590] Ibid. pp. 26-27.
[591] Hogle, Jerrold E. 'Recovering the Walpolean Gothic. The Italian: Or, the Confessional of the Black Penitents (1796-1797)', in *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic*, ed. by Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 151-167 (p. 152).
[592] Johnson, *Equivocal Beings* p. 123.

between their social standings[593], and she is able to imagine the hostile reaction of Vivaldi's parents, therefore she unsuccessfully tries to smother her newborn feelings. Despite those attempts to quench her passion, Ellena exhibits a series of symptoms that coincide with love melancholy. For instance, she becomes obsessed with the idea of the lover shortly after meeting him for the first time, and she subsequently sighs his name while musing at the window. In effect, when Vivaldi spies on her, Ellena is holding a lute and sighing his name with "a sweetness peculiar to her accent[594]". Nevertheless, she escapes as the hero declares his love[595]. Anyway, she accepts to marry Vivaldi reluctantly through the mediation of her aunt Signora Bianchi, still afraid of secrecy.

More serious symptoms of lovesickness manifest when Ellena's fears come true, and she is abducted by Marchesa's servants. At that point, Vivaldi becomes a sort of obsession for her, a fixed idea over which the girl is constantly sighing and crying, due to the ominous impression of never seeing him again. The trope of hopelessness, which is part of love melancholy's tradition, recurs several times as the narrative unfolds. Most precisely, it occurs whenever Ellena is abducted or imprisoned. For example, after the first abduction, she contemplates the landscape, and thinks of Vivaldi:

> But soon after the idea of Vivaldi glancing athwart her memory, she melted into tears; the weakness however was momentary, and during the rest of the journey she preserved a strenuous equality of mind[596].

Thinking of him is considered a moment of weakness by the resolute heroine, as she is supposed to control her feelings with fortitude, in order not to succumb to them. Yet, when imprisoned in *San Stefano,* Ellena thinks about resigning her beloved, and she feels an extreme sorrow. At first, she examines her "melancholy prison" with a profusion of sighs, and then she recollects the times spent with Vivaldi, shedding "bitter tears". Subsequently, the heroine thinks about the fact of entering Vivaldi's family clandestinely, and then she realises that she could remain independent, and earn her living by embroidering dresses:

> "But it is not yet too late to retrieve my own esteem by asserting my independence, and resigning Vivaldi for ever. By resigning him! by abandoning him who loves me, — abandoning him to misery! Him, whom I cannot even think of without tears, — to whom my vows have been given, — who may claim me by the sacred remembrance of my dying friend, — him, to whom my whole heart is devoted! O! miserable

[593] "Why this unreasonable pride of birth!" said she; "A visionary prejudice destroys our peace. Never would I submit to enter a family averse to receive me; they shall learn, at least, that I inherit nobility of soul. O! Vivaldi! but for this unhappy prejudice!" *The Italian*, p. 27.
[594] *The Italian*, p. 13.
[595] Ibid. p. 14.
[596] Ibid. p. 61.

> alternative! — that I can no longer act justly, but at the expence of all my future happiness! Justly! And would it then be just to abandon him who is willing to resign every thing for me, — abandon him to ceaseless sorrow, that the prejudices of his family may be gratified[597]?"

Despite her contrasting feelings, Ellena is genuinely in love with Vivaldi. That is demonstrated by her well-rooted love melancholy by means of tears, sighs, fixations, and nostalgia. Therefore "[…], the anguish she suffered told how much more she dreaded to lose than to accept Vivaldi, and that love was, after all, the most powerful affection of her heart[598]. Still secluded in her cell in the nunnery, Ellena attempts to relieve her fits of atrabiliar humour by reading the masterpieces of Tasso, or by contemplating the landscape from her window. Nevertheless, the latter reveals to be treacherous and triggers an onset of lovesickness. In other words, nature promotes a "tender melancholy in her heart", which leads to the thought of Vivaldi. Therefore, she recollects their last moments together with a sense of nostalgia. Purple haze and mountain tops influence Ellena's melancholic mind, which is prone to imagine a suffering Vivaldi and to redouble her own grief[599]. The feeling of anxiety concerning the health of the beloved is another peculiar trait of love melancholy, in which both physical and emotive decline becomes a recurrent concern for the suffering subject – that becomes evident in the serenade scene at *Santo Stefano*. In a similar manner to *Udolpho*, Ellena is surprised by a melancholic strain of music while contemplating her favourite landscape, and she convinces herself that the passionate interpreter is Vivaldi. Unlike her forerunner Emily, Ellena's conjectures correspond to reality, since her lover is indeed there to rescue her from the cruel nuns of *Santo Stefano*.

However, the gentle despondency inspired by the song swiftly fades into an extreme state of anxiety concerning Vivaldi, due to the high risk he is taking[600]. A similar wave of anguish occurs while imprisoned by Spalatro and Schedoni, and the only remedy is provided by a lack of knowledge about Vivaldi's whereabouts. Indeed, Ellena's only solace lies in the fact that her lover is safe in his family estate, sparing her further grief about his stay at the

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[597] *The Italian*, p. 67.
[598] Ibid. p. 68.
[599] The silence and repose of the vast scene, promoted the tender melancholy that prevailed in her heart; she thought of Vivaldi, and wept — of Vivaldi, whom she might, perhaps, never see again, though she doubted not that he would be indefatigable in searching for her. Every particular of their last conversation, when he had so earnestly lamented the approaching separation, even while he allowed of its propriety, came to her mind; and, while she witnessed, in imagination, the grief and distraction, which her mysterious departure and absence must have occasioned him, the fortitude, with which she had resisted her own sufferings, yielded to the picture of his. *The Italian*, p. 91.
[600] Ibid. p. 118.

Inquisition[601]. In any case, a prolonged distance from Vivaldi wears out Ellena's own health. Therefore, she is subject to consuming fits of desperation: "How often, with tears of mingled terror and grief, did she call upon Vivaldi — Vivaldi, alas! far distant — to save her; how often exclaim in agony, that she should never, never see him more[602]!" Again, the protagonist abandons herself to lovesickness; she invokes the name of her lover, cries and sighs, and then resigns to see him no more.

The most significant portrayal of love melancholy occurs during Ellena's stay at *Santa della Pietà*. The scene, in effect, emblematically summarises all those ailments traditionally associated with lovesickness. Despite the view of the Bay of Naples had previously dispelled a part of Ellena's worries, as once again, being in the same city or nation as the lover is cause for joy[603], that pleasing sensation is not long to last. Even surrounded by gentle and understanding nuns, the heroine cannot help to yield to her fixed idea about Vivaldi's well-being. As above discussed, neither literature nor practical work seems to be effective to counteract her depression. In addition to that, even society and cheerful conversation fail to soothe Ellena's black humour. As a proper melancholic woman, the only remedy to her affliction seems to seek a solitary point in her favourite terrace from which lose herself in melancholic brooding and musing silences:

> Here, alone and unobserved, she frequently yielded to the melancholy which she endeavoured to suppress in society; and at other times tried to deceive, with books and the pencil, the lingering moments of uncertainty concerning the state of Vivaldi; for day after day still elapsed without bringing any intelligence from Schedoni. Whenever the late scenes connected with the discovery of her family recurred to Ellena, she was struck with almost as much amazement as if she was gazing upon a vision, instead of recalling realities. Contrasted with the sober truth of her present life, the past appeared like romance; […]In such melancholy considerations, she often lingered under the shade of the acacias, till the sun had sunk behind the far distant promontory of Miseno, and the last bell of vespers summoned her to the convent below[604].

Ellena's state of mind will radically change with marriage, which is Burton's panacea for all varieties of melancholy. While entering the church, the heroine realises that the past agonies just make her present happiness more intense. By obtaining the object of her desires in a

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[601] *The Italian*, p. 203.

[602] Ibidem.

[603] But when, having reached an eminence, that scenery was exhibited to her senses, when the Bay of Naples, stretching into remotest distance, was spread out before her; when every mountain of that magnificent horizon, which enclosed her native landscape, that country which she believed Vivaldi to inhabit, stood unfolded, how affecting, how overwhelming were her sensations! Every object seemed to speak of her home, of Vivaldi, and of happiness that was passed! and so exquisitely did regret mingle with hope, the tender grief of remembrance with the interest of expectation, that it were difficult to say which prevailed. Ibid. p. 275.

[604] Ibid. p. 287.

legal context, Ellena manages to achieve a serene life in a place that resembles a "fairy land"[605], which is not threatened by the shadow of melancholy.

In conclusion, despite providing a moral centre to the narrative, due to her enhanced qualities of self-control and self-reliance, but also innocence and frankness[606], Ellena di Rosalba exhibits the character of *humor melancholicus*. That happens due to her constitution, and to the circumstances she is demanded to face. In the first place, the Italian heroine exhibits a previously-unknown geniality linked to manual work, which notably functions as a distraction from dismal ideas. Furthermore, Ellena possesses a peculiar sensibility, which allows her to project her melancholy on the landscape while being soothed by it. Similarly to the case of Emily St. Aubert, Ellena's inclination is bound to worsen into a full-fledged atrabiliar disorder including love melancholy, which is generally attributed to the harsh circumstances that she is demanded to face. Indeed, extreme events are enough to depress her spirit, send her into the darkest pit of despair, and develop the symptoms of melancholy. As previously discussed above, the only solution is here constituted by a lawful marriage. Indeed, at that point, Ellena is able to join her love, and her lover's family, without any preoccupation concerning her social standing, and to join a joyful and sincere community.

## 4.2 The Sentimental Hero: Vincentio di Vivaldi

Although Radcliffe's novels are generally knowns as female-centred novels, since the plot revolves around the female protagonist, Vincentio di Vivaldi represents the first attempt on the part of Radcliffe to introduce a well-developed male protagonist in her narrative. To a certain extent, it is possible to argue that Vivaldi is the actual protagonist of the whole story since he is endowed with a series of features that make him a new model of hero. As Nick Groom observes, Vivaldi personifies the "Burkean Hero", a character who fully embodies the sense of spite towards an archaic social system to which he is expected to adhere – here personified by Marchesi di Vivaldi, while cultivating a deep sense of social responsibility. Indeed, Vivaldi can be considered Ellena di Rosalba's male counterpart, as he represents the new kind of masculinity promoted by the Cult of Sensibility; Vincentio is sensible to art and nature, but at the same time endowed with an easily impressionable imagination. In a similar manner to the previous heroines portrayed by Radcliffe, it may be remarked that the young

[605] *The Italian*, p. 390.
[606] Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality ', p. 859.

hero is mainly governed by passions, while the current heroine takes possession of those features which were attributed to male characters, such as rationality and strong morality[607].

In addition to that, Groom attributes to Vivaldi a “mutual and chaste” vision of love for Ellena, declined more in a devotional key rather than in a sensual one[608]. Indeed, the love relationship plays a key role in the development of Vincentio’s melancholy. From the very first meeting with the object of his sentimental interest, the hero will display the most typical marks of love melancholy, which permeates the whole narrative. In effect, Vivaldi’s actions are promoted by his melancholic affection for Ellena, since all of his reactions and active decisions are justified by his impending lovesickness.

Love melancholy, like any kind of melancholy, will develop its pathologic symptoms concerning the mental health of the character. Besides a general occupation of thoughts, accompanied by an equally generalised misery, Vivaldi’s mind results disabled to the extent that he is not able to decode reality around him anymore. His perception of the world is mediated by the overwhelming idea of Ellena, which determines both his reaction to sublime nature and to the gloomy terrors of the Inquisition. Indeed, the events of the plot are put in motion by Vivaldi’s melancholic reaction to Ellena’s abduction. The hero assumes the traits of a melancholic traveller, whose main aim is to quench ailments provoked by love melancholy by means of a proper and rightful marriage.

This segment will examine Vincentio di Vivaldi’s atrabiliar affliction under the form of lovesickness and will scrutinize the development of serious paranoid symptoms, in conjunction with extreme circumstances such as wild nature, gloomy Catholic settings, and underground prisons.

### *4.2.1 Love Melancholy: Vivaldi’s Main Atrabiliar Affliction*

> ‘Oh that my heart were as secure from the darts of love, the assassin of my peace,’ exclaimed Vivaldi, ‘as yours is from those of bravos! […][609].’

With those exact words, Vincentio de Vivaldi describes to his friend Bonarmo the melancholic feelings he is harbouring for Ellena di Rosalba. Indeed, the hero describes the most classical form of love melancholy, which, like an assassin in the shadows, arrives to kill the peace in him by means of Cupid’s arrows. His passion was inflamed in a rather unconventional way on the very first page of the novel and set in motion the sequence of

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607 Kelly, ‘ “A Constant Vicissitude of Interesting Passions”, p. 59.

608 Groom, Nick. ‘Introduction’ in Ann Radcliffe *The Italian,* ed. by Frederick Garber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. xxxiv.

609 *The Italian*, p. 17.

incidents at the core of the novel according to Sedgwick[610]. Contrary to the tradition that depicts love melancholy as an illness that infects the body and soul passing through the eyes[611], it may be observed that Vivaldi contracts the disease through his ears, and immediately falls in love after hearing Ellena's voice in the church of San Lorenzo[612], notwithstanding her features covered by a veil[613]. Love melancholy's drawbacks do not take long to appear, as Vivaldi already remains "trembling with anxiety and sinking with disappointment" for not being invited to enter Villa Altieri by Signora Bianchi just after making their acquaintance. As a result, back at the residence of his parents, Vivaldi is haunted by Ellena's sheer beauty:

> The sound of her voice, and this acknowledgment of obligation, made him less willing to go than before, but at length he tore himself away. The beauty of her countenance haunting his imagination, and the touching accents of her voice still vibrating on his heart, he descended to the shore below her residence, pleasing himself with the consciousness of being near her, though he could no longer behold her; and sometimes hoping that he might again see her, however distantly, in a balcony of the house, where the silk awning seemed to invite the breeze from the sea. He lingered hour after hour, stretched beneath the umbrageous pines that waved over the shore, or traversing, regardless of the heat, the base of the cliffs that crowned it; recalling to his fancy the enchantment of her smile, and seeming still to listen to the sweetness of her accents[614].

The impact of the heroine on Vivaldi's feelings is so strong that he is already affected by a fixation, which devastates his psychological balance. By virtue of that new pivotal element, Vivaldi starts to subvert the plans for his future life in the function of Ellena, hoping to be reciprocated and indulging in "anxious yet happy" hours[615].

As time passes by, Vivaldi's lovesickness further deteriorates his mind, which is currently obsessed over the object of his desire, and worn out by the heat produced by his passion. For that reason, the hero develops unexpected mood swings, from impatient joy and trembling

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[610] Sedgwick, 'The Character in the Veil', p. 256.
[611] Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature*, p. 15.
[612] Bondhus, 'Sublime Patriarchs', p. 23.
[613] It was in the church of San Lorenzo at Naples, in the year 1758, that Vincentio di Vivaldi first saw Ellena Rosalba. The sweetness and fine expression of her voice attracted his attention to her figure, which had a distinguished air of delicacy and grace; but her face was concealed in her veil. So much indeed was he fascinated by the voice, that a most painful curiosity was excited as to her countenance, which he fancied must express all the sensibility of character that the modulation of her tones indicated. He listened to their exquisite expression with a rapt attention, and hardly withdrew his eyes from her person till the matin service had concluded; when he observed her leave the church with an aged lady, who leaned upon her arm, and who appeared to be her mother. *The Italian*, p. 7.
[614] Ibid. pp. 8-9.
[615] Ibid. p. 9.

hope[616] to depressed disappointment[617], and illusory terrors. Like every victim of love melancholy, Vivaldi is constantly falling prey to "apprehensions which passion only made plausible, and which reason reproved"[618]. In other words, the hero's spirit results easy to depression, especially after Ellena's adverse reaction to his declaration of love. Consequently, his inflamed imagination is prone to create a series of obstacles and threats, which are delusions not supported by external reality[619]. Therefore, Vivaldi is exposed to jealously, Burton's "bastard ranch of love-melancholy", without any objective evidence about the existence of an actual contender. Following the principle that "melancholy men are apt to be jealous", it appears inevitable for Vivaldi to misinterpret the message delivered by a mysteriously evanescent monk, and he associates Ellena's forbidding reaction with the presence of a rival. The incorrect perception of reality, attributed to the flames of passions and disordered imagination, fosters an atrabiliar reaction[620]. Seeking the loneliness of his room, Vivaldi is portrayed brooding on Ellena's sentimental status, and on the reaction of his parents like a proper victim of melancholy. Those terrors, which hold a strong grip over the hero's mind, prove to be a product of his melancholic affliction. That is evident, since, despite her external reticence, Ellena had actively expressed her interest in Vivaldi, while the latter is busy trembling and raging over an "imaginary rival". The general outcome of those delusions is a series of seizures of despair and anguish – "again despondency overcame him"[621].

In order to banish any kind of doubt, Vivaldi is prone to listen to his friend Bonarmo's, and he decides to sing a serenade to his beloved. In that manner, he can express both his passion and his melancholic genius:

> Vivaldi's voice was a fine tenor, and the same susceptibility, which made him passionately fond of music, taught him to modulate its cadence with exquisite delicacy, and to give his emphasis with the most simple and pathetic expression. His soul seemed to breathe in the sounds, — so tender, so imploring, yet so energetic. On this night, enthusiasm inspired him with the highest eloquence, perhaps, which music is capable of attaining; what might be its effect on Ellena he had no means of judging,

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[616] *The Italian,* p. 10.

[617] Vivaldi, mean while, restless from disappointment, and impatient from anxiety, having passed the greater part of the day in enquiries, which repaid him only with doubt and apprehension, determined to return to the villa Altieri, when evening should conceal his steps, consoled by the certainty of being near the object of his thoughts, and hoping, that chance might favour him once more with a view, however transient, of Ellena. *The Italian*, p. 11.

[618] *The Italian*, p. 58 Knox-Shaw, Peter. '"Strange Fits of Passion": Wordsworth and Mrs Radcliffe', in *Notes and Queries* (June 1998), 188-189 (p. 188).

[619] Broadwell, 'The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', p. 80.

[620] *The Italian*, p. 14.

[621] Ibid. p. 15.

> for she did not appear either at the balcony or the lattice, nor gave any hint of applause[622].

Since the heroine does not appear, Vivaldi is left to the torments of unrequited love, liable to “suffer an agony of disappointed” and still convinced of the presence of a rival[623]. Jealousy tends to be a recurrent passion affecting Vivaldi’s character, which appears constantly as the narrative unfolds. For instance, it occurs when he helps Ellena escape from the convent of *San Stefano*. In that episode, just before leaving her prison, the heroine shows a profound sentimental connection with Sister Olivia, a benevolent nun of the convent, who played an active role in their escape plan. As Bondhus points out, it must seem singular that a young nobleman like Vivaldi feels jealousy towards an elderly nun. In effect, his disordered imagination assimilates Olivia as a new threat to his relationship, and therefore he feels that her involvement relegated him to a secondary position[624]. As a result, the hero claims that he holds a second place in Ellena’s heart[625].

The only apparent remedy to that sickness is reassurance about the truthfulness of Ellena’s feelings[626]. Indeed, when the heroine admits that she reciprocates his feelings, Vivaldi’s melancholy seems to disappear. He is projected in a sort of earthly paradise overflowing with joy, which is an ecstatic state that is quite hard to dispel[627]. Nevertheless, that blissful sensation is not long to last, and several doubts will reappear later in the novel. For instance, during their sojourn in the Apennines, Vivaldi pushes Ellena into a rushed marriage, in order to quench the apprehensions produced by his unrequited love. Evidencing her reticence, Vivaldi is caught by the unjustifiable doubt that she does not love him anymore, therefore he expresses directly his affliction consisting of fear and anxiety: “Ah, Ellena! did love ever yet exist without fear — and without hope? O! never, never! I fear and hope with such rapid transition; every assurance, every look of yours gives such force either to the one, or to the other, that I suffer unceasing anxiety[628].” Hence, the young maid is forced once again to reassure the hero’s melancholic delirium, by renewing her sentiments for him. Nevertheless, despair and doubt remain a constant presence that lies in the background of the narrative. In

[622] *The Italian*, p. 18.
[623] Ibid. pp. 18-19.
[624] Bondhus, ‘Sublime Patriarchs’, p. 23.
[625] *The Italian*, p. 131.
[626] A conversation about this theme with Signora Bianchi is enough to help him release some tension but does not suffice to clear his doubts – Ibid. p. 26.
[627] From this moment Vivaldi seemed to have arisen into a new existence; the whole world to him was Paradise; that smile seemed impressed upon his heart for ever. In the fulness of present joy, he believed it impossible that he could ever be unhappy again, and defied the utmost malice of future fortune. With footsteps light as air, he returned to Naples, nor once remembered to look for his old monitor on the way. Ibid. p. 28.
[628] Ibid. p. 146.

a moment of clarity, in which he is not blinded by love, Vivaldi realises that his union with Ellena is virtually impossible due to her social position. The sudden acknowledgement develops a clash between love and familial responsibilities in the hero's bosom. The young aristocrat is prone to defend the weak heroine from the slanderers of her reputation, while suffering for the impossibility of their union: "Though the displeasure of his father concerning a marriage with Ellena had been already foreseen, the experience of it was severer and more painful than he had imagined;"[629].

In a similar manner to Ellena, Vivaldi expresses his love melancholy through a constant concern for his lover's wellbeing. That preoccupation is combined with a sort of separation anxiety, which fosters a series of false presentiments that are not reflected by the external reality of the novel[630]. In other words, Vivaldi is continually fostering delusive dreads about the heroine's status of health, without a valid cause but his melancholic imagination. For instance, when the shadow-monk of Paluzzi warns him not to go to Villa Altieri "for death is in the house", Vivaldi immediately falls prey to an hallucination created by his own distorted fancy. A rational mind would have thought that the monk was talking about Signora Bianchi's death, an occurrence that the narrator suggests as well, but the hero's imagination is occupied with Ellena. Therefore, the image of the dying maid imploring for his help rises to his mind, and he is even able to see her bleeding to death, pale and weak as life is leaving her body[631]. Naturally, that hallucination is a clear symptom of *humor melancholicus*, as much as the groundless fear of separation. For instance, when Ellena is set to depart for a short stay at *Santa Maria della Pietà* in order to grieve the loss of her aunt, Vivaldi exhibits a restlessness that degenerates into a proper state of depression, which issues a series of ill omens about their impending separation. According to his delusive sensations, Vincentio laments that he is bound to never see Ellena again, since the nuns may lure her into taking the veil and therefore spend her life as a consecrated nun in the convent. Hence, he openly expresses his terrors to his beloved, who underlines the groundlessness of his anxieties. In

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[629] *The Italian*, p. 32.
[630] Knox-Shaw, '"Strange Fits of Passion"', p. 189.
[631] An indifferent person would probably have understood the words of the monk to allude to Signora Bianchi, whose infirm state of health rendered her death, though sudden, not improbable; but to the affrighted fancy of Vivaldi, the dying Ellena only appeared. His fears, however probabilities might sanction, or the event justify them, were natural to ardent affection; but they were accompanied by a presentiment as extraordinary as it was horrible; — it occurred to him more than once, that Ellena was murdered. He saw her wounded, and bleeding to death; saw her ashy countenance, and her wasting eyes, from which the spirit of life was fast departing, turned piteously on himself, as if imploring him to save her from the fate that was dragging her to the grave. And, when he reached the boundary of the garden, his whole frame trembled so, with horrible apprehension, that he rested a while, unable to venture further towards the truth. *The Italian*, p. 41.

the end, he is bashed and embarrassed by his ideas, yet Ellena's reassuring tone does not dispel his melancholic dread[632].

A similar pattern occurs during the section set on the Apennines, near Lake Celano, just after their escape from *San Stefano*. Here, following the rules of delicacy, Vivaldi and Ellena are expected to seek refuge beneath separated roofs. Indeed, the young maid is accepted in a convent of Carmelites, while the hero is bound to spend the night among the Benedictines, together with his faithful servant Paulo. Vivaldi's reticence to let Ellena for the night is again a fear unsupported by evident facts, but by a sensation of being separated forever, which directly issues from his melancholic disorder[633]. Vivaldi is constantly afraid of ideal terrors stalked by real ones, yet imaginary terrors issue from imaginary worries since the imaginary, for example, the images of dead Ellena[634]. When the couple is divided, for example after Ellena's forced removal from Villa Altieri, the hero's mind is completely focused on the absence of his beloved, and "[t]he nearer interest pressed solely upon his mind, and he was conscious only to the loss of Ellena[635]". In other words, Vivaldi's predisposition to that fixation tends to strengthen due to the absence of the above-mentioned, which consequently issues an intense wave of anguish concerning Ellena's health. That, together with the above-mentioned elements, suffices to prove that Vivaldi's melancholy takes the form of lovesickness. The hero manifests typical symptoms such as the occupation of thoughts, debilitation issuing from unrequited love, jealousy, hallucinations, and separation anxiety. Indeed, it is possible to observe that the need to satisfy his love melancholy prompts Vivaldi's journey through Southern Italy, just after his lover's removal from Villa Altieri. During that travelling experience, which will take the form of a melancholic journey, Vivaldi will witness different kinds of landscapes that will interact with his dejected condition.

#### *4.2.1.1 Landscape: the Melancholic Traveller – Travelling Out of Lovesickness*

As a proper hero of sensibility, Vivaldi is mainly distinguished from his negative counterpart Schedoni thanks to his responsiveness to the surrounding environment. In spite

[632] "It should seem Ellena, by those boding fears," said he, imprudently, "that I am parting with you for ever; I feel a weight upon my heart, which I cannot throw off. Yet I consent that you shall withdraw awhile to this convent, convinced of the propriety of the step; and I ought, also, to know that you will soon return; that I shall soon take you from its walls as my wife, never more to leave me, never more to pass from my immediate care and tenderness. I ought to feel assured of all this; yet so apt are my fears that I cannot confide in what is probable, but rather apprehend what is possible. And is it then possible that I yet may lose you; and is it only probable that you may be mine for ever? How, under such circumstances, could I weakly consent to your retirement […]" *The Italian*. p. 58.
[633] Ibid. p. 158.
[634] Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s,* p. 34.
[635] *The Italian*, p. 97.

of not being on the same level as Ellena, Vivaldi is still classified as a genius, since he possesses a melancholic sensibility[636]. Like his predecessors, he has a penchant for projecting his feelings on the natural landscape[637]. Yet, unlike Valancourt, who visited Emily's estate to linger in the melancholic feeling that he enjoys so much, Vivaldi is able to recover from his melancholic outburst by contemplating nature. Indeed, Vivaldi finds in natural scenery the hope and motivation necessary to save his beloved. Although being a "man of feeling", the hero is not passive, and successfully rescues Ellena from her prison in the convent of *San Stefano*[638].

The most part of the narrative follows Vivaldi's melancholic journey on the traces of Ellena, which is inspired by his love melancholy; he needs to retrieve the adored object in order to quench his affliction[639].

*4.2.1.2 The Effect of Nature on Vivaldi's Melancholy*

Vivaldi's relationship with the surrounding landscape, whether it be sublime nature or gothic edifices of sepulchral legacy, is generally mediated by the fixed idea of Ellena, which is the neuralgic centre of his melancholic illness. That aspect may be observed in the sequence just after Ellena's abduction since Vivaldi's perception of landscapes changes dramatically due to love melancholy. After the kidnapping of the object of his affection, Vivaldi, as expected, falls into a depressive state, which is constantly reinforced by the gloomy prospect of never seeing her again. Lost in a "melancholy reverie concerning Ellena", the hero observes the sea, while realising that the bay of Naples has lost all of its charms[640]. Prone to blaming himself for the young maid's abduction[641], the hero tries to appease his melancholy seizure. In the fashion of a proper victim of lovesickness, he contemplates the landscape to quench the groans and the sighs coming from his heart. Then,

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[636] That may be noticed in the scenes in which Vivaldi plays the lute while singing with his tenor voice. As Noske points out "The ultimate means of melancholy expression is, of course, the human voice." (Noske, Frits. 'Sound and Sentiment: The Function of Music in the Gothic Novel', Music & Letters, Vol. 62, No. 2 (1981), 162-175 (p. 167)) When Vivaldi sings his love to Ellena through serenades is able to express the ultimate level of his melancholic affliction for love, showing a certain degree of genius, still inferior to his partner's one. Broadwell, 'The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', p. 77.

[637] The solemnity of the scene accorded with the temper of his mind, and he listened in deep attention for the returning sounds, which broke upon the ear like distant thunder muttering imperfectly from the clouds. The pauses of silence, that succeeded each groan of the mountain, when expectation listened for the rising sound, affected the imagination of Vivaldi at this time with particular awe, and, rapt in thought, he continued to gaze upon the sublime and shadowy outline of the shores, and on the sea, just discerned beneath the twilight of a cloudless sky. *The Italian*, p. 12.

[638] Bondhus, 'Sublime Patriarchs', p. 23.

[639] Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s,* p. 42.

[640] Błaszak, Marek. 'Ann Radcliffe's Gothic Romances and the Sea', p. 39.

[641] *The Italian*, p. 102.

while musing in a boat, Vivaldi learns Ellena's ubication by means of a boatman. Such a report infuses a new sense of hope in the hero's bosom which transforms melancholy into a sort of motivation to look for Ellena[642]. That determination marks a lack of passivity, which is typical of melancholic characters or sentimental heroes such as Valancourt. On the other hand, a similar active and restless pursuit of the beloved, which will never stop until the two will be reunited, is a clear mark of love melancholy[643].

The scene on the Apennines represents another significant passage concerning Vivaldi's melancholic pathetic fallacy. Here, nature reveals again its double essence by matching the internal motions of the hero with the surrounding scenery, elevating his spirit to soothing heights or making it sink into the gentle sadness of white melancholy[644].

Those mountains are an object that portrays pathetic fallacy since they appear to be in perfect harmony with Vivaldi's mood[645]:

> A few devotees only had begun to ascend the mountain, and Vivaldi kept aloof even from these, pursuing a lonely track, for his thoughtful mind desired solitude. The early breeze sighing among the foliage, that waved high over the path, and the hollow dashing of distant waters, he listened to with complacency, for these were sounds which soothed yet promoted his melancholy mood; and he some times rested to gaze upon the scenery around him, for this too was in harmony with the temper of his mind. Disappointment had subdued the wilder energy of the passions, and produced a solemn and lofty state of feeling; he viewed with pleasing sadness the dark rocks and precipices, the gloomy mountains and vast solitudes, that spread around him; [646]

Hence, Vivaldi acts as a proper melancholic in search of a lonely place in to which proceed with his gloomy broodings. In effect, the fact of feeling separated from the landscape enhances the sense of solitude[647]. Pathetic fallacy seems quite evident, as the "sighs" of the foliage and the "hollow dashing" of the waves mimic the groans and sighs of Vivaldi's heart. The recurring elements of sepulchral tradition such as mountains, precipices, and dark rocks are always presented as amplifiers of the melancholic mood, which make Vivaldi indulge in a state of pleasing sadness similar to those experienced by Emily St. Aubert in *The Mysteries of Udolpho.*

Elements that apparently enhance the hero's melancholic vein are also present in the section situated in Rome. Those objects have a key role in soothing his heavy depression, provoked

[642] *The Italian*, p. 103.
[643] Arnaud, *Ann Radcliffe et le Fantastique,* p. 234.
[644] Lewis, Jayne. '"No Colour of Language": Radcliffe's Aesthetic Unbound' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2006) pp. 377-390 (p. 385).
[645] Piwowarska, The Category of Space in the Gothic Novel', pp. 190-191.
[646] *The Italian*, p. 111.
[647] Broadwell, 'The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', p. 85.

by Ellena's removal, into a gentle despondency and "sacred enthusiasm". While admiring the roman landscape, Vivaldi's melancholic soul is particularly struck by the ancient Roman ruins, which represent the legacy of a magnificent past[648]. Inevitably, those archaeological finds influence the imagination of the young aristocrat, and excite a tender nostalgia mingled with regret for past times, increased by the lunar lighting[649]. Once again, the Graveyard paraphernalia seems to promote a pleasing melancholy that makes Vivaldi forget his own misfortunes:

> where a melancholy and universal silence prevailed. At intervals, indeed, the moon, as the clouds passed away, shewed, for a moment, some of those mighty monuments of Rome's eternal name, those sacred ruins, those gigantic skeletons, which once enclosed a soul, whose energies governed a world! Even Vivaldi could not behold with indifference the grandeur of these reliques, as the rays fell upon the hoary walls and columns, or pass among these scenes of ancient story, without feeling a melancholy awe, a sacred enthusiasm, that withdrew him from himself. But the illusion was transient; his own misfortunes pressed too heavily upon him to be long unfelt, and his enthusiasm vanished like the moonlight[650].

As it usually happens to gravely depressed characters, the "melancholy awe" connected to Ancient Rome does not suffice to soothe his torments, which resurface rather easily. On the other hand, the modern city of Rome, which is endowed with a lively cosmopolitan essence, appears not to match Vivaldi's melancholy. Not only is the centre of the city constantly brimming with activities, but it is also currently hosting Carnival celebrations, therefore the atmosphere is charged with a festive air that clashes with the protagonist's mood. Vivaldi, in effect, prefers silence, solitude, and moonlit ruins, which express his noble feelings of despair. Thorn between terror concerning the fate of Ellena and hopelessness concerning his future sufferings, the joyous crowd of the Carnival makes Vivaldi sick since it does not resonate with his melancholic mood[651].

In other words, the natural landscape does not provide a reassuring presence for Vincentio. Contrary to Ellena, Vivaldi is interdicted from the divine dimension, and its consequent

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[648] Piwowarska, The Category of Space in the Gothic Novel', pp. 190-191, 193.

[649] Ruins hit the fancy with the grandeur of past times that cannot be relieved, a sort of nostalgia that creates a melancholic feeling, "a pathological idealisation of the dead or the lost".
Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s,* p. 39.

[650] *The Italian*, p. 186.

[651] The heat of the weather made it necessary to have the windows of the coach open; and the prisoners, therefore, saw all that passed without. It was a scene, which contrasted cruelly with the feelings and circumstances of Vivaldi; torn as he was from her he most loved, in dreadful uncertainty as to her fate, and himself about to be brought before a tribunal, whose mysterious and terrible proceedings appalled even the bravest spirits. Altogether, this was one of the most striking examples, which the chequer-work of human life could shew, or human feelings endure, Vivaldi sickened as he looked upon the splendid crowd, while the carriage made its way slowly with it; […]. Ibid. p. 185.

consolatory effect, due to a lack of control over his passions[652]. For that reason, Vivaldi is anchored to his melancholic feelings and is bound to experiment the darker side of nature, which develops his love melancholy into a full-fledged pathologic illness. That condition is particularly evident in the scene of the escape from *San Stefano*, when, after a series of adventures, Ellena and Vivaldi are finally out of the convent, and try to get as far away as possible from the prison. Here, the elements that usually excite lofty feelings, such as the moonlit moor surrounded by silence, enhance Vivaldi's paranoia. The sublime environment, which consists of tremendous passes and horrid bridges between the cliffs, combined with darkness and limited vision, paves the way for a moment of black melancholy:

> Vivaldi now perceived figures upon the slender arch, and, as their indistinct forms glided in the moonshine, other emotions than those of wonder disturbed him, lest these might be pilgrims going to the shrine of our Lady, and who would give information of his route[653].

Hence, Vivaldi is prone to see gliding shadows in the night, and malign pursuers at every turn, due to an impetus of atrabiliar disorder, which is supported by the tumultuous and dark atmosphere[654]. However, that sort of quiet tends to increase both Ellena's and Vivaldi's anxiety, since the moonlit scenery immersed in silence offers a strong contrast with the tumult of their minds[655].

Contrary to Ellena, Vivaldi is prone to observe the most aggressive side of nature, even in rather quiet moments, as when contemplating the mountainous landscape near Lake Celano[656]. Here, the party stops to admire the evening sun and the view from the top of the majestic landscape of the sea. Vivaldi is fascinated by the brutality of mountains, while Ellena is more focused on the gentler side of nature, therefore pointing out valleys and fields[657]. In other words, the hero registers the most intimidating aspects, which consist of dark rocks and sharp peaks, and lingers in that sublime feeling of fear. On the other hand, the young heroine's role is to soften Vivaldi's view by underlining the vibrancy of colours, the depth of the shades, and the beauty of glowing light[658]. For Vivaldi, the sublime is a sort

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[652] Smith, Andrew. *Gothic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 32.
[653] *The Italian*, p. 141.
[654] Ibid. p. 139-141.
[655] As they passed with silent steps along the winding rocks, the tranquility of the landscape below afforded an affecting contrast with the tumult and alarm of their minds. Ibid. p. 139.
[656] As Chandler manifested in her article, those characters are able to compose the surrounding scenery for themselves, personally projecting their moods and feelings on nature while, in *Udolpho*, that mechanism was enacted by a omniscient narrator. Chandler, 'Ann Radcliffe and Natural Theology', p. 149.
[657] *The Italian,* pp. 152-153.
[658] Lewis, '"No Colour of Language"', p. 386.

of enemy to overcome, therefore he describes it in negative terms, while Ellena's presence always softens the situation[659]. In addition to that, the scene is bound to remark upon the uncommon sensibility connected to melancholy, which belongs to the upper social classes. Indeed, it is possible to observe Vivaldi's intolerance of Paulo's remarks about nature. Contrary to the protagonists' mandatory appreciation for landscape in general, the servant is only moved by it in virtue of its resemblance to Naples. Moved only by the nostalgia excited by the view, Paulo is a confirmation of the stereotype that the lower social classes are not able to contemplate nature with melancholic emotion, which only belongs to aristocrats[660].

#### *4.2.1.3 Catholic Gloom, Ruins and Prisons: Black Melancholy and Lovesickness*

Apart from moonlit precipices, nocturnal landscapes, and ruins, the elements belonging to the Graveyard repertoire in *The Italian* also include gothic churches and shrines, with a general interest in the Catholic aesthetic. Still connected to his lovesickness and melancholic fear for Ellena, Vivaldi's paranoid side is enhanced by that kind of setting. The Inquisition is a pretext to portray terror, yet Radcliffe exposed a series of stereotypes that betrayed her British protestant profession of faith. Furthermore, the author exploited what Scott defined as 'the new and powerful machinery afforded her by the Popish religion'[661], which was useful to heighten the suspense of her novels. Catholicism is criticized since it is represented as an organization that relies on the methods of fear and darkness to maintain its power[662]. However, it is another occasion to express the melancholy of Vivaldi through his detention in the cells of the Inquisition.

Under similar circumstances, Vivaldi is likely to develop a disordered imagination, a trait that is shared with Emily St. Aubert. According to Jerrold E. Hogle, the two protagonists share the same overactive imagination connected to their scarcely stable emotionality. In other words, Vivaldi happens to possess the same disordered imagination as Emily, prone to see "a world of terrible shadows", which is only a product of his melancholic mind that alters reality[663]. When something dubious happens due to an element of deprivation, such as obscurity and limited vision, Vivaldi jumps to a conclusion and develops fears that are

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In those scenes, Ellena acts as a sort of mediator between Vivaldi and nature by virtue of her well-formed personality based on self-regulation and fortitude. By highlighting the softest side of nature, the young heroine anchors Vincentio's volatile passions, starting a process of maturation into adulthood.

[659] Bondhus, 'Sublime Patriarchs', p. 25.

[660] Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality', pp. 856-857.

[661] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic* , p. 122.

[662] Tooley, Brenda. 'Gothic Utopia: Heretical Sanctuary in Ann Radcliffe's The Italian' in *Utopian Studies*, Vol. 11, No.2 (2000), pp. 42-45 (p. 43).

[663] Hogle, 'Recovering the Walpolean Gothic', p. 160; Smith, *Gothic Literature,* p. 27.

utterly causeless and connected to things that cannot be. At the end of the novel, Vivaldi learns how to strengthen his mind and his sensibility, in order not to surrender to his disordered imagination[664]. The first example of the negative sublime, connected with the Catholic aesthetic, is represented by the Shrine of *Our Lady of Mount Carmel.* At first, the young aristocrat is seized by an attack of "sacred awe", due to the superstition connected to the Catholic world[665]. In such an oppressive setting, he cannot tolerate the strength of feelings evoked by music, which instead of enthusiasm, provokes him with strong emotions that cannot be suffered. In addition to that smothering effect, such a gloomy atmosphere is enhanced by a tolling bell and by the sad harmonies of the choir. Similar elements force Vivaldi to brood over death and therefore provoke a wave of black humour[666]. Furthermore, Vivaldi's melancholy is charged with additional forebodings, which are worsened by the news of a nun that is about to be professed. In his access of paranoia induced by love melancholy, Vivaldi is afraid that Ellena is about to become a nun. He frantically looks for the heroine, even if he has no proof for her to be there but: "Vivaldi observed her with a fearful eye, and, though he did not recognize the person of Ellena, yet, whether it was that his fancy was possessed with her image, or that there was truth in his surmise, he thought he perceived a resemblance of her[667]." Here, due to a wave of anguish, Vivaldi is not able to see clearly and half-hallucinates about other novices being Ellena. Nevertheless, one of the soon-to-be-ordered nuns reveals to be her, and Vivaldi will have to thwart the forced consecration.

Another place that enhances Vivaldi's love melancholy, in combination with the Catholic religion, is the gloomy dungeon of the Inquisition. Constituting one of the main tropes of Gothic fiction, prisons are meant to provoke fits of negative melancholy in the characters as Udolpho did for Emily. In that case, the effect of the Inquisition is even stronger on Vivaldi. Being already exposed to love melancholy, the young hero is willing to face the most atrocious tortures, in order to spare Ellena further sufferings. That sort of fixation is fundamental to develop Vincentio's character, who can reach a new level of maturity by eliciting his lover as an inspirational model, from which he draws the qualities of fortitude and resilience[668]. Vivaldi seems not able to achieve his lover's level of self-control, due to

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[664] Warren, 'Designing and Undrawing Veils', pp. 525, 533.
[665] 'Nor was the convent he was approaching a less sacred feature of the scene, as its gray walks and pinnacles appeared beyond the dusky groves. "Ah! if it should enclose her!" said Vivaldi, as he caught a first glimpse of its hall. "Vain hope! I will not invite your illusions again, I will not expose myself to the agonies of new disappointment; I will search, but not expect. Yet, if she should be there '*The Italian,* p. 111.
[666] Ibid. pp. 111-112.
[667] Ibid. pp. 112-113.
[668] Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 126.

his overactive imagination. Indeed, the mental image of suffering Ellena is enough to provoke him a fit of madness, which is an unnecessary agitation since there are no proofs that the girl is detained by the Inquisition[669]. The most painful torture for Vivaldi is self-inflicted by his delusional mind because the idea of the suffering beloved inflicts more damage than actual injuries[670]. Indeed, the Inquisition appears to be the perfect place to promote pathologic melancholy. The dark environment, combined with the solemn awe inspired by the architecture of the oubliettes, the hooded friars, the trembling taper projecting sinister shapes, the view of torture instruments, and the constant groans impress Vivaldi's mind with an idea of suffering and throw him in the darkest despair[671].

At that stage, due to the gloomy setting, the imprisonment, and to the uncertainties concerning Ellena, Vincentio is prone to anxiety and paranoia. He, in effect, is constantly afraid that the monks will torture the girl in order to extrapolate a confession from him, therefore – he needs not to betray "all the feelings of his heart"[672]. In the darkness and solitude of his cell, Vivaldi is prone to develop a sort of hopelessness concerning his future, mingled together with imaginary dreams and hallucinations. In a similar state, the lack of confidence is evident and portrayed by a restless walk in the cell. [673]. After regaining an apparent calm, Vivaldi is affected by a second wave of melancholy, which is even stronger than the first due to the presence of hallucinations. Influenced by the sounds he seems to hear in the darkness of his cell, the protagonist dreams about monks killing him with stilettos – in a similar manner to his beloved[674]. Waking up from such a nightmare, Vivaldi acknowledges the apparition of the shadow monk of Paluzzi in his cell. Consequently, Vincentio's paranoia increase and he starts to doubt his own perception of reality, questioning both his judgement and his tendency to superstition. The monk delivers a speech about Schedoni's true nature, yet the hero's focus lies on the sensation of unreality radiating from the monk himself. Indeed, the latter appears to be a hallucination created by a distorted mind, which suffers from melancholy[675]. That hypothesis seems to be supported by the sudden disappearance of the said monk, who seems to vanish into nothing and to be

[669] *The Italian*, p. 290.
[670] Tooley, 'Gothic Utopia', p. 51.
[671] *The Italian*, pp. 290-291, 294; Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 108.
[672] Ibid. pp. 296, 299.
[673] His resolution remained unshaken, but he could not look, unmoved, upon the horrors which might be preparing for him. The interval of expectation between the sentence and the accomplishment of this preliminary punishment, was, indeed, dreadful. The seeming ignominy of his situation, and his ignorance as to the degree of torture to be applied, overcame the calmness he had before exhibited, and as he paced his cell, cold damps, which hung upon his forehead, betrayed the agony of his mind. Ibid. p. 293.
[674] Ibid. p. 301-301.
[675] Ibid. p. 302-303.

enhanced by the guard monitoring Vivaldi's cell. Following that episode, the young aristocrat will be questioning his sanity, as he recognises his decaying psyche, and the problems issuing from his excessive fixation with Ellena[676].

Even while clashing with the Inquisition, the protagonist realises that "his imagination inclined him to the marvelous, and to admit ideas which, filling and expanding all the faculties of the soul, produce feelings that partake of the sublime, he now resisted the propensity, and dismissed, as absurd, a supposition, which had begun to thrill his every nerve with horror[677]." Indeed, Schedoni mentions that Vivaldi possesses "a susceptibility, which renders you especially liable to superstition", especially when it comes to Ellena's wellbeing. For that reason, all the assumptions that the hero makes about his beloved are magnified by his melancholic fancy. Consequently, the young aristocrat suffers due to his credulousness, referable to his disordered imagination[678]. In effect, Vivaldi exhibits melancholic symptomatology, since he is liable to indulge in fantastic ideas to achieve "the expansion of the soul" while providing ground for causeless fears that cannot be easily dismissed by means of reason. Apart from that unjust imprisonment under gloomy circumstances, and the constant fixation on Ellena's situation, Vivaldi's love melancholy appears to be increased by the discovery that Schedoni is his lover's slanderer and father. Although acknowledging the fact that Ellena is safe at *Della Pietà* is a cause of joy and relief, learning the supposed blood relation between her and the major villain of the novel issues a wave of anguish[679]. Vivaldi feels suddenly thrown into a state of utter uncertainty, which results in a typical psychomachia; the hero falls prey to an attack of melancholic turmoil. On one hand, he is happy about Ellena's current whereabouts, but then his overactive mind, which is influenced by despair, induces him to think that the monk had lied to him about his beloved's safety. Hence, love melancholy tortures Vivaldi with endless paranoid thinking, which provokes a "tempest of conjecture and of horror" in his mind[680].

Despite being cleared from the charges of abduction of a novice and being released from the cumbersome persona of Schedoni, Vivaldi is still occupied by melancholic thoughts concerning his relationship with Ellena. With the death of Marchesa, Marchese di Vivaldi

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[676] Ibid. p. 307.
[677] *The Italian*, p. 313.
[678] Smith, Nelson C. 'Sense, Sensibility and Ann Radcliffe' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1973), pp. 577-590 (p. 584, 586).
Vivaldi himself has frank character, with the pride and the generosity of his father, animated by the embers of passions of his mother, without any kind of malignity, yet he is weak to the excess of imagination. Bondhus, 'Sublime Patriarchs', p. 20.
[679] *The Italian*, pp. 346-347.
[680] Ibid. p. 349.

does not oppose any obstacle against the union of his son with an alleged bourgeois such as Ellena. Nevertheless, he orders Vivaldi to relinquish her after an ascertained blood relation with the criminal monk. Therefore, the journey between Palazzo Vivaldi and *Santa Maria della Pietà* is referred to as "a melancholy journey", since Vivaldi is again prey to doubt concerning the realisation of his love[681]; a possible relationship with a fraud and murder would annihilate every wedding plan[682]. However, during the final encounter with Ellena, and the consequent explanation about her lineage (she is just the niece of Schedoni and a victim of a turbid family feud) the past suffering and the past melancholy are compared with the joy of the current moment, making it even more intense.

In the end, after a series of sad and hopeless moments, which revolve around the being of Ellena and the impossibility of realising his love desire, Vivaldi marries Ellena in a crowded church. The sheer happiness of the moment contrasts with the melancholic atmosphere of the first attempt at marriage, and melancholy seems to be dispelled. Vivaldi's melancholy is generally connected to the figure of Ellena, which takes the form of love melancholy. All the symptoms such as suffering in loneliness, groans, fear of a rival, and unjustified terrors for her health become stronger when the lover is removed from him. In order to retrieve his beloved and end his love melancholy by marriage, the protagonist starts a melancholic journey, in which he will witness a series of landscapes that are fundamental to express his melancholic feelings. By soothing or smothering those emotions, nature exhibits the pleasing effects of white melancholy and the paranoid state induced by black melancholy. Indeed, the final arc of the Inquisition represents the apotheosis of Vivaldi's paranoid thinking, due to the groundless terrors and hallucinations fostered in the darkness of his cell. His melancholic traits will be redeemed by his final reunion with Ellena.

### 4.3 The Splenetic Villain: Father Schedoni

Despite both Vincentio de Vivaldi and Ellena di Rosalba share the role of protagonists in the novel, ancient and modern literary criticism tends to recognise Father Schedoni as the most prominent character of the story, which even originates the title of the novel[683].

As Nicholas Groom remarks, both Sir Walter Scott and Mario Praz considered the criminal monk a real "masterpiece"[684]. Based on the rich tradition of Elizabethan and Jacobean Italianate villains, mingled together with Walpole's Manfred, and Lewis's Ambrosio,

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681 *The Italian*, p. 387.
682 Broders, 'The Fast and the Curious', p. 924.
683 Hogle, 'Recovering the Walpolean Gothic', p. 152.
684 Groom, 'Introduction' in Ann Radcliffe *The Italian,* p. xxxvi.

Schedoni perfectly matches the literary pattern of the melancholic political schemer. The vicious monk embodies the stereotype of the splenetic villain of saturnine ascendancy, which is discontent with the world order and plots people's downfall, but with new narrative depths since the character is subject to emotional trouble. Being a cold and calculating individual, well versed in the arts of dissimulation, fond of solitude and endowed with a gloomy aura, Father Schedoni, previously known as the Count di Marinella and then di Bruno, represents the most melancholic character of whole the narrative.

As beforehand mentioned, Radcliffe appears to draw her inspiration for Father Schedoni from Elizabethan drama, rather than from proper Italian history, therefore portraying a character in the "villain-hero" guise of Marlowe[685]. Gary Kelly defines the monk as "mysterious menacing and Machiavellian", which is a reason for "awe and terror" for the heroine, and a "fierce rival" of the hero[686]. Schedoni, in effect, is a villain of Italianate flavour, whose aim is to counterbalance Ellena's and Vivaldi's uncommon moral values, which, of course, coincide with the ideal virtues of the eighteenth century[687]. In addition to that, Radcliffe depicted her Italian devil as a member of the church of Rome, to exploit the trope of the criminal monk, and expose her Anglican distaste for the institution of the Catholic Church. By portraying such a hypocrite, unfeeling, and merciless man[688], Radcliffe included a character plagued by saturnine melancholy, whose "fallen greatness and gloomy violence disclose a hidden world of darkness and death[689]."

This chapter will describe those features, both physical and mental, that qualify Schedoni as a son of Saturn.

### *4.3.1 "Melancholy eyes" and "gloomy disposition": the Physiognomy of a Saturnine Character*

Writing in late Eighteenth-century England, Ann Radcliffe successfully incorporated in her gothic production a series of tropes that belonged to sentimental fiction. One of the most relevant elements is the employment of physiognomy, in order to anticipate her characters' temperament through their physical appearance. Even though that practice was highly

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[685] McIntyre, Clara F. 'Were the "Gothic Novels" Gothic?' in *PMLA*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (1921), pp. 644-667 (pp. 651-652).

[686] Kelly, '"A Constant Vicissitude of Interesting Passions"', p. 54.

[687] Despite their Italian citizenship, Ellena and Vivaldi are in all respects young members of the Eighteenth-century English aristocracy.

Macintyre, 'Were the "Gothic Novels" Gothic?', p. 654; Napier, *The Failure of Gothic*, p. 134.

[688] Navone, John. 'The Italian Devils of Anglo-Saxon Literature', in *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 55, No. 645 (1974), pp. 68-77 (p. 70,75).

[689] Lutz, Deborah. *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative* (Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 31.

discussed at the time – in Udolpho there is even a dialogue between Emily (an endorser of the value of sensibility including physiognomy) and Madame Montoni in which the latter demolishes the accuracy of that doctrine[690] – Radcliffe managed to employ it proficiently in the description of Schedoni. In effect, it is possible to infer from his very first appearance in the story that he is a melancholic character, who bears many resemblances to the saturnine character. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a similar temperament was associated with a melancholic attitude. [691]. Gloom marks clear that Schedoni is tormented by melancholy, but by a particular kind of *humor melancholicus* that afflicts both physiognomy and physiology, which is described as *snodeste* – despicable[692]. Therefore, saturnine men presented specific physical attributes, such as excessive thinness, downcast and sunken eyes animated by a malevolent light, and a dark completion resulting from black bile[693]. Indeed, in Radcliffe's description, Schedoni is presented as an individual possessing a "striking figure, but no so from grace", since "it was tall, and, though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth", which, accompanied by the austere black cowl of the monks, stroke fear in people's hearts. In addition to that:

> His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face, encreased its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror. His was not the melancholy of a sensible and wounded heart, but apparently that of a gloomy and ferocious disposition[694].

It is possible to infer that Schedoni's physiognomy fits the stereotype of the son of Saturn in virtue of his thinness, and of the darkness of his facial features, which are exalted by the shadows of his cowl. However, the most relevant feature is constituted by the eyes that reflect his melancholy.

Schedoni's melancholy is a torment radically different from Vivaldi's, Ellena's or even Emily St. Aubert's since the monk is afflicted by saturnine *humor melancholicus*. Such a disorder does not seem to denote goodness of heart, but an unjustified viciousness, paired with a ferocious desire for power. Indeed, the Arabian philosopher Abu Ma'sar described saturnine men as hateful, disloyal, deceitful and liable to corruption, fond of solitude,

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[690] Radcliffe, Ann. *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* edited by Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 112.

[691] Ancient authors – belonging both to the Middle Ages and Renaissance as well – associated melancholy with planet Saturn; in a world in which stars were held responsible for determining humors, Saturn was generally deemed as the star of melancholic temperament. Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia,* p. 119.

[692] Ibid. pp. 108-109-110.

[693] Ibid. pp. 120, 137, 179.

[694] *The Italian*, p. 35.

introverted and unsociable, but thirsty for power, haughty and arrogant, and inclined to tyranny and slavery[695]. Meanwhile, Greek mythology provided the reason for saturnine sadness and inclination to deceitful acts, which are due to the gloomy duplicity of Cronus[696]. Therefore, the monk's facial features are described as bearing the traces of many passions, which agitated him in the past, yet "[a]n habitual gloom and severity prevailed over the deep lines of his countenance[697];". In effect, his main quality may be inscrutability; Schedoni is able to estrange his emotions from his face and display the same immutable leaden mask[698], which underlines his deceitful saturnine nature. Thanks to that ability, the monk is capable of feigning a "meek and holy countenance", combined with a downcast glance, which bestows him a splenetic aura[699]. A perfect example of that fake humility is represented by the passage in which Vivaldi accuses him of being Ellena's slanderer. As a result of those allegations, the monk holds a downcast eye and continues to pray in an affectation of meekness[700].

Schedoni's physical description is completed by a black cowl, which evidences his pale face, and which hood project gloomy shadows on his already malignant face. A similar shadow enhances his unsettling aura, which is described as "super-human[701]". Such an image might call to mind the classic representation of the god Saturn, in particular the Pompeiian fresco in the House of Castor and Pollux. There, the Roman god is portrayed as an old man with malignant eyes, clad from head to toe with a hooded dark cloak and carrying a scythe, a symbol of power and threat[702].

### *4.3.2 Hostile, Gloomy and Fraud: Schedoni's Melancholic Character*

Respecting the laws of physiognomy, Schedoni's gloomy exterior is just an introduction to his melancholic character. According to tradition, the sons of Saturn were stricken by a condition similar to melancholic pathology and exhibited pessimism, a desire for loneliness,

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[695] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 122.
[696] Ibid. p. 148.
Ancient Greek astrology recognised the negative value of Saturn, which will be maintained along the centuries. Generally connected to the myth of Cronos, the planet implicated a distorted prospective over the world due to its position in the lower part of the sky – the *imum coeli* – that leads to a hostile attitude towards life. In addition to that, Saturn was considered a malevolent old man in contrast with the powerful and far more positive figure of Jupiter. Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, pp. 131-132, 151.
[697] *The Italian*, p. 35.
[698] Andonova-Kalapsazova, 'Emotions Vocabulary and the Reconceptualisation of Emotions in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents"', p. 53.
[699] *The Italian*, pp. 36, 47, 99.
[700] *The Italian*, pp. 99, 100.
[701] Ibid. p. 35.
[702] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 185.

a proneness to fake modesty and lies, and a penchant for silent brooding and general gloom[703]. Reading the novel, it is possible to affirm that Schedoni conforms to the saturnine traits of ancient, Medieval and Renaissance lore. In effect, he is a natural-born pessimist, who can only see "evil in human nature.[704]" His demeanour is usually silent and focused on isolation, generally brooding like a proper melancholy man:

> He would sometimes abstract himself from the society for whole days together, or when with such a disposition he was compelled to mingle with it, he seemed unconscious where he was, and continued shrouded in meditation and silence till he was again alone[705].

According to those lines, the monk's mind is constantly wrapped into cogitations, and muses in silence about his current situation, or his ambitions, subtly displaying his scheming nature. That thoughtful disposition is a recurrent element in the story since the villain is often "lost in thought, broke not by a single world, the deep silence of the solitudes through which they passed[706]", or "recalled from one of the thoughtful moods in which he had so habitually indulged[707]".

Apart from being hostile, gloomy, fraudulent and shy, saturnine men are recognised as extremely ambitious and enterprising, with a bad disposition towards others, but generally endearing to noble and powerful people[708]. In Schedoni's case, that aspect is shown by his close friendship with the Marchesa di Vivaldi – Vivaldi's mother. At the beginning of the story, the narrator makes clear that the gloomy monk aspires to occupy a higher position in the Church Office, therefore he is ready to satisfy any demand from the Marchesa, in order to advance his career[709]. Consequently, he seems ready to avoid Vivaldi's union with Ellena at any cost, even committing homicide[710]. That heinous plan is not just the result of his overwhelming ambition, but also of his desire for vengeance. Saturnine people are often described as possessing a good memory and liable to vengeance[711], therefore it is plausible to codify Schedoni's nature as ambitious as much as vengeful. The resolution of killing Ellena appears to be a punishment for Vivaldi, who dared to expose the monk's fake and treacherous nature in front of the whole brotherhood: "That insult, which had pointed forth

[703] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, pp. 136-137,172,179.
[704] *The Italian*, p. 51.
[705] Ibid. p. 35.
[706] Ibid. p. 238.
[707] Ibid. p. 261.
[708] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, pp. 108-109-110, 124, 180.
[709] Napier, *The Failure of Gothic*, p. 144.
[710] Ambition, it has already appeared, was one of his strongest motives of action, and he had long since assumed a character of severe sanctity, chiefly for the purposes of lifting him to promotion. *The Italian*, p. 104.
[711] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 179.

his hypocrisy, and ridiculed the solemn abstraction he assumed, had sunk deep in his heart, and, fermenting the direst passions of his nature, he meditated a terrible revenge[712]."

By steadily acting as a pious monk, Schedoni openly declares his concealing nature, which is dedicated to deception and manipulation. Then, the monk is described as a creature of dissimulation, who is not satisfied with truth, and who prefers cunningness and winning people's minds with the subtle arts of dispute and logic[713]. In addition to that, Schedoni is extremely skilled at reading people's state of mind, in order to manipulate them to his advantage: "his eyes were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice[714]". As mentioned above, the eyes are the most striking feature of the monk's face and one of the most effective weapons in his arsenal. In effect, Schedoni is able to read others' stories through his melancholy glance, while revealing anything about him[715]. Furthermore, the monk is able to adapt his temperament to any circumstance: "he could adapt himself to the tempers and passions of persons, whom he wished to conciliate, with astonishing facility, and generally with complete triumph[716]." Therefore, Schedoni's countenance does not reflect his internal motions of the soul and results in a fraud villain if compared with the honest and innocent heroes[717]. As a result, the monk successfully reveals his saturnine essence of manipulator by combining those two abilities in order to manipulate the Marchesa and Vivaldi. He provokes a wave of excessive pride in the former, and excites an excess of imagination in the latter, just to fulfil his personal plan.

In the case of the Marchesa, the monk appears quite skilled at understanding her strong passions, especially her malevolent pride, and leverages her negative personality traits in order to reach a higher office inside the congregation of Black Penitents[718]:

> Schedoni observed, with dark and silent pleasure, the turbulent excess of her feelings; and perceived that the moment was now arrived, when he might command them to his purpose, so as to render his assistance indispensable to her repose; and probably so as to accomplish the revenge he had long meditated against Vivaldi, without hazarding the favour of the Marchesa. So far was he from attempting to sooth her sufferings, that he continued to irritate her resentment, and exasperate her pride; effecting this, at the

[712] *The Italian*, p. 104.
[713] *The Italian*, p. 35; Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 84.
[714] *The Italian,* p. 35.
[715] Lutz, *The Dangerous Lover*, p. 31.
[716] *The Italian*, p. 35.
[717] Napier, *The Failure of Gothic* , p. 140.
[718] Andonova-Kalapsazova, Emotions Vocabulary and the Reconceptualisation of Emotions in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents"', p. 54.

same time, with such imperceptible art, that he appeared only to be palliating the conduct of Vivaldi, and endeavouring to console his distracted mother[719].

From that passage, it seems clear that Schedoni is willing to use his craft to inflame the Marchesa's passions while appearing as a charitable and benevolent advisor, just to achieve his purpose of vengeance. Subsequently, the criminal monk is even able to convince the woman that Ellena di Rosalba poses too great a threat to the honour and respectability of her family, therefore the girl must be killed[720]. Similarly, later in the novel, the saturnine monk tries to employ his scheming craft to change the Marchesa's resolution, by presenting Ellena as a lesser threat and as a good party for Vivaldi, without success[721].On the other hand, Schedoni appears quite successful in manipulating Vivaldi too, just by recognising his susceptible imagination, which is given by a mixture of young age and love melancholy. Thus, as written by Punter, Schedoni can easily read Vivaldi's sentimental perturbation[722], especially subsequently to the young aristocrat's scene of rage at the convent[723]. After being publicly offended in front of his brethren, Schedoni will take advantage of Vivaldi's passion of love, and propensity for the marvellous, to prevent his clandestine marriage with Ellena. Towards the end of the novel, during his downward spiral in the prison of the Inquisition, the monk explains to Vivaldi that such a susceptibility is a weakness, that should be fixed in order not to be deceived by a malevolent other[724].

Schedoni's melancholic and saturnine nature is not only evident in his physiognomy and in his depressed, rapacious, gloomy, selfish, and manipulative character, but also in a series of emotional traits that make him akin to another well-known villain of the Gothic fiction: Manfred from *The Castle of Otranto*.

#### *4.3.3 Unmoving, Insensible to Landscape and a Bad Father: Schedoni's Manfred-like Behaviours*

According to Jerrold E. Hogle, *The Italian* constitutes Radcliffe's return to "the fundamentals of the Gothic as they appear in Horace Walpole's tightly structured *The Castle*

[719] *The Italian*, p. 161.
[720] Ibid. pp. 169-170.
[721] Ibid. pp. 279-280.
[722] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 72.
[723] *The Italian*, pp. 50-51.
[724] "The opinions you avowed were rational," said Schedoni, "but the ardour of your imagination was apparent, and what ardent imagination ever was contented to trust to plain reasoning, or to the evidence of the senses? It may not willingly confine itself to the dull truths of this earth, but, eager to expand its faculties, to fill its capacity, and to experience its own peculiar delights, soars after new wonders into a world of its own!" Ibid. pp. 376-377.

*of Otranto* (1746)[725]." Apart from the Italianate setting, and the correspondence between Theodore/Vivaldi and Matilda/Isabella/ Ellena, the main resemblance may be detected in the characters of Manfred, prince of Otranto, and Father Schedoni. The two, in effect, manifest a saturnine variety of melancholy and Machiavellian traits, which consist of excessive cupidity and thirst for power[726]. Apart from melancholy musings and greedy ambitions, Schedoni embodies the same saturnine features of Manfred, which regard the relationship with nature and the lack of abilities as a father.

Villains, in general, are characterised by a remarkable indifference towards the surrounding environment, and Schedoni makes no exception. Like Manfred, the criminal monk lacks the kind of melancholic genius belonging to heroes and therefore fails to contemplate sublime natural environments with pleasing feelings of sadness and awe[727]. Schedoni is exposed several times to elements that are meant to provoke awe, or palpitating emotions, throughout the novel, yet he is not able to connect with the divine dimension or the gentle despondency experimented by Ellena or Vivaldi. On the other hand, the monk himself feels superior to the rest of humanity by virtue of his haughtiness[728], therefore he is willing not to yield to strong emotions. Indeed, Saturn is recognised as the god of rational thought[729], and Schedoni himself demonstrates to be one of his most devoted children by smothering his emotions with his intellect[730] and his evil genius[731]. For instance, when the Marchesa is conceiving the plan to murder Ellena and is immediately liable to pangs of remorse for an act not yet committed, due to a requiem played to the memory of a recently dead man, Schedoni remains substantially unmoved and disgusted by such a scene:

> Schedoni was scarcely less disturbed, but his were emotions of apprehension and contempt. "Behold, what is woman!" said he — "The slave of her passions, the dupe of her senses! When pride and revenge speak in her breast, she defies obstacles, and laughs at crimes! Assail but her senses, let music, for instance, touch some feeble chord of her heart, and echo to her fancy, and lo! all her perceptions change:— she shrinks from the act she had but an instant before believed meritorious, yields to some new emotion, and sinks — the victim of a sound! O, weak and contemptible being[732]!"

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[725] Hogle, 'Recovering the Walpolean Gothic', p. 153.
[726] Navone, 'The Italian Devils of Anglo-Saxon Literature', pp. 72,74.
[727] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 69; Smith, *Gothic Literature*, p. 32.
[728]Andonova-Kalapsazova, 'Emotions Vocabulary and the Reconceptualisation of Emotions in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents"', p. 49.
[729] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 148.
[730] Smith, *Gothic Literature*, pp. 26, 30.
[731] Warren, 'Designing and Undrawing Veils', p. 526.
[732] *The Italian*, p. 170-171.

Landscape proves to be as unsuccessful as music. In the scene of the seaside, one of the dramatic climaxes of the novel, the monk appears in all of his gloomy and saturnine glory. He is clad in black, silent, and shaded by his cowl, and appears sublime to the extent of being gigantic, "announcing power and treachery[733]." Apparently untouched by the surrounding environment, the dark shadows on his face betray an association between the dark clouds arranged on the shore and the melancholic temperament of the monk. Schedoni appears to be attracted by the storm in an unconventional way if compared to the heroes of the narrative[734]. The evil monk becomes part of the "encreasing gloom, and swelling surge, that broke in thunder on the beach[735]", as that sublime and melancholic perturbation is akin to the agitation in his bosom[736], which concerns his lack of resolution in killing the innocent Ellena[737]. On the other hand, apart from that particular scene, Schedoni manifests his general lack of interest in natural landscapes due to his total devotion to reason. For him, imagination, and those aspects connected to pleasing despondency, are just an illusion affecting naïve people:

> Over the gloom of Schedoni, no scenery had, at any moment, power; the shape and paint of external imagery gave neither impression or colour to his fancy. He contemned the sweet illusions, to which other spirits are liable, and which often confer a delight more exquisite, and not less innocent, than any, which deliberative reason can bestow[738].

From that passage, it may be inferred that Schedoni is enveloped in a gloomy silence, generated by his melancholy brooding that cannot be impressed by the beauty of nature[739]. In contrast to him, Ellena's soul is soothed and elevated by their environmental surroundings, while the monk cannot achieve the divine dimension due to his intrinsic aura of terror and gloom[740].

The only landscape element capable of provoking a melancholic reaction in the criminal monk is constituted by the ruins of Cambrusca, as Claudia Johnson found a resemblance between the ruins and the "desiccated and sepulchral figure" of the Schedoni[741]. Here, Schedoni exhibits a discrete sense of anxiety attributed to his paranoid thinking. Indeed, the monk falls victim to a melancholy fit due to the fact that his Machiavellian plan and his

[733] *The Italian*, p. 210.
[734] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 69.
[735] *The Italian*, p. 211.
[736] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 69.
[737] Piwowarska, The Category of Space in the Gothic Novel', p. 191.
[738] *The Italian*, p. 242.
[739] Ibid. p. 243.
[740] Navone, 'The Italian Devils of Anglo-Saxon Literature', p. 74.
[741] Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 127.

renowned respectability are at stake all at once. Such an unjustified dread is fostered by the threatening presence of Spalatro – who could expose the monk's criminal past, combined with the murderous story of the Baron of Cambrusca – which resembles the monk's own story. Consequently, Schedoni exhibits a state of perturbation that is identifiable with paranoia, since he is afraid that the peasant guide might be aware of his connection with Spalatro, and frantically thinks about a solution to his current anxiety. Such an occupation of thoughts denotes Schedoni's melancholic torment[742].

Besides music and landscape, Schedoni's saturnine melancholy is particularly evident in his relationship with fatherhood, especially in the regard to negative fatherhood. Similarly to Manfred, the monk can be labelled as a bad father, due to his adverse bond with Ellena di Rosalba. As a matter of fact, both Greek mythology and astrology linked the god Saturn to bad fathers and old people, while Roman Vezio Valente explained that some features embodied by saturnine men, such as being childless or abandoning their new-born children, combined with a desire for violence and hidden maliciousness, are associated to Cronus' negative family experiences[743]. Actually, Schedoni is depicted as a man who had supposedly abandoned his newborn, and who is currently planning to kill her. The monk is not dissimilar from Manfred, since they both qualify as ruthless usurpers, who try to hide their past atrocities, in order to preserve their dynasty[744]. Schedoni is ready to use his alleged newfound daughter in order to form an alliance with the Vivaldis – one of the most ancient noble families of Naples. Such a move will change his fate and help him to acquire a more advantageous position inside the Office, just like Manfred resorted in extremis to Matilda to maintain his lineage[745]. On the other hand, both Italian villains feel for the first time compassion and remorse stirring in their chests when their daughters are in danger. Indeed, Schedoni's painful torment while planning Ellena's murder is almost similar to Manfred's desperation after slaying Matilda[746]. Initially, Schedoni appears resolved to kill Ellena, in order to please the Marchesa and to obtain his vengeance on Vivaldi. Under similar circumstances, he expresses his contempt by addressing her as a "poor insect[747]".

The section set at the beach opens up Schedoni's inner turmoil. Elisabeth Napier points out that the monk is thorn between "touch of pity" and the desire to kill the girl[748]. Despite the

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[742] *The Italian*, p. 263.
[743] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, pp. 131-132, 134.
[744] Hogle, 'Recovering the Walpolean Gothic', p. 153.
[745] *The Italian*, p. 227.
[746] Hogle, 'Recovering the Walpolean Gothic', p. 153.
[747] *The Italian*, p. 211.
[748] Napier, *The Failure of Gothic*, p. 139.

repressions implemented by his cool calculating nature, the monk starts to feel several emotions agitating in his chest:

> The conflict between his design and his conscience was strong, or, perhaps, it was only between his passions. He, who had hitherto been insensible to every tender feeling, who, governed by ambition and resentment had contributed, by his artful instigations, to fix the baleful resolution of the Marchesa di Vivaldi, and who was come to execute her purpose, — even he could not now look upon the innocent, the wretched Ellena, without yielding to the momentary weakness, as he termed it, of compassion[749].

For the first time in his life, Schedoni appears to be unable of doing the deed because of a sudden pang of compassion, which shakes his resolution coming from his selfish ambition[750]. Being touched by Ellena's beauty, innocence, and delicate feminine frame[751], the monk labels those new feelings as "weakness", which troubles his impassibility with internal perturbation[752]. Every attempt to smother his feelings to proceed with the plan is nullified by that newly discovered sympathy[753]. Apart from feeling pity for Ellena, Schedoni also partakes in Spalatro's pangs of horror and remorse, which are provoked by the idea of taking Ellena's life with a dagger[754]. Such an interior turmoil affects the monk's ability of self-discipline, as he is not able to strike the mortal blow to a sleeping Ellena; he remains victim of a "shuddering horror[755]". Then, as a good son of Saturn, Schedoni tries to remember the vengeance, the hatred nourished for Vivaldi, accompanied by the social prestige that he would gain in the eyes of the Marchesa in order to complete the act. Nevertheless, he remains shocked by the discovery that Ellena is his own long-lost daughter.

A similar sudden knowledge operates a radical change in Schedoni, who appears to yield to his newly awakened feelings of grief and remorse. Despite not tolerating the act of expressing his emotions in front of others[756], the monk abundantly cries and sighs in a melancholic expression of his turmoil[757]. That kind of feeling leaves him like a man "who has just recoiled from the brink of a precipice, but who still measures the gulf with his eye[758]." Another sign of saturnine melancholy associated with Schedoni's bad fatherhood is

[749] *The Italian*, pp. 211-213.
[750] Andonova-Kalapsazova, 'Emotions Vocabulary and the Reconceptualisation of Emotions in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents"', p. 55.
[751] Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s*, p. 45.
[752] Andonova-Kalapsazova, 'Emotions Vocabulary and the Reconceptualisation of Emotions in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents", p. 56; *The Italian*, p. 213.
[753] *The Italian*, p. 216.
[754] Ibid. pp. 218-219, 221.
[755] Ibid. p. 223.
[756] Broadwell, The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', p. 81.
[757] *The Italian,* pp. 225-226.
[758] Ibid. p. 229.

the load of self-reproach hitting him while witnessing the mummery of Virginius killing his daughter Virginia, during the Roman Carnival. Here, in a paranoid access, Schedoni sees his own past intentions enacted on the stage and falls prey to an internal turmoil of anger and self-reproach, mingled with the fear of being discovered by both Ellena and their guide[759].

Father Schedoni is definitely a saturnine character afflicted by a pessimist variety of melancholy, in regards to landscape and fatherhood. Despite those Manfred-like attributes, Schedoni displays his most melancholic side in the last section of the novel.

### *4.3.4 A Proper Melancholic End for a Melancholic Life: Schedoni's Imprisonment and Death in Chains*

Schedoni's intrinsic saturnine quality may well be revealed by the above-mentioned features, yet it is definitely underlined by his highly melancholic final arc in prison. In fact, Arabian astrology identified men born under the sign of Saturn as criminals and prisoners, while Vezio Valente considered their tendency to miserably die in chains as a legacy of Cronos' imprisonment in the realm of Tartarus[760]. Consequently, Schedoni's imprisonment and death in the Inquisition's dungeons are the final marks of his saturnine melancholy. Schedoni's presence is convened by the tribunal of inquisition due to Vivaldi's accusations about the unclear past of the monk. Therefore, the villain is forced to undergo a process as the accused, while listening to Father Ansaldo's account of his past crimes[761]. Despite the heavy accusations directed toward him, Schedoni appears able to maintain his typical melancholic attire, which is utterly unfazed by the infernal atmosphere of the Inquisition.

According to Napier, Schedoni's silence possesses a theatrical quality[762], which may be maintained true inasmuch as the monk is trying to dissimulate his guilt, by using the art of deception and acting as a meek man, keeping his usual downward gaze[763]. Nonetheless, Ansaldo's mention of the Count di Bruno appears to have an impact on Schedoni's "social mask"[764]. Although fighting in order to preserve an expressionless stance, the accused shifts involuntarily his expression[765]; he turns away his face[766], and conspicuously has trouble in governing himself, as a "livid hue overspread his complexion" and his eyes averted with

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[759] *The Italian,* p. 262.
[760] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la melanconia*, pp. 124, 134-135.
[761] Ansaldo was summoned as the witness due to his connection with Schedoni: the monk had confessed him all of his crimes.
[762] Napier, *The Failure of Gothic*, p. 139.
[763] *The Italian*, p. 322.
[764] Broadwell specifies that Schedoni's "social mask" is usually a proficient tool in his hands.
Broadwell, The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', p. 79.
[765] Napier, *The Failure of Gothic*, p. 141.
[766] *The Italian*, p. 325.

horror”, while exhibiting a lack of control on his tone[767]. Additional agitation is provoked by the appearance of Nicola di Zampari, one of his previous accomplices, who forces Schedoni to hide under his hood[768]. Despite such an emotive tempest issued by his paranoid fears, Schedoni manages to admit his faults as Ellena’s slanderer, while conserving his untouched demeanour:

> Schedoni, when he withdrew from the hall, bowed respectfully to the tribunal, and whether, not withstanding late appearances, he were innocent, or that subtlety enabled him to reassume his usual address, it is certain his manner no longer betrayed any symptom of conscious guilt. His countenance was firm and even tranquil, and his air dignified[769].

During the second day of trial, Spalatro testifies against his master, in order to redeem himself by exposing his past crimes. Hence, the servant unfolds Schedoni’s past, revealing his saturnine nature, which is dominated by an unrestrained display of selfish passions, especially of envy[770]:

> It would be difficult for a candid mind to believe how a conduct so reasonable could possibly excite hatred in any breast, or that the power of selfishness could so far warp any understanding, as to induce Marinella, whom we will, in future, again call Schedoni, to look upon his brother with detestation, because he had refused to ruin himself that his kinsman might revel! Yet it is certain that Schedoni, terming the necessary prudence of di Bruno to be meanness and cold insensibility to the comfort of others, suffered full as much resentment towards him from system, as he did from passion, though the meanness and the insensibility he imagined in his brother’s character were not only real traits in his own, but were displaying themselves in the very arguments he urged against them. The rancour thus excited was cherished by innumerable circumstances, and ripened by envy, that meanest and most malignant of the human passions; by envy of di Bruno’s blessings, of an unencumbered estate, and of a beautiful wife, he was tempted to perpetrate the deed, which might transfer those blessings to himself[771].

The profile of Schedoni delivered by his past deeds fully confirms his stance as a victim of saturnine melancholy Indeed, the haughtiness, the arrogance, the thirst for power, the disloyalty towards the family, the art for deceit, and the passion of envy are all part of the melancholic condition of a born under Saturn[772].

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[767] *The Italian*, p. 326.
[768] Ibid. p. 327.
[769] *The Italian*, p. 337.
[770] Andonova-Kalapsazova, ‘Emotions Vocabulary and the Reconceptualisation of Emotions in Ann Radcliffe’s “The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents”’, p. 54.
[771] *The Italian*, p. 342.
[772] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturno e la Melanconia*, p. 122.

Realising that there is no escape from the justice of the Inquisition, Schedoni decides to scheme his final revenge towards the world, followed by his death. In effect, the monk's death is one of the most saturnine moments of the whole narrative, in virtue of the sadness and misery that transpire from it.

As Michasiw observes, Schedoni is one of the most magnificent Radcliffean villains for most of the narrative; he is ruling over his convent, he influences the social and political choices of the Vivaldis, he holds Ellena's life in his hands, and he even uses the Inquisition as a tool for personal revenge. However, after the trial, everything turns against him, since he is betrayed by the church, by the Marchesa, and finally is condemned by the Inquisition[773]. Such a downward spiral towards the blackest misery is bound to end with suicide, which is committed in prison through poison. In contrast with the rest of Radcliffe's villains, Schedoni dies unrepentant and only after committing one last act of vengeance by dragging Zampari with him[774]. A few moments before his death, the monk already exhibits a melancholic aspect, that is emphasised by paleness and hollow eyes[775]. For the entire duration of the discussion, he "appeared almost to writhe under the agony, which his mind inflicted upon him, and it was only by strong effort, that he sustained his spirit so far as to go through with the interrogations he had judged it necessary to put to Nicola[776]", with casual peaks of vitality to confess his relationship with Ellena and his faults towards Vivaldi[777].

Furthermore, his last energies are spent witnessing Zampari's death, since revenge is the only passion that survives in that crucial moment[778]. Schedoni's strengths appear concentrated in that single moment, as he emits a last demonic sound of exultation, looking at his final act of revenge[779]. However, the monk remains human, and after confessing his sins, unceremoniously dies, and leaves behind an empty shell: "Life was now sinking apace; the gleam of spirit and of character that had returned to his eyes, was departed, and left them haggard and fixed; and presently a livid corpse was all that remained of the once terrible Schedoni[780]!" Focusing on the image of the light leaving his eyes, those lines describe the death of the monk, melancholically hunched over himself, despite the power and the might he possessed at the beginning of the novel.

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[773] Michasiw, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power', pp. 340-341.
[774] Arnaud, *Ann Radcliffe et le Fantastique*, p. 229.
[775] *The Italian*, p. 369
[776] Ibid. p. 373.
[777] Ibid. pp. 374-375.
[778] Sedgwick, 'The Character in the Veil', p. 265.
[779] Groom, 'Introduction' in Ann Radcliffe *The Italian*, p. xxxviii.
[780] *The Italian*, p. 383.

To sum up, Father Schedoni, previously known as the Count di Marinella and the Count di Bruno, represents the perfect example of saturnine temperament. His story constitutes a compendium of all those behaviours, and qualities, attributed to a proper son of Saturn: his strong self-centred passions of ambition, pride and envy that will make him commit a fratricide – one of the highest treason to the institution of family – his talent for scheming and fraud, dissimulating even his real feelings, the friendship with powerful people, his insensibility towards music and landscape, and his knowledge of being a bad parental figure all characterise him as a proper son of Saturn. In addition to that, even his physical appearance matches the ancient stereotype, since he is always enveloped in a dark cowl that highlights his malevolent eyes, and confers him a perpetual halo of blackness as dark as his past crimes, and as his melancholic affliction as well[781].

In conclusion, it is possible to affirm that melancholy, although declined in distinct forms, is the most relevant feature of those characters. In contrast to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, where the main focus is centred for the most part of the narrative on the protagonist Emily St. Aubert, in *The Italian*, Mrs Radcliffe diversifies her approach to melancholy and attributes a peculiar disposition to each of the three main characters.

The first character that stands out in that sense is Ellena di Rosalba, the main female character of the novel. Following the previous analysis, the heroine exhibits an atrabiliar affliction, generally connected to her sensibility and her genius, but also with the circumstances that she is demanded to endure. Undoubtedly, the repeated abductions and imprisonments establish a reason for melancholic thoughts, which are always soothed by the natural landscape. As previously observed, nature constitutes another pretext for melancholy, and it unleashes that poetic and divine dimension that is proper of artists and poets, referred to as White Melancholy. When the circumstances are deemed exceptionally stressful and despair takes the lead, Ellena cannot be relieved by the landscape and falls into a state of paranoia, which is typical of pathologic melancholy. That kind of affliction shares a series of symptoms and behaviours with love melancholy, another condition that unsettles Ellena's mental balance and completes her melancholic profile.

Love melancholy is also shared by the second main character of that novel, the young hero Vincentio de Vivaldi. Vincentio's main atrabiliar disorder is, as previously demonstrated, lovesickness, since the fixed idea of Ellena, and his unquenchable desire, overwhelm his rational side. As a result, the hero's reality is filtered by the concept of his beloved, and he forges a series of unmotivated fears, which correspond to melancholic affliction. For that

[781] Schmitt, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality', p. 861.

reason, Vivaldi is apt to fits of melancholy that compromise his understanding of reality. Hence, nature represents a threat instead of a sanctuary, while Catholic places of worship – whether they be shrines, churches or the dungeons of the Inquisition – act actively on his vivid imagination, and foster terrible hallucinations. Both Vivaldi's and Ellena's melancholy present a simple remedy: marriage. Indeed, following the precepts written by Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, the protagonists are able to end their social and sentimental troubles at once, forever banishing the dark shadow of melancholy from their lives.

It is important, though, to underline the fact that the general oppressive melancholy, which forms the structure of the novel, is lost with the death of Father Schedoni. Indeed, that criminal monk represents the centre of the melancholy of the whole narrative and embodies the purest melancholy temperament, even compared to Ellena and Vivaldi. As previously illustrated, Schedoni demonstrates to be a genuine son of Saturn, and he is part of a tradition of atrabiliar villains that finds its roots in the Elizabethan schemers, and that includes other Gothic antagonists such as Walpole's Manfred. With his cool and scheming temperament, his old age, and his gloomy aspect, the monk darkens the tale, directly provoking the wistful desperation of the main characters.

In the end, following the moral values of her time, Radcliffe will show that such a variety of melancholy is negative and should be avoided by portraying Schedoni's miserable death in prison. There, Schedoni is completely drenched in black melancholy, therefore he cannot be redeemed, and he deserves to die in a manner that mirrors his conduct in life.

# Conclusion

To sum all things up, it is possible to infer that melancholy was a central theme in Ann Radcliffe's writings. Although both eighteenth-century English physicians and intellectuals were deeply involved in the discussion of the central issue of this thesis, their dissertations would be pointless without the centuries-long tradition of theories on melancholy. For this reason, it might be correct to affirm that Radcliffe's representation of melancholy is strongly indebted to prior knowledge from the past.

Therefore, this chapter will complete my dissertation by presenting the key points of my work, in relation to the pre-existing studies on this matter. This study aimed at scrutinizing the centrality of melancholy in Ann Radcliffe's novels in relation to the secular pre-existing medical and cultural tradition of that illness. The results, coming from an attentive examination of medical and literary texts on melancholy, in combination with an accurate reading of Radcliffe's writings, indicate that Ann Radcliffe founded her novels on popular knowledge about this matter.

I dedicated a large section of my work to the ancient theories on melancholy, which were still held true in the eighteenth century. Despite being challenged and re-interpreted by a large number of modern physicians, Hippocratic and Galenic doctrines remained at the core of the issue. Ancient philosophers and physicians managed to create a complete lore on melancholy, by finding causes, symptoms, and remedies. Moreover, ancient medical practitioners managed to discern between three varieties of this illness, which included physical malady, mental illness, and a specific behavioural inclination. This syndrome was associated with humoral disbalance, since an excessive amount of black bile inside the organism could generate general malaise, insomnia, and weakness. On the other hand, the toxic vapours, created by a similar imbalance, could affect the brain, and generate mental illness. Such a condition encompassed a complex symptomatology that included hallucinations, fixed ideas, and sometimes lethargy. In addition to those symptoms, melancholy could evolve into a temperament, which would not always develop into a pathology. Nevertheless, a similar condition involved a provisional state of mind, which varied from sadness, to a pleasing state of nostalgia. However, melancholic individuals were still predisposed to develop a serious illness.

The centuries-long knowledge became relevant in early modern England, due to an unprecedented wave of suicides. Robert Burton extensively discussed the issue in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, a compendium of theories from Antiquity to Early Modern days. This work had an exceptional impact on the literary world, since the writers of poems, and

later novels, heavily relied on this tradition, in order to give a proper portrayal of melancholy. In discussing remedies, Burton listed a series of treatments that were already recommended by the physicians of the past. That list included purgatives and substances to evacuate the noxious humour, the control of Galenic six non-naturals (a balanced diet, good air, and an healthy lifestyle). In addition to that, the scholar agreed with past psychotherapies against melancholy, which included music, good company, literature, art, and occupation. Furthermore, Burton detected two new varieties of melancholy, which revealed to be a fundamental topic for later literature. In effect, he introduced love melancholy and religious melancholy in the roster of the disorders created by atrabiliar imbalances. Love melancholy, in particular, was a new theme that defined a series of literary tropes for the portrayal of love, which included jealousy, faintness, and fixed ideas. Moreover, Burton introduced marriage, and satisfaction of unquenchable love desire, as one of the most effective treatments against melancholy, a measure which will be extremely relevant in both poetry and prose fiction.

Nevertheless, it is only with the new scientific theories of Thomas Willis and George Cheyne that melancholy gained a relevant role in the eighteenth century English society. Those new doctrines identified melancholy as a result of pollution of animal spirits and vapours, but also as the result of a prolonged emotive state. Indeed, ungoverned passions, long periods of trouble, and intense states of anxiety can influence the nervous system and wear it out. As a result, victims of strong feelings are affected with atrabiliar disorders. Parallel to the medical context, melancholy established itself as a kind of character. Inspired by the aforementioned melancholic temperament, melancholy was with specific physical traits, which were not of positive connotation.

On the other hand, melancholy was associated with a series of positive qualities of intellect and imagination. Aristotle and Marsilio Ficino, in effect, maintained that the madman and the melancholic man possessed the same freedom of imagination, which enabled the achievement of a privileged artistic dimension. However, women were excluded from this reality, and their melancholy was relegated to a simple pathology.

A similar interest in melancholy prompted a wave of literature that focused on this issue. Despite the melancholic character had already been featured in Elizabethan plays, the subject was fully exploited by John Milton, whose poetry became extremely popular among eighteenth-century writers. In Milton’s poems, melancholy was clearly divided in white and black, and following writers adapted those themes according to their personal circumstances. As a result, those who wrote about white melancholy, generally portrayed pensive musings

at night, in which it was possible to enjoy nature, while experimenting a pleasing dejection. Such a concept underlined the proximity to Burton's *Anatomy*, where the earliest stages of melancholy affliction were characterised by gentle suffering. On the other hand, black melancholy portrayed the dark side of the illness, which debilitates the creative force of the artist. Hence, black melancholy is represented as a pathologic disease, which destroys the artist's genius. Furthermore, love melancholy constituted another form of concern, which was typically female. Despite women were generally estranged from the creative force of genius connected with melancholy, love melancholy poetry described the sufferings of women in front of unquenchable passion.

By the first half of the century, novels recognised melancholy as a default trait of human nature. Seen as a common destiny, melancholy was represented both as a mood and as a pathologic illness, whose symptoms mirrored the above mentioned tradition. Due to its intrinsic gloom and sadness, melancholy became a connotative element of Gothic fiction. The Graveyard poets constituted the first group of writers that managed to represent melancholic feelings in a Gothic context. Their ponderations on the transience of life, and on the inevitability of death, were accompanied by sublime nature in the mood of Burke. Indeed, the Graveyard poetry focused its attention on gothic elements such as tombs, bones, churches, and gothic cathedrals, which prepared the ground for the Gothic melancholy later expressed by Horace Walpole. His work on *The Castle of Otranto* underlined the melancholy of nature, which usually resonates with the hero. Nevertheless, the general melancholic mood influenced also the villain, whose feelings can be described as saturnine, and the heroine, who expresses resignation for her condition.

All those aforementioned elements heavily influenced Ann Radcliffe's vision of melancholy in her novels. It cannot be denied that Emily St. Aubert is a melancholic character, who suffers from several varieties of melancholy as well. Emily, in effect, exhibits a hereditary form of melancholy, inherited from her father St. Aubert. That kind of melancholic sensibility is directly connected to genius in the mood of Aristotle and Ficino. The sweet despondency, which torments the girl, directly encourages her artistic production. Indeed, the heroine is a proficient lute player, singer, drawer, and enjoys the works of genius as well. In addition to that, she is able to compose her own poems, which are based on her white melancholic experience of the surrounding landscape.

Despite her predisposition to later fits of black melancholy, Emily mainly suffers from spurs of white melancholy. This duality exhibits Radcliffe's debt to Burton and Milton's production, since she described the first phases of her heroine's disturbances as sad but

pleasing. At the beginning of the story, new landscapes represent a positive experience for Emily, which elevates her spirit, inspires her heart, and gives her visions attributed to her genius.

Radcliffe follows the doctrine elaborated by Cheyne, and suggests that prolonged emotions of fear, combined with poor environmental position, worsen Emily's mental conditions. As the story unfolds, Emily tends to lose her predisposition to white melancholy, in order to surrender to black melancholy. As a result, Emily's stay in the prison of Udolpho is characterised by causeless terrors, general anxiety, and hallucinations that do not coincide with physical reality. Similar symptoms coincide with the typical symptomatology of pathologic melancholy. In order to counter that malaise, Radcliffe suggests a series of remedies that come from the rich tradition above mentioned. Emily constantly tries to alleviate her anxieties by spending time in the company of good friends, playing her lute, drawing, reading, or admiring the natural landscape. Nevertheless, those cures do not seem to take any effect on Emily's troubled mind.

In addition to those atrabiliar disorders, Emily St. Aubert suffers from love melancholy, which symptoms are based on the tradition established by Burton and by eighteenth-century poetry. The heroine is constantly occupied by the thought of Valancourt and, like the desperate maidens of early eighteenth-century songs and poems already mentioned in chapter two, she wanders in the night scenery trying to quench her passion. In effect, elements such as the constant preoccupation with the state of health of her lover, the constancy of his feelings, and the pain provoked by the separation, exhibit a clear debt towards the tradition.

Considering the tradition of portraying young heroines in relation to the eighteenth-century society, it is inevitable to remark that Emily's patriarchal anxiety is the gothic transposition of Clarissa's or Pamela's social anxieties. In effect, the fact of not being allowed neither to dispose of her money, nor to marry the man that she loves, is a reason for melancholy for Emily. Therefore, Emily seems condemned to eternal despair due to Montoni's plans, as Clarissa is bond to get depressed even to death due to society. Nevertheless, Radcliffe concluded this narrative marked by female melancholy with marriage, which acts as a reward towards the heroine. Moreover, a similar ending not only respects the eighteenth-century bourgeois utopia, but also proves right Burton's final remedy to melancholy.

On the other hand, in *The Italian*, Radcliffe portrayed three different kinds of melancholy associated to three different characters. Hence, the heroine, the hero, and the villain are associated with a specific variety of melancholy. The main heroine, Ellena di Rosalba,

represents the portrait of a female victim of melancholy. For instance, she is sensitive and endowed with a new kind of genius, which is more practical, and connected to the Burtonian tradition of occupation, in order to avoid melancholic affliction. Like Emily St. Aubert, the portrayal of Ellena is heavily indebted to the English poetic tradition concerning landscape and pathetic fallacy. The heroine, in effect, is able to express her melancholic feelings through an equally melancholic landscape in a perfect conformity. By following the Graveyard poetry's tradition, Ellena is able to reflect on her future life by contemplating nature, and to curb her pessimism by the intrinsic divine element in nature.

Solitary sceneries such as ruins, gothic buildings, and prisons fully reflect the gothic pessimism of black melancholy. Consequently, Ellena's symptomatology mirrors the ancient medical tradition, and encompasses a series of hallucinations, attacks of terrors, paranoid thoughts, and fixed ideas. In addition to her natural melancholy, Ellena suffers from a specific kind of love melancholy. The heroine's malaise is directly connected to social conventions, and it blends patriarchal anxiety with lovesickness. In a first moment, Ellena tries to control her feelings, since she knows that a lawful connection with the aristocratic Vivaldi family is impossible. Yet, seeing her feelings reciprocated by Vivaldi, the girl decides to finally recognize her feelings. However, this implicates a series of clichés connected to lovesickness, which include a dramatic separation, anxiety concerning the lover's health, general occupation of thoughts, and restlessness generally deriving from the prior tradition. Ellena's responses to sadness are in line with Burton's tradition, since she tries to counteract her fits of despair with the contemplation of nature, pensive music in solitude, literary masterpieces, and music. However, as above mentioned, marriage is the real solution to every variety of atrabiliar disturbance.

Vincentio di Vivaldi is another melancholic hero, who possesses a strong and susceptible imagination together with an overdeveloped sensibility. In effect, his main disturbance is love melancholy, which revolves around the figure of Ellena di Rosalba. Vivaldi exhibits the typical symptoms described by Burton, and is constantly falling prey to hallucinations and paranoias about the health of his beloved. Indeed, his idea of Ellena becomes a fixation that influences Vincentio's life, and filters his reality. The girl influences his view of landscape and his pathetic fallacy, which shows him the beautiful side of nature. Ellena is also a reason for his jealousy, his causeless fears, and his despair expressed under the moonlight. Moreover, even his paranoid and hallucinatory ravings in the dungeons of the Inquisition are prompted by his anxieties for Ellena.

Vivaldi's love melancholy has only one remedy, which is marriage. Contrary to Ellena, Vincentio's love melancholy can be soothed neither by the contemplation of sublime nature, nor by music or literature. His love melancholy, in effect, can only be assuaged with the satisfaction of his desire, and therefore with marriage.

Schedoni represents the last variety of melancholy, which is strictly connected to the temperaments associated to Saturn. Mirroring the Greek folklore on the figure of Saturn, which was extensively treated by Marsilio Ficino, Schedoni embodies a splenetic character deeply affected by melancholy.

The monk's appearance is marked by a persistent gloom, which is mainly due to his black cowl and sorrowful presence. Accordingly to those physical attributes, Schedoni's character presents numerous negative qualities, such as a propension for deceit, ambition, and vengeance. In addition to that, the monk is quite successful at manipulating the others by adapting his own feelings, and is generally on good terms with rich and powerful people.

Those aspects are the constitutive traits of a son of Saturn, a person with a character that recalls the melancholic life of the god Saturn. Indeed, his ambition and his vengeance put the whole plot in motion, since his desire to achieve a better position in the Church's Office, combined with his desire to take revenge on Vivaldi, determine Ellena's misadventures.

Furthermore, his personal story and his relation to Ellena, which is similar to Walpole's Manfred, determine another similitude with Saturn. Indeed, Schedoni is a bad father, and a betrayer of relatives.

As a negative character, the monk lacks the sensibility needed for sad reflections contemplating nature, yet he is constantly shrouded in a pensive silence while scheming.

However, Schedoni is prone to surrender to paranoid thinking of pathologic nature when his past misfits and his current intentions are revealed. At the end of the narrative, Schedoni dies in the most melancholic fashion possible. Following Saturn's destiny of imprisonment, the monk will die in a chain in a dark prison, unrepentant and unredeemed.

In conclusion, this work tried to underline the importance of melancholy in Ann Radcliffe's novels, which represents the central structure of the narrative. In doing so, this dissertation points out a series of passages that directly deal with melancholy, an issue that has a high relevance in the characterisation of the protagonists. However, little can be understood without a deepened insight into the thousand-year-old history of this issue.

Despite the large number of articles that analyse Radcliffe's novels, only a few deal with the portrayal of melancholy. Indeed, it is difficult to find a study that extensively discusses this topic, by comparing the feelings and situations of the characters with prior medical

knowledge or prior literary portrayals. Scholars and experts develop their analyses on the psychology of characters in relation with the gothic environment, or with the gothic aspects of the story, or apply a feminist approach to examine the whole plot. Therefore, I tried to focus on the feelings of melancholy, in order to demonstrate that kind of disorder is the main constitutive trait of Radcliffe's characters. Moreover, Radcliffe was fully aware of both medical and literary lore concerning the portrayal of causes, symptoms, and remedies.

This might open new possibilities for additional studies in this field, since, as Reverend Alison Milbank underlines in her articles, melancholy is a general mood that affects all of Radcliffe's literary production. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore the portrayal of this theme also in her minor novels – *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, A Sicilian Romance, The Romance of the Forest, and Gaston de Blondeville* – in order to discover how its representation evolved over the years.

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