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A FIELD GUIDE TO
MELANCHOLY

phrase *Et in Arcadia Ego* – ‘even in Arcadia I am’ – have connotations of melancholy? The phrase and its grammar have been widely debated over the centuries, including speculation on who the ‘I’, the *ego*, is. Some interpretations have nostalgic connotations, suggesting that it is a phrase reminiscing about a bygone age. Art historian Erwin Panofsky’s seminal study of the phrase rests on two key translations, the sentimental elegy of ‘I, too, lived in Arcadia’, or the more brooding lament, ‘Death is even in Arcadia’.¹⁰

In Nicholas Poussin’s iconic painting of the *Et in Arcadia Ego* theme (1637–1638), a group of classical shepherds are in deep contemplation of a tomb on which the phrase is written, one tracing the words with his finger. The tomb, and the hint of death’s presence, lend weight to this haunting of Arcadia. It therefore becomes another of the paradoxes that are embedded in ideas associated with melancholy, the contradiction between the beauty of paradise, and the presence of death. As a *memento mori*, or reminder of death, the tradition of *Et in Arcadia Ego* expresses the melancholy relationship with time, with the transience of things. In his study of the two images painted by Poussin on the theme, Anthony Blunt summarises the thematic content as, in the first, ‘regret and disillusionment at the transitoriness of life’ and, in the second, the additional component of ‘resignation’.¹¹

The *Et in Arcadia Ego* theme became a frame for the encounters of Western explorers with the South Pacific. Like Claude Lévi-Strauss, with his conflicted melancholy over his time spent in the tropics, as expressed in *Tristes Tropiques*, eighteenth-century explorers visiting the South Seas isles, including Tahiti and Fiji, were also distracted by

a certain poignancy in these archetypical paradises. Sydney Parkinson, an artist who travelled on Captain James Cook's voyages, exemplified the practice of depicting Arcadian scenes, peopled with noble savages. Places like Tahiti confounded the visitors from Europe, as, on one hand, there were quite evidently the signs that a Golden Age had existed in this setting of tropical abundance and pleasant scenery. Against this, though, were disturbing aspects, including behaviour that seemed immoral to the eyes of the explorers, and strange funerary practices. Parkinson painted a funerary setting in Tahiti, including the presence of a chest with an offering on it, a funerary structure, and mourning figures. When William Woollett made an engraving based on Parkinson's 1770 wash drawing, *View in the Island of Huaheine with an Ewhara and a small altar with an offering on it*, he endowed it with 'melancholy grandeur'.¹² The offering to the dead and the mourning figures were aspects which were emphasised in the image, and the exoticness of the paradisiacal setting was intensified. Here is a prime example of *Et in Arcadia Ego*, a reminder of the presence of Death, even in these far-flung isles.

Lacrimae Rerum

Lacrimae Rerum is a phrase which comes from Virgil's *Aeneid*, line 462 of Book 1. Aeneas, the *Aeneid*'s central character, finds tears falling while he contemplates murals showing the battles of the Trojan War. Faced with the images of the dead in war he is affected by the sense of life's futility, of the passing of things, and utters the line *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangent*, 'there are tears

for misfortune and mortal sorrows touch the heart'.¹³

Translations vary, and the phrase sometimes appears in English as 'tears *for* things', and sometimes as 'tears *of* things'. This subtle shift in preposition opens up two melancholy connections. In the first, the tears *for* things are, in the Virgilian sense, for the way in which the reminders of mortality touch the soul, for the human condition itself. While Aeneas's tears were for the things he looked upon, there is an inverse of this, which bestows an affective melancholy on what is observed – the tears *of* things. As Peter Schwenger explains, although the use of 'of' might be stretching Classical grammar, the interpretation 'the tears of things' conveys the melancholy inherent in objects. Moreover, Schwenger illuminates the word *rerum*, which is often glossed as 'the affairs of men' or 'events' (perhaps because Aeneas was observing tableaux of the human dimension of war), but actually means 'things', as in Lucretius's *de rerum natura*: 'on the nature of things'.

Love Melancholy

In his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton devoted an entire section to 'Love Melancholy'. He offered that the 'last and best' cure for love melancholy is to let those afflicted have their desire. But, for a true melancholic, closure is not the point. And, of course, the impossibility of closure, of being allowed to prolong one's desire, is the critical part of love melancholy. To have desire fulfilled is to lose that very thing, as the longing is no longer. Love melancholy keeps its wound open, dwells upon unrequitedness, feeds upon it. Love-sickness, insane love, and

erotomania, are terms used to describe the various species of love melancholy – that condition of despair and desperation. As Avicenna described it in his tenth-century *Canon of Medicine*, love is an illness which is ‘a form of mental distress similar to melancholia in which man’s mind is excitedly and continuously preoccupied with beauty itself and with the forms and signs thereof.’¹⁴

Love melancholy enlists both the god of love, Eros, and the god of death, Thanatos. While Eros deals with desire, Thanatos maintains the sense of impending loss associated with the death of things, with the end of love. The two are constantly at play, Eros and Thanatos do-si-do, circling around and around. This dance of love and death is sometimes extended to the ending of life as an extreme escape from the unbearable plight of unrequited love. The suicide of Goethe’s Young Werther represents such an escape, and he describes it as a sacrifice. His farewell letters to the focus of his desire, Lotte, plot this trajectory of love and death, heading towards this ultimate expression of love melancholy. For Werther, suicide represents the eternity of love, a way to ensure it will not end, telling Lotte that when she also dies he will fly to her and be with her ‘in eternal embrace, in the presence of the Almighty’.¹⁵ There is a certain honour associated with those who declare they will die for love. Marie-Henri Beyle, the nineteenth-century writer known as Stendhal, wrote at length on love and, in his *Fragments*, he advised, ‘True love makes the thought of death frequent, easy, without terrors; it merely becomes the standard of comparison, the price one would pay for many things.’¹⁶

The goddess Hera is also implicated in love melancholy, in the love-sickness known as *amor hereos*, or *ereos*. The idea of *amor hereos* is what is sometimes called the ‘domi-

nant love' of Hera, who became jealous over Zeus's affair with the nymph Io – her own priestess. But the interpretations of *hereos* are not straightforward. It is an ambiguous word and some sources elide it to *eros* or even to heroes' love. One of the key uses of the phrase is in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* in describing the sorrows of Arcite:

His speche nor his vois, though men it herde.
 And in his gere, for al the world he ferde
 Nat oonly lyk the loveres maladye
 Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye
 Engendred of humour malencolyk,
 Biforen, in his celle fantastyk.¹⁷

This *amor hereos* is specifically associated with melancholy in the writings of the Middle Ages, and physicians of the time would concern themselves with this type of love-sickness. John of Tornamira was the physician to the popes in the fifteenth century, and in his discussion 'de melancolia' he explains *amor hereos* and relates it to the dryness of the brain. The idea of *amor hereos* is also part of Robert Burton's work, where he uses the phrase 'Heroical or Love-Melancholy'. Although this is often interpreted as the love melancholy of heroes, knights and nobles, Burton makes direct reference to the lineage of physicians who used it in the sense of 'hereos'. Concluding his 57-page article plotting the idea of *amor hereos* through the ages, John Livingstone Lowe declares that he has done his dash, but that, 'As a chapter in the history of psychiatry; as part of the texture of forgotten modes of thought; as a curious light upon dark places, the lore of the lover's malady has a vivid and enduring human interest.'¹⁸

Nostalgia

Nostalgia holds a particular affinity with melancholy. Like melancholy, nostalgia was also considered an illness, the disease of homesickness. Johannes Hofer, a Swiss medical student, invented the word in the late seventeenth century, as a hybrid of the Greek words for returning home (*nostos*) and pain or longing (*algos*). Despite its construction, Hofer's 'nostalgia' meant not the pain of returning home, but the anguish of being away, of being apart from one's place in the world. He developed the word as a diagnosis of unwellness detected amongst Swiss mercenaries who spent long periods away from home, with the symptoms including 'persistent thoughts about home, melancholy, insomnia, anorexia, weakness, anxiety, lack of breath, and palpitations of the heart'.¹⁹

And, like melancholy, it has been dissected by physicians in search of its pathology but in recent times has become categorised as an emotion rather than a physical ailment. It is also, like melancholy, notoriously slippery. As Svetlana Boym puts it, '[n]ostalgia remains unsystematic and unsynthesizable; it seduces rather than convinces'.²⁰ In *The Art of Memory*, Frances Yates makes the connection between melancholia and memory, noting that melancholics are best able to retain memory 'owing to their hard and dry constitution'.²¹ The medieval philosopher and theologian Albertus Magnus explained that, based upon the theory of the four humours, melancholy could produce good memories 'because the melancholic received the impressions of images more firmly and retained them longer than persons of other temperaments'.²² It is not an ordinary 'dry-cold' melancholy which is associated

with memory, and specifically ‘the temperament of *remiscibilitas*’, or reminiscence, but a ‘dry-hot’ melancholy, intellectual and inspired.

With parallels in the French *mal du pays* (country sickness) and the German *Heimweh* (home-pain), nostalgia is a form of bitter-sweetness, a love of longing, a joyous pain. Like lovesickness’s embracing of the agonies of unrequited love, homesickness revels in the impossibility of returning to a particular moment. The impossibility of actually returning to the past, a lost object which most certainly cannot be regained, casts nostalgia as melancholy *par excellence*. Nostalgia is a melancholic prolonging, a retardation of closure – nostalgics do not seek a cure, they want the pleasure of the pain of separation. After all, as Immanuel Kant advised, the *Heimkunft*, or homecoming, is often ‘very disappointing’ because in the intervening time that very place may have been ‘wholly transformed’ – to return to that exact place is impossible.²³ In echoing melancholy’s fixation on a single object, nostalgia’s obsession with a particular time and place is able to block out all connection to the present. This impossibility allows the moment to persist untrammelled amidst the contemporary. For this reason nostalgia is often seen as a reaction to progress, a yearning for simpler times, a longing for that which has been sacrificed.

Nostalgia’s sentimentalising is also a process of editing. In yearning for that which has past, only the positive aspects are recalled, amplified, valorised, while the negative dimensions of that previous time fly under the radar. Places are often fragmentary, discontinuous, as in poet Rainer Maria Rilke’s reverie on how a remembered house is ‘not a building, but is quite dissolved and distrib-

uted inside me; here one room, there another, and here a bit of corridor which, however, does not connect the two rooms, but is conserved in me in fragmentary form. Thus the whole thing is scattered about inside me, the rooms, the stairs that descended with such ceremonious slowness, others, narrow cages that mounted in a spiral movement, in the darkness of which we advanced like the blood in our veins.'²⁴

As part of nostalgia's editing of place and time there is an element of imaginative invention, of wistful reconstruction. Things which may have been negative in the past can cross over into a positive recollection, so that memories even of war can be suffused with a golden glow. The deprivations of Communist East Germany fade in the face of a species of nostalgia called *ostalgie*, a hybrid of the German *Ost* (east) and *nostalgie*. The pre-1989 reunification abbreviation of the DDR, the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* or German Democratic Republic, is now a sought-after emblem on t-shirts and other memorabilia. And it is not just those who experienced the communist regime that seek these items. One of the curious things about nostalgia is that it sometimes involves borrowing the memories of others. Just like the DDR emblem, CCCP – the Russian form of the former USSR – is also in vogue around the world. And the imagery of the hammer and sickle printed on a t-shirt is nostalgically worn in the USA, for example, with all recollections of the schism of the Cold War conveniently consigned to the rubble of memory.

Refugees are perhaps the most poignant sufferers of nostalgia. Displaced from their homelands, refugees' memories of place gain even greater significance. Rather than

the luxurious borrowing of the memories of others, or of looking back at leisure, the fragments of a former existence are bearers of identity, of a seat of one's self, for the nostalgic refugee. Nostalgia can take on a role of recovery in such settings – in both senses of the word – of aiding healing and of reclaiming that which is lost.

Pathos

Pathos resonates with one particular dimension of melancholy – that of suffering. As a means of intensifying or highlighting the presence of sadness and sorrow, pathos is a form of persuasion, and is found in any context in which this is an important task. For example, the persuasive power of pathos might be found in literature and art, but also in advertising and journalism. The use of stock tropes of pathos, shorthand for 'here is an example of suffering', can be found throughout all of these realms.

The quotidian pathos of news journalism and advertising places images of suffering in front of us daily. Embedded within many of these images is an evocation of melancholy, yet it is one which must be constantly renewed, and intensified, as our saturation with imagery and words progressively dulls their effectiveness. War photojournalism, advertising appeals for aid organisations, stories about local human tragedies, all enlist pathos in conveying their content. The deployment of pathos in advertising is often the most transparent, using direct appeals to sympathy and pity. The pathetic images of a starving child or an ill-treated animal are familiar examples of such techniques.

Taken to an extreme, pathos can undo melancholy. Pathos easily descends into parody and melodrama, becoming overly sentimentalised and drowning in emotion, and bathetic rather than pathetic. In this sense it can even become comedic, as bathos occurs when emotion becomes overwrought and instead undoes itself through overstatement. Pathos can also, as in the case of the 'society of the spectacle' in the conundrum of melancholy and beauty in chapter 1, become a pernicious elevation of suffering to aesthetic pleasure.

Religious Melancholy

Just like love melancholy, religious melancholy often involves unrequited love – in this case, a love for god. There is a desire for a connection with god, but also a knowledge of the impossibility of such closeness. Relationship problems with deities extend back to classical times, when the Olympian gods were near, yet elusive. Identifying the figure of Apollo in a de Chirico painting (*The Enigma of the Oracle*, 1910), Toohey and Toohey ascribe to him a metonymic quality, that he stands for all gods, and shows their sometimes aloof relationship with humanity. The gods know 'how to cure our nostalgia and melancholy and how to "get us home"'. But they will not provide us with the answer.²⁵ The relationship between this figure of Apollo, and the poignant figure of Odysseus nearby in the painting, engulfed in his nostalgia, sets up a *mise-en-scène*²⁶ that epitomises the predicament of humanity alienated from deities.

The parallel with love melancholy was captured by the tenth-century Arab physician Isaac (Ishaq ibn Imran), who

also described a variety of religious melancholy, observing that, 'There are many holy and pious men who become melancholy owing to their great piety and from fear of God's anger or owing to their great longing for God until this longing masters and overpowers the soul; their whole feeling and thoughts are only of God, the contemplation of God, His greatness and the example of His perfection. They fall into melancholy as do lovers and voluptuaries, whereby the abilities of both soul and body are harmed, since the one depends on the other.'²⁷

One of the most profound moments of religious melancholy was the experience of Spanish mystic, St John of the Cross. *Dark Night of the Soul* was written while he was incarcerated in a small cell, and embodies the yearning, through spiritual attainment, for a union with God. St John of the Cross described two dimensions of melancholy, one which was experienced on the path to spiritual fulfilment, and the other which led to deeper despair and resignation. It was this first type which is the 'spiritual melancholy' that came of the need for mystics to passively submit to God, and through this submission to experience a period of melancholy detachment from any joy in religion or in the world God has created. He also experienced the second kind of melancholy, which has been retrospectively diagnosed as depression, and he was adamant that this melancholy of despair was not caused by demons, and that it required a medical rather than spiritual intervention.

The melancholy that comes from the difficulties of relating to god persisted, and was interpreted as either a punishment or a test that had to be endured. Religious melancholy often brought extreme despair, as in the case in eighteenth-century New England where a woman was

so beside herself about the problems of her relationship with God that she hung herself with a fishing line.²⁸

The scenario for religious melancholy can also be seen to be the predicament of 'deus absconditus,' or 'missing god' – literally the belief that god has absconded, and that we are abandoned. The absence of god leads to feelings of eternal and unresolvable loss, and a yearning to make contact. In some religions this sense of an unattainable love for god becomes expressed as a form of divine ecstasy. This melancholic yearning is sometimes shown in devotional works, as love poetry written to the Divine, of imagined moments of engagement and separation with this absent god. There is also the understanding that melancholy is associated with the introspection required for deep religious engagement, including receiving divine grace and in some cases mysticism and prophecy. A further aspect is that of frustration, of not being able to sufficiently honour or be close to god. In the Sufi religion, for example, a true Sufi follower is suffused with *hüzün*²⁹ because 'he suffers from grief, emptiness and inadequacy because he can never be close enough to Allah, because his apprehension of Allah is not deep enough'.³⁰

Tristitia

In Latin, *tristitia* means sorrow, or to make sad, and its links to melancholy are immediately obvious. However, *tristitia*'s unique sense of sadness and sorrow has all but disappeared over the centuries, often being folded into the general umbrella of melancholy. As noted above, *acedia* and *tristitia* were synonymous for many centuries, until *tristitia* assumed the sense of noble suffering, or what John

Cassian called ‘wholesome sorrow’.³¹ So while *acedia* was known as the sin of Sloth, *tristitia* was the sin of Sadness. It was considered a sin because it leads to despair, and inexorably to death, and the waste of life.

There is also a constructive interpretation to the idea of *tristitia*, as in the writings of Thomas More on Christ’s own life of sadness. More’s book *De Tristitia Christi* celebrates ‘Christ’s exemplary display of sadness, weariness and fear (*tristitia tedio puarore*) leading up to and during his crucifixion’.³² More argued that our life should be one of sadness and not happiness, as we should not seek heaven on earth.

While both *acedia* and *tristitia* were best known during medieval times, and are words little used today, they are both underpinnings of one of melancholy’s allies, *ennui*. This particular term is explored as part of the next chapter, in which the specific cultural colourings of melancholy are investigated, and how these in turn have had broader cultural influence.

Ubi sunt

Meaning literally ‘where are?’, *ubi sunt* is a lament over the imminent loss of things. The Latin phrase was used in medieval poetry to signal this type of sadness with its plaintive tone, and would usually be followed by a litany of lost things. It is shorthand for a longer phrase, *Ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt?* – ‘Where are those who were before us?’ The elegiac phrase is sung in the academic anthem *Gaudeamus Igitur*, the second verse of which begins, *Ubi sunt qui ante nos/In mundo fuere?* or ‘Where are they/Who were in the world before us?’

The *ubi sunt* motif persists as a form which announces

a lamentation, or a sometimes nostalgic reverie. For example, from Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: "Where is Troy and Mycenae and Thebes and Delos and Persepolis and Agrigentum," continued my father, taking up his book of post-roads, which he had laid down. "What is become, brother Toby, of Nineveh and Babylon, of Cizicum and Mitylenae?" And again in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: 'The Thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?' And in John Keats' *Autumn*, 'Where are the songs of Spring? Ay where are they?'³³

Peter Schwenger identifies a contemporary *ubi sunt* in George Perec's *Life: A User's Manual* where the character Serge Valène, a painter, recalls a lengthy list of things which have passed through his 55 years of residence in the apartment building: 'Where were they now, the Van Houten cocoa tins, the Banania cartons with the laughing infantryman, the turned-wood boxes of Madeleine biscuits from Commercery? Where were they gone, the larders you used to have beneath the window ledge, the packets of Saponite...'³⁴

Notes

1. Werner Herzog, *Where the Green Ants Dream*.
2. Cited in Anton J van Hoff, *From Autothanasia to Suicide: Self-Killing in Classical Antiquity*, p.122.
3. Antonio Contreras Mas, *Libro de la Melancholía* by Andrés Velázquez (1585). Part 1. The intellectual origins of the book, p.31.
4. Psalm 91:6 in the St James version of *The Bible*. In some writings the 'noonday' reference is ascribed to Psalm 90:6, which depends on the particular translation.
5. Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, p.3.
6. Stanley W Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times*

to *Modern Times*, p.72.

7. John de Graaf, David Wann & Thomas H. Naylor, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*.

8. Interview with Georges Minois by Blandine Bénard, Chantal Tchoungi and Jacques Balducci, translated by Aris Sarafianos, in 'The Many Colours of Black Bile: the melancholies of knowing and feeling', p.1.

9. Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss, *Affluenza: when too much is never enough*.

10. See Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*. And see also Louis Marin, *Sublime Poussin*.

11. Anthony Blunt, 'Reviewed work(s): Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego*', p.96.

12. Bernard H Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p.45.

13. Virgil, *Virgil: Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid 1-6*, p.273.

14. Avicenna in Stanley Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times*, p.355.

15. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, p.93.

16. Stendhal, *Love*, p.225.

17. In John Livingston Lowes, 'The Loveres Maladye of Hereos', p.492.

18. *ibid*, p.546.

19. Janelle L Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*, p.21.

20. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.13.

21. Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, p.59.

22. *ibid*, page 69.

23. Immanuel Kant in Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, p.201.

24. Rainer Maria Rilke in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p.57.

25. Peter Toohey and Kathleen Toohey, 'Giorgio de Chirico, Time, Odysseus, Melancholy, and Intestinal Disorder', p.288-289.

26. *Mise-en-scène* is a term from theatre, also applied to cinema, which means the composition of a particular scene, including all of the scenery, props, lighting, and the actors in costume.

27. In Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression*, p.59.

28. Mary Ann Jimenez, 'Madness in Early American History: Insanity in Massachusetts from 1700-1830'.

29. Hüzüin is a Turkish form of melancholy, discussed in chapter 4.

30. Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, p.81.
31. In Jackson (1986), *Melancholia and Depression*, p.68.
32. Douglas Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern Europe*, p.57.
33. Sterne, Shakespeare and Keats examples from Frederick Tupper, 'Ubi sunt-A Belated Postscript', p.198.
34. Peter Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, p.108.

From *Apea* to *Weltschmerz*:
A Lexicon of Melancholy



Laurence Aberhart, *Interior, Otago Museum, Dunedin,*
4 May 1994

From *Apea* to *Weltschmerz*: A Lexicon of Melancholy

The four and twenty letters make no more variety of words in diverse languages, than melancholy conceits produce diversity of symptoms in several persons. They are irregular, obscure, various, so infinite ... you may as well make the moon a new coat, as a true character of a melancholy man...

Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*¹

Elusively sliding through time and space, melancholy takes on many guises and colourings throughout history and in different cultures. Melancholy evades precise definition, instead gathering up layers and layers of accretions. As with any emotion, the question of universal experience is a perplexing one. What might it mean if an emotion, a condition, is not directly translatable from one language to another? Is that same emotion experienced differently by another language group, or perhaps not even experienced at all? How much are language and character associated? And what of those phenomena which transcend language – painting and music for example – might the emotions expressed in such works take on a collectively felt response, an emotional Esperanto?

Such questions are dissected within the fields of cross-cultural psychology and linguistics, and hang like a threatening cloud over every literary translation, where the

particular poetic nuances of a work in one language must somehow be wrought into a different vocabulary and syntax. There are some emotions which are considered ‘basic’ – happiness and sadness, for example – and some cross-cultural linguists argue that some concepts are culture-specific and others are universal. Feeling, wanting and knowing are classified as universal concepts, whereas the Russian word *toska* – a type of melancholy – is culture-specific.² It is beyond the scope of this book to dissect these arguments, and the intention is instead to present the richness of melancholy as it slips and slides through a range of languages.

The following lexicon traverses a range of different cultural expressions in order to construct a sense of the emotional ambience of melancholy and its attendant spirits. Many of the words in the lexicon presented here will be familiar to English speakers, as they have entered the English vocabulary as carriers of specific connotations of melancholy. Melancholy, in its vague precision, has remained a relatively constant constellation of ideas throughout history. As Jennifer Radden notes, the discourse on melancholy has crossed between a breadth of cultures, Eastern and Western, and there have been multitudes of dialogues, from ancient to modern languages, yet, throughout all of this the ideas do not vary widely.³ And during the two-thousand-year development of the term, as Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl explain, ‘Although new meanings emerged, old meanings did not give way to them; in short, it is a case not of decay and metamorphosis, but of parallel survival.’⁴ This is not to say that there are not contradictions, and indeed contradiction is embedded within the concept of melan-

choly, but these have remained as constant points of tension.

Chinese

Autumn is the season most often associated with melancholy, invoking the sense of things passing, of imminent decline. In Chinese, there is a particular melancholic sadness tied to autumnness, in the concept of *bei qiu*, where *bei* is sadness and *qiu* is autumn. Autumn's potency for melancholy relates to the way in which life is paralleled to the seasons, a concept which is particularly strong in Chinese culture. The tradition of *bei qiu* was developed in the second century BC, by Song Yu, for example in the fragment, *Bei zai qui shi qi ye! Xiaose xi, cao mu yao luo er bian shuai!*, translated as:

Alas for the breath of autumn!

Wane and drear!

Flower and leaf fluttering fall and turn to decay⁵

Ai is a further colouring of sadness in Chinese, one more closely aligned with ideas of grief and mourning, and particularly associated with a tangible sense of death. Keeping in mind Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholy, *ai* is more like a simple form of grief, where a sense of closure is reached. However, a third sense of sadness, *chou*, evokes that less tangible grief that is the mark of melancholy. This wound-kept-open version of sadness appears in a poem by Li Bai, the 'immortal poet' of the eighth century: *Chou dao dua shui shui gengliu, ju bei jiao chou chou geng chou. Rensheng zai shi bu cheng yi, ming shqo*

san fa nong bian zhou, where the repetition of *chou* is expressed as layers of sadness and loneliness, of being inconsolable, melancholic:

I lift my goblet to melt away sorrow,
 but sorrow continues in sorrow.
 Man's life in this world may never find
 what satisfies the mind –
 Tomorrow at dawn let your hair flow down,
 For delight sail off in your tiny boat.⁶

Chou takes on a range of melancholic colourings, including homesickness and nostalgia, or *xiang chou* – ‘home-town *chou*’. Tied up with the sense of blackness and bleakness, *chou* is expressed as endless, like the seemingly interminable darkness of night. *Chou*'s interminability is precisely melancholy: ‘Unlike *bei*, which is easy for the experiencer to get over, *chou* stays with the experiencer.’⁷ One of the most evocative poets on the melancholy of *chou* is the eleventh/twelfth century poetess, Li Qingzhao. *Chou* appears throughout her poems, including the woe-ful lament ‘*Sheng Sheng Man*’, or ‘Every Sound Lamentation’. Using a metaphorical evocation of the bleakness of dismal weather and the passage of chrysanthemum flowers that even ‘three cups of thin wine’ could not alleviate, she finishes, *Zhe cidi, zen y ge chou zi liaode!*, translated as, ‘How in the word “miserable”, can one find / The total effects of all these on the mind.’⁸ And like the emblematic head-in-hands posture of the melancholic, as described in Chapter 2 *chou* has its own physical expression, *chou mei*, or ‘*chou* eyebrows’, a visage of intense contemplation of an unsolvable and confusing problem.

English

The English word ‘melancholy’ is a legacy of the Greek terms *melas* (black) and *chole* (bile). Yellow bile, black bile, phlegm and blood constituted the four ‘humours’, and an imbalance in any of these constituted a disorder, with an excess of black bile being the condition of melancholy. Intriguingly, black bile appears to be an invented substance, a theoretical locus for the pathology of pathos, while all the other humours are identifiable within the body.

Variations of the word can be found in a variety of languages as a transliteration of the original Greek, such that in addition to the unique language-specific words outlined elsewhere in this lexicon there are also generic versions of the word ‘melancholy’: the French have *mélancolie*, the Italians *malinconia*, Germans *melancholie*, and so on. Despite the seemingly transparent etymology, the word has gathered around it a whole swarm of connotations, including the negative associations of depression. As alluded to in the introduction, this is a grey area, and presents a set of questions which are different to those explored by this book. Yet, such debates serve to illustrate the ongoing intangibility of ‘melancholy’, reinforced further by the various cultural colourings outlined in this lexicon. Central to all of this is the idea of sadness without purpose, without any apparent occasion, or at least out of proportion to its cause. The irresolvability of the cause is vital – as otherwise melancholy simply slips away into mourning and thus, eventually, closure.

Melancholy’s specifically English connection is rooted in the legacy of Timothy Bright, Robert Burton, and the

Shakespearean evocation of the melancholy individual. One term that captures this tradition comes from the work of George Cheyne, an early researcher on psychiatry. The title of his 1733 book underscored what was considered a particular cultural association with melancholy: it was called *The English Malady*. His focus was on nervous debility, and through identifying it as a characteristic of the elite classes, is often seen as glamorising ‘melancholy *à la mode*’.⁹ Cheyne’s ‘English Malady’ was a very social melancholy, a popularisation of the earlier visions of the melancholy genius, and Samuel Johnson was sceptical of such a construction, warning James Boswell, ‘Do not let him teach you the foolish notion that melancholy is a proof of astuteness.’¹⁰

‘Spleen’ is a dimension of melancholy which was later adopted by the French, and is based on a physiological connection, since it is the spleen which, in the arcane language of Burton, ‘draws this black choler [melancholy] to it by a secret virtue, and feeds upon it, conveying the rest to the bottom of the stomach, to stir up appetite, or else to the guts as an excrement’.¹¹ Spleen was a constituent of Cheyne’s ‘English Malady,’ and poets like Matthew Green, known as ‘Spleen Green’, wrote about the prevention of spleen in 1737: ‘how to drive away/The day-mare Spleen, by whose false pleas/Men prove mere suicides in ease/ And how I do myself demean/In stormy world to live serene.’¹²

The idea of spleen as a synonym for melancholy appears in English poetry of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but later begins to fade. One of the purest statements is in Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*, begun in 1805, with its:

Moods melancholy, fits of spleen, that loved
 A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
 The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring;
 A treasure and luxurious gloom of choice¹³

Finnish

The Finns have two words which carry melancholic meaning – *apea* and *kaiho*. *Apea* is a feeling of sadness, of being downcast and gloomy, while *kaiho* suggests a less tangible poignancy, of yearning, longing, pining. The emotion of *kaiho* is the central theme of the Finnish tango, embracing solitude and loneliness. The Finnish tango is a national phenomenon, the music of choice for over half of Finland's population of 5 million. Writing in *Billboard* magazine, Antti Isokangas described how a fusion of cultural influences is found in the Finnish tango, with the conservative, stubborn and serious traits of Nordic peoples complemented by 'Eastern European melancholy, pessimism, and even a strange, Arctic kind of masochism...' ¹⁴ A 1993 *60 Minutes* programme profiled the Finnish tango, reporting that dancing the tango in Finland was an expression of 'clinical shyness [and] almost terminal melancholy'. ¹⁵ Played mainly in minor keys, that musical mode which is suffused with melancholy, the lyrics reinforce the sense of pathos which makes the Finnish tango culturally distinct from the Argentinean tango. For the Finns, the tango is about the love of longing, nostalgia, unrequited love, and self-pity.

The Finnish architect Vesa Honkonen worked with American architect Steven Holl on Helsinki's Kiasma museum in the 1990s. One of Honkonen's tasks was to

convey the Finnish character to Holl, which he did via a letter, explaining in particular the pessimistic darkness of the Finnish people, and how the tango captures this:

Ladies sitting at the other side of the outdoor dancing place Tanssilava. Men at the other side. No one smiles. Tango starts; men make their choices. No one speaks, just a nervous bow, girl moves her head a few millimetres meaning yes, and the dance starts... The world around does not exist anymore; the lyrics take one to the world of truth, the world of beautiful sorrow.¹⁶

French

The French concept of *ennui* is one which has assimilated itself into the English language, often translated as ‘boredom’. Boredom and melancholy are closely associated, yet melancholy lacks the nihilism of boredom – or, as Svensden puts it, ‘Boredom lacks the charm of melancholy’ – a charm that is connected to melancholy’s traditional link to wisdom, sensitivity and beauty.¹⁷ *Ennui* could be considered ‘lite’ melancholy, lacking the gravity of a melancholy borne of self-inspection or critical reflection. Instead, *ennui* tends to be associated with a self-absorbed dissatisfaction with things. Often connected to the condition of modernity, *ennui*, like the Italian *noia*, has connotations of the effect of anaesthesia, the numbing boredom with the *taedium vitae* or weariness with the ‘tediousness of life’, and of *anhedonia* – an inability to find pleasure in things that should be pleasurable.

Tristesse is another French inflection of melancholy. This sense of sadness was personified in the figure of

Tristesse, one of the painted images encountered in the walled garden in the thirteenth-century poem, the *Roman de la Rose*. Amongst this group, all representing the defects which prevent courtly love and including 'Envy' and 'Avarice', *Tristesse* or 'Sorrow' is 'pale and gaunt... she did not want to be consoled at any price nor let go of the sorrow she had in her heart; she had angered her heart too much, and her grief was too deep rooted.'¹⁸

Michel de Montaigne, the sixteenth-century French essayist, used the term in his *Sur la tristesse*, translated as 'On Sadness' or 'Of Sorrow'. He saw *tristesse* as a fashionable affectation, an attempt at feigning the melancholy of genius. Montaigne distinguished melancholy from *tristesse*, noting that he suffers from the former, but not the latter. *Tristesse* is seen as the cause of violent passions, and Montaigne recounts a number of stories illustrating how it leads people to behave inappropriately.¹⁹

Françoise Sagan's first novel *Bonjour Tristesse*, published in the 1950s, captured the suspended quality of sadness in the title itself, and underscores the connection to melancholy in the first lines:

A strange melancholy pervades me to which I hesitate to give the grave and beautiful name of sadness. In the past the idea of sadness has always appealed to me, now I am almost ashamed of its complete egoism. I had known boredom, regret, and at times remorse, but never sadness. Today, it envelops me like a silken web, enervating and soft, which isolates me.²⁰

For French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, *tristesse* was a quality found in entire cities, a collective melancholia.

In *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss conveys his feelings of futility in encountering the settlements beyond the margins of Western civilisation, speaking of his *tristesse*. This was not simply sadness, but a complex of lingering contemplation, and grief. Wandering through the world of these untouched cultures, Lévi-Strauss wrote that he returned with a handful of ashes, that all around him he saw the marks of monocultures, of ‘civilisation produced in bulk’. The translators of *Tristes Tropiques* have always left the title in French, as requested by the author himself. One translation of the work, by John and Doreen Weightman, notes that, ‘The possible English versions, such as “Sad Tropics”, “the Sadness of the Tropics”, “Tragic Tropics”, etc., do not quite correspond either in meaning or in implication... the suggestion of “Alas for the Tropics!”’²¹

Although it is an English word, the emphasis on ‘spleen’ is a particularly French contribution to the lexicon of melancholy. French poet Charles Baudelaire used the word ‘spleen,’ in English, in his poetry to evoke the black pit of melancholy. Several poems in his collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* are titled *Spleen*, and call to mind the language of melancholy: ‘When the low, heavy sky weighs like a lid’, ‘Hope like a bat / Goes beating the walls with her timid wings / And knocking her head against the rotten ceiling, and Hope, vanquished, / Weeps’, and ‘atrocious, despotic Anguish / On my bowed skull plants her black flag’.²²

Baudelaire’s collection of prose poems, published posthumously, was titled *Le Spleen de Paris*, and gathered together the sensations and responses to trying to find beauty in the modern city. His apparent guilt at witnessing poverty and deprivation serves to conjure up feelings

of melancholy both in himself, and in the city by analogy, in a similar way to Claude Lévi-Strauss's sensing of 'tristesse' in tropical cities. In witnessing an old clown on the streets of Paris he described how he saw him 'bent, decrepit, the ruin of a man, leaning against one of the posts of his cabin; a cabin more miserable than that of the lowest savage, and in which two candle ends, guttering and smoking, lighted only too well its penury.'²³ This sight affected Baudelaire with its intense melancholy, its spleen, and he grappled with his feelings of pity and sudden depression.

Spleen's resonance with the physiology of bile is echoed in EM Cioran's notion of *amertume* or 'gall', which offers a further French inflection of melancholy. Cioran originated from Romania, but spent much of his writing life in Paris, writing in French. His book of aphorisms, *Sylogismes d'Amertume* is translated by Richard Howard as *All Gall is Divided*, drawing the connection between the spleen and gall, both sites of the production and storage of bile, and their connections to melancholy and bitterness. And like Baudelaire's *Spleen de Paris*, Cioran's *Sylogismes d'Amertume* is a series of short, intense, meditations on melancholy and the allied themes of love, death, religion.

German

The melancholy sense of detachment from the world, the angst of disempowerment, is embodied in the German *Weltschmerz*. This agony of existence (*Welt* = world, *schmerz* = pain) is a pessimistic perspective on the evils of the world. The compound word was constructed by Ger-

man novelist Jean Paul, in his novel *Titan* (1800–1803), to describe the unrequited love of the character Roquairol. This initial version of *Weltschmerz* was limited to this personal horizon, but its diffusion across Europe saw its melancholic meaning expand to the more generally pervasive existential gloom. Braun describes it in his treatise on the topic as ‘the poetic expression of an abnormal sensitiveness of the feelings to the moral and physical evils and misery of existence – a condition which may or may not be based upon a reasoned conviction that the sum of human misery is greater than the sum of human happiness. It is usually characterised also by a certain lack of will-energy, a sort of sentimental yielding to these painful emotions.’²⁴

The term for longing in German is *Sehnsucht*, combining a typically paradoxical melancholy mix of nostalgia and desire. CS Lewis adopted the word to express a form of spiritual longing throughout his life, from the works of Plato to a longing for God. The conundrum of *Sehnsucht* is further confounded as Lewis uses it synonymously with joy.

Wehmut and *Schwermut* are also used to convey melancholy, with the former being a lighter form and the latter darker, more aligned with the sense of depression. *Schwermut* has a specific weight to it, with part of the word, *Schwer*, meaning ‘heavy’. German aesthetic theorist Theodor Adorno used *Schwermut* rather than *Melancholie* to refer to melancholic Dane, Søren Kierkegaard, in order to express the utter despair in his writings.

Japanese

The Japanese language has numerous words associated with melancholy. Expressing the subtle nuances within the complexity of melancholy, the words range through subjective qualities of the self, to the melancholy which is embedded in objects. Hagiwara Sakutorō, a poet from the early twentieth century, infused his poetry with many senses of melancholy. He used *kanashii* in the feeling of the sadness of things, as in his poem *Kanashii enkei*, ‘Sad Vista’, which describes ‘the crowds of factory workers who spill out onto the pavements of the city at sunset, their hats casting shadows which spread out to encompass the whole city in a single dark pall’.²⁵ The title of his anthology *Aoneko* (1923) is translated as ‘Blue Cat’ and, in a late edition of the book, Sakutorō wrote about how that ‘blue’ was very much associated with the sense of melancholy. He also explained that, during this time of writing, he was deeply affected by Schopenhauer, and *Aoneko* is ‘infused with a natural undercurrent of world weariness, the pessimistic, idle *ennui* which is the essence of his philosophy of denial of the will, or like the Hinayana Buddhist tenet of enlightenment through annihilation’.²⁶ In the *Aoneko*, or ‘Blue Cat’, anthology the word *yūutsu* is often used, to mean melancholy, as opposed to *kodoku* meaning solitude, loneliness or isolation, as used in his earlier anthology, *Tsuku ni hoeru* ‘Howling at the Moon’ (1917).

The melancholy of nostalgia is approximated in *natsukashii*, a word which doesn’t have a direct parallel in English, but circles around sentimentality, longing for the past, and the recollection of good memories. *Natsukashii* is made up of ‘vivid memories, the smell and taste of brief

moments in the past such as are invoked by Marcel Proust's description of savoring a little oval 'Madeleine' Madeira cake...'²⁷

The melancholy that is within objects and places, what might be considered the 'tears of things', is captured in the Japanese *wabi sabi*, which amplifies the significance of time passing and the pathos that this evokes. Andrew Juniper describes how *wabi sabi* 'is an expression of the beauty that lies in the brief transition between the coming and going of life, both the joy and melancholy that make up our life as humans.'²⁸ Inherent in this melancholic time-centredness is the inexplicable beauty of the weathered and the withered, a faded flower, the patina on a stone, a well-worn kitchen bowl.

The pathos that is implanted in things is also expressed in *mono no aware*, closely related to *wabi sabi*, and a Japanese version of *lacrimae rerum*. One of the core themes of *mono no aware* is serenity in the face of impermanence. Rather than the recognition that time passing and things disappearing bring an existential anguish, it is embodied as an aesthetic pleasure. The significance of Japanese rituals – the cherry blossom festival and the tea ceremony – lies within the melancholy of *mono no aware*, of the engaging with the poignant impressions made by fleeting, momentary experiences. Two key literary works express the idea of *mono no aware*: the eleventh century *The Tale of Genji*, sometimes called the world's first novel, and *The Tale of Heiki*, written by Kakuichi, a blind monk, in 1731. The lamentation of *mono no aware* is captured in the opening lines of *The Tale of Heiki*:

The sound of the Gion Shōja bells echoes the imperma-

nence of all things; the color of the *śāla* flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last; they are as dust before the wind.²⁹

Portuguese

Saudade is a vague, nostalgic melancholy. It is yet another term which is elusive and slippery, resonating strongly with melancholy. In the Portuguese dictionary written by lexicographer Antonio Houaiss, *saudade* is defined as ‘melancólico de incompletude’³⁰ or a ‘melancholy of incompleteness’. The definition extends this to a situation of deprivation, as in the loss of someone or something, or the lack of certain experiences. Such an absence can become ‘the most profound presence in one’s life’, and it is a ‘state of being, rather than merely a sentiment’.³¹

Fifteenth-century chronicler Duarte Nunes de Leão said that, ‘*Saudade* is the memory of something or the desire for something’, as opposed to the less expansive definition of it by the romantic poet Almeida Garret as ‘bitter pleasure’ or ‘pain and happiness’.³² *Saudade* was the central theme of the Portuguese literary movement called *saudosismo* which was led by poet Teixeira de Pascoaes, and included the writer Fernando Pessoa. Because of *saudade*’s particularly Portuguese flavour, the *saudosismo* movement saw it as central to the development of a local style of writing, and it became emblematic of the renaissance of Portuguese culture. Pascoaes called it ‘the very spiritual blood of the race’.³³ The spirit of *saudade* infuses Pessoa’s poetry, exemplified in the lines, ‘I love everything that was / Everything that no longer is...’, and, in another poem,

‘It’s neither happiness nor pain this pain that makes me happy.’³⁴

This complex of longing and sadness is expressed in the Portuguese tradition of the *fado*, the song of fate. One dimension of the *fado* is the intensification of the nostalgia of being away from home, sung by sailors or peasants on their long journeys, to ‘express their *saudades* and their longing to return’.³⁵ Pinto de Carvalho describes how in the *fado*:

Both words and music reflect the abrupt turns of fickle Fortune, the evil destiny of the unfortunate, the irony of fate, the piercing pangs of love, the poignancy of absence or despair, the profound sobs of discouragement, the sorrows of *saudade*, the caprices of the heart, and those ineffable moments when the souls of lovers descend to their lips and, before flying back on high, hover for an instant in a sweet embrace.³⁶

Nick Cave finds *saudade* in the modern love song: ‘We all experience within us what the Portuguese call *saudade*, which translates as an inexplicable longing, an unnamed and enigmatic yearning of the soul and it is this feeling that lives in the realms of imagination and inspiration and is the breeding ground for the sad song, for the love song.’³⁷

Russian

The emotional timbre of Russian melancholic yearning is embodied in *toska*, an untranslatable emotion, with resonances with the Portuguese *saudade*. Ideas of language,

culture and identity are intertwined, with the various melancholic inflections reflecting the contexts of cultural history and topography. For *toska*, this means an echo of the vast Russian geography, as well as an encapsulation of *duša*, the Russian soul.

Toska combines three dimensions – fear, melancholy/nostalgia, and boredom/revulsion. These three elements can be present in different amounts to make up the whole, such that *toska* in itself is an intricate and constantly metamorphosing emotional complex. The relationship of *toska* to other similar terms in the Russian language also lends further colourings to the place of melancholy within the psyche. It has a connection with *tošno*, which relates the feeling of melancholy as a metaphysical sickness – an unease of the soul – to a feeling of physical sickness.

In the Romantic era of Russian literature, *toska* is a central theme, encapsulating the desire for yearning. It suffuses the pages of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and, in his translation of this novel-in-verse, Vladimir Nabokov describes *toska* in a note as 'a generic term for a feeling of physical or metaphysical dissatisfaction, a sense of longing, a dull anguish, a preying misery, a gnawing mental ache'.³⁸ Nabokov's explanation of *toska* traces the complex terrain of this emotion, contradictory, untranslatable:

No single word in English renders all the shades of *toska*. At its deepest and most painful it is a sensation of great spiritual anguish, often without any specific cause. At less morbid levels it is a dull ache of the soul, a longing for nothing to long for, a sick pining, a vague restlessness, mental throes, yearning. In particular cases it may be the desire for somebody or something spe-

cific, nostalgia, lovesickness. At the lowest level it grades into ennui, boredom ...³⁹

During Soviet times the danger of melancholic introspection became political, and *toska* was marginalised. It was permissible to express melancholic thoughts, but not if they implicated the political regime. Instead, politically correct emotions, collective happiness and gaiety for example, were to be expressed. The pressure to be happy brought about its own *toska*, and grief boiled under the surface. It was sometimes expressed in a 'ritual lament',⁴⁰ an autobiographical statement of the sorrows that are borne in life. Melancholy, though, is bound up with less-specific grief, rather than sadness-with-a-cause. And it is within *toska* that this amorphous mourning is located.

Another term used by Pushkin in *Eugene Onegin* is *skushno*, a soft, Muscovite pronunciation of *skuchno*. Nabokov glosses this as 'I'm dull' or 'I am ennuied', identifying it as a sort of melancholic boredom.⁴¹ In his story 'Skushno', Gregor von Rezzori, a writer fluent in many languages including Russian and English, describes it as a word that is difficult to translate. He offers, 'it means more than dreary boredom: a spiritual void that sucks you in like a vague but intensely urgent longing.'⁴² Von Rezzori limns *skushno* via an image of landscape, striving to capture this elusive term:

In the sunshine-basking seasons, the landscape with its vast horizon was as beautiful as a park; under a wintry sky, aswarm with crows, it offered only melancholy leagues of farmland, plowed up into black clods; far away, beyond the snowy strips that marked the hollows

in the rolling terrain, the black lines of woodlands stretched all the way to the mountains, twilight blue and barely visible at the milk-glass edge of the sky dome. It was just such a day, in late winter, that corresponded best to my mood of *skushno*.⁴³

Boredom is also conveyed in the word *unynie*, another Russian term allied with melancholy. In his study of the writings of Gogol, Christopher Putney notes how *acedia*, the melancholy of boredom, is translated as *unynie*.⁴⁴ This word means ‘despondency’ and Anna Wierzbicka highlights how it lacks the yearning and longing of *toska*, and is more like the black hole of melancholy – depression.⁴⁵

Spanish

The brooding and dark mood of Spanish music, its ‘shadowy and palpitating’ quality is located in the particular melancholy called *duende*. The elusiveness of melancholy is one of *duende*’s significant characteristics, a quality that was defined not in Spanish, but by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in searching for words to describe Paganini’s poignancy: ‘A mysterious power which everyone senses and no philosopher explains.’⁴⁶ This definition became embedded within the idea of *duende* in the famous essay by Spanish poet, Federico García Lorca, *Play and Theory of the Duende*. Lorca connected *duende* directly with death: ‘the *duende* does not come unless he sees that death is possible. The *duende* must know beforehand that he can serenade death’s house and rock those branches we all wear, branches that do not have, will never have, any consolation.’⁴⁷

Nick Cave finds the idea of the *duende* persists in

certain kinds of music, and is something that requires a particular attention: ‘Sadness or *duende* needs space to breathe.’ It is particularly connected to the melancholy of love, and, ‘All love songs must contain *duende*. For the love song is never truly happy. It must first embrace the potential for pain.’⁴⁸

Turkish

Orhan Pamuk’s novel *Istanbul* is a remarkable, extended meditation on the city and, in particular, its melancholy or *hüzün*. As a form of collective melancholy, the ‘black mood [felt] by millions of people together’, *hüzün* engulfs the entire ancient city, imparting a particular colouring, mood, and zeitgeist. Pamuk enumerates the qualities of *hüzün* characterised in particular events or scenes in a sequence that runs to some 5½ pages, to include such moments as ‘the evenings when the sun sets early’; ‘the old Bosphorus ferries moored to deserted stations in the middle of winter, where sleepy sailors scrub the decks, a pail in their hands and one eye on the black-and-white television in the distance’; ‘the clock towers no one ever notices’; and ‘the fruits, vegetables, garbage and plastic bags and wastepaper, empty sacks, boxes and chests strewn across abandoned street markets on a winter evening’.⁴⁹ Pamuk also identifies the particular cultural ethos of *hüzün*, that, ‘Istanbul does not carry its *hüzün*, as “an illness for which there is a cure” or an “unbidden pain from which we need to be delivered”; it carries its *hüzün* by choice, and with honour.’

Hüzün has a visual quality, it is ‘black and white’ – not in the sense of a frankness, but of a reduced tonal range

evocative of the nostalgia that accompanies photography and film from the pre-colour era, that vision of the past having been monochromatic. This cultural suffusion of melancholy is very different from the idea of a personal psychic state – of depression as such. Pamuk describes how the setting of the city itself is *hüzün*, as though the city has a psychic state, and it comes through in the ‘black-and-white’ Bosphorus, and in the city’s ruins.

Notes

1. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p.247.
2. See for example Jean Harkins and Anna Wierzbicka (eds), *Emotions in crosslinguistic perspective*.
3. Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva*, p.ix.
4. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, p.3.
5. Zhengdao Ye, ‘An inquiry into sadness in Chinese’, p.370.
6. Stephen Owens’ translation cited in *ibid*, p.379.
7. *ibid*, p.384.
8. *ibid*, p.386.
9. Roy Porter, ‘Introduction’ in George Cheyne, *The English Malady*, p.xi.
10. In *ibid*.
11. Robert Burton, *An Anatomy of Melancholy*, p.25.
12. In Oswald Doughty, ‘The English Malady of the Eighteenth Century’, p.265.
13. *ibid*, p.267.
14. Antti Isokangas, ‘Finnish Tango: Once a Fad, the Dance is now a Tradition’, p.78.
15. Richard Wilkins, ‘Cultural Frames: Loci of intercultural communication asynchrony in a CBS 60 Minutes news segment’, p.243.

16. Vesa Honkonen, *A letter for Steven Holl to explain the behaviour of Finnish people*.
17. Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Boredom*, p.19.
18. Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, p.35.
19. See Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*.
20. Françoise Sagan, *Bonjour Tristesse*, p.3.
21. Translators' Note in Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, p.11.
22. Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*.
23. Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*, p.26.
24. Wilhelm Alfred Braun, *Types of Weltschmerz in German Poetry*, p.1.
25. Hagiwara Sakutorō in Hugh Clark (2003) 'Sakutorō and the City', p.144.
26. *ibid*, p.149.
27. Ingrid Fritsch, 'Chindonya Today: Japanese Street Performers in Commercial Advertising', p.65.
28. Andrew Juniper, *Wabi-Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence*, p.1.
29. Kakuichi, *The Tale of the Heiki*, p.23.
30. Antonio Houaiss, *Dicionario Houaiss da lingua portuguesa*.
31. Katherine Vaz, *Saudade*.
32. Darlene J Sadlier, *An Introduction to Fernando Pessoa: Modernism and the Paradoxes of Authorship*, p.139.
33. Maria Irene Ramalho, Sousa Santos, Irene Ramalho Santos, *Atlantic Poets: Fernando Pessoa's Turn in Anglo-American Modernism*, p.288.
34. *ibid*, p.139-140.
35. Ventura de Abrantes in Rodney Gallop, 'The Fado (The Portuguese Song of Fate)', p.203.
36. Pinto de Carvalho in *ibid*, p.200.
37. Nick Cave, *The Secret Life of the Love Song; The Flesh made Word*.
38. Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, Volume 2 of 4, p.337.
39. *ibid*, volume 1 of 4, p.141.
40. Golfo Alexopoulos cited in Shelia Fitzpatrick, 'Happiness and *Toska*: An Essay in the History of Emotions in Pre-war Soviet Russia', p.365.
41. Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, volume 2 of 4, p.63.
42. Gregor von Rezzori, *Memoirs of an anti-Semite*, p.1.

43. *ibid*, p.3.
44. Christopher R Putney, 'Acedia and the *Daemonium Meridianum* in Nikolaj Gogol's 'Povest' o tom, kak possorilsja Ivan Ivanovičs Ivanom Nikiforovičem', p.237.
45. Anna Wierzbicka, *Emotions Across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals*, p.308, n.3.
46. Federico García Lorca, *In Search of Duende*, p.49.
47. *Ibid*, p.58.
48. Nick Cave, *The Secret Life of the Love Song; The Flesh made Word*.
49. Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, pp.84-89.

A 'Blue' Guide: Melancholy in
Cinema, Art, Literature, Music,
Architecture and Landscape



Laurence Aberhart, *Moreporks (Bird Skins Room #2)*,
Taranaki St, Wellington, 3 October 1995

A 'Blue' Guide: Melancholy in Cinema, Art, Literature, Music, Architecture and Landscape

*Melancholy hates haste and floats in silence. It must be handled
with care.* Nick Cave, *The Love Song*¹

There is, art historian Jean Clair suggests, a whole theatre of melancholy, an ideal 'museum' of melancholy, and an ideal picture gallery of melancholy, which would include works 'from Albrecht Dürer to Edvard Munch, from Domenico Fetti to Giorgio de Chirico', and an imagined sculpture museum of melancholy which would display works from 'ancient steles with their grief-stricken mourners, hands tucked under arm-pits, down to Rodin's *Thinker*, sunk in his black thoughts'.² Clair's vision of an ideal picture and sculpture gallery was recently realised in his curation of the exhibition, *Mélancolie: Génie et Folie en Occident* ('Melancholy: Genius and Madness in the West'), staged at the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais in Paris, and then in the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, in late 2005 and 2006.

Beyond Jean Clair's observations, and further to the exhibition, there is also to be imagined perhaps, an ideal film festival of melancholy, a library of melancholy literature, a playlist of melancholy music, and a guidebook of architecture and landscapes which epitomise the qualities of melancholy. This final chapter of the *Field Guide* pro-

vides an overview of some of the manifestations of melancholy within the domain of creative expression. The works here constitute a desiderata of melancholy, a litany of the desired elements of such a state, a mood, a guide to the places of the blues.

The 'Blue Guide' cannot possibly provide an exhaustive list of all things melancholy, but seeks to point to things, particularly things which are outside the margins, and to illuminate them so that the various manifestations of the family resemblance might be recognised. The aspiration of the 'Blue Guide' is to open up a particular way of seeing and appreciating this vital aspect of the human condition, ways to experience the delicious elusiveness of melancholy.

A Film Festival of Melancholy

Reflecting on what might be included in a film festival of melancholy brings forth waves of different melancholic expressions. Within the medium of film, melancholy might be captured in the characters, the storyline, or the evocation of atmosphere and mood through the use of settings or particular tonality and sound. Batman, in his early incarnation, epitomises the archetypal melancholic character, as the dark and seemingly depressive hero, a modern-day Shakespearean tragic figure.

Films which use the impression of melancholy within the medium itself include the works of Bill Morrison and James Elaine. Morrison works with old film which has decayed, and in his short film *Light is Calling* (2004) a scene from the 1926 film *The Bells* is reprinted and set to a soundtrack by composer Michael Gordon. The disinte-

gration of the old film becomes a thing of beauty and fascination, providing an abstract flux of blobs and forms, reminiscent of the surrealists' techniques of decalcomania and frottage. In the longer 2002 film, *Decasia*, its title a play on the words 'decay' and 'fantasia', Morrison used fragments of film found in the Fox Movietone Newsfilm Library in South California. The collaboration with composer Michael Gordon produced a haunting, pulsing, seething film, where the holes and flaws of the decomposing celluloid seemed almost like watching decay in action. The images writhe and flicker on the screen, with the various melting and fading surfaces overlaid over the top of sometimes barely recognisable scenes from the past. Images pulsate – whirling dervishes, a serene geisha, a boxer – and over it all the strange spectre of the bubbling emulsion, a cinematic ectoplasm which is in synchronicity with the haunting soundtrack. While there is no story to *Decasia*, there is the frame of the great melancholic narrative of modernity underscoring the sequence, with the headings as simple intertitles, 'Creation', 'Civilization', 'Conundrum' and 'Disintegration and Rebirth'.

James Elaine also uses old film but, in his case, he works with film stock that is itself from another era, rather than with exposed film footage in a state of decay. He used old Super 8 film to make the film *Melancholia* (2004) which was shot at the World's Fairgrounds in Flushing Meadows, Queens, New York. The soundtrack of the hauntingly repetitive piano composition by William Basinski, *The Saddest Melody Ever Heard*³ is again critical to the melancholy effect of the film.

The reduction of technique is also a key to the melancholy ambience of the films *London* (1992) and *Robinson*

in Space (1997) by Patrick Keiller. Both films are shot almost wholly without moving shots. Instead, they are composed of sequences of static camera shots – where the camera is set in one place and records the scene from that point, the lingering take sometimes devoid of human content. The movement of the River Thames, the customers in a shopping mall, London red buses, all filmed with an almost deadening slow pace. Nothing happens, in a conventional filmic sense. There is no denouement, no punch line. Only relentless tedium, the *ennui* of existence; melancholy alienation, loss, longing. The ghosts of previous visitors to the city are invoked – Baudelaire, Rimbaud – enhancing the melancholy atmosphere. In Keiller's films the decay is in the landscape itself, in the city fabric, the tragic spectacle of Thatcherite Britain, the IRA bombings, portrayed via various *mise-en-scènes*. The counterpoint to the film is not the melancholy music scores like those of Gordon or Basinski, but the incredibly weighty voice of narrator Paul Scofield. Only one voice is heard during both films, and it is Scofield's: deep, gravelly, and inflected with the gravitas of melancholy, the tired voice of *Weltschmerz*. The pain of the world, of 1990s Britain, is conveyed in the slowly delivered words, the narration of a world gone awry.

The tedium of *Weltschmerz* also permeates the films of Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni. In films like *L'avventura* (*The Adventure*, 1960) and *Il deserto rosso* (*The Red Desert*, 1964) repetition and a sense of hollowness represent the characters' lives of *ennui* or *noia*. The characters' melancholy comes from the paradox of affluence, of an easy life with too much time on their hands, and Antonioni, the 'poet of *ennui*', mines the gap between

contentment and nihilism. *The Red Desert* was set in the industrial zone of Ravenna, but Antonioni said he was not condemning the inhuman industrial world; instead he 'wanted to translate the poetry of that world, in which even factories can be beautiful ... The neurosis I sought to describe in *Red Desert* is above all a matter of adjusting.'⁴

Swedish director Ingmar Bergman also explores the *ennui* of contemporary existence in the settings and characterisations of his films. In *From the Life of the Marionettes* (1980), the characters Peter and Katarina discuss the very nature of *ennui* itself. Katarina firstly says that she does not even know what *ennui* is, and Peter responds, 'I feel *ennui*, yes. And a typical component of *ennui* is that you feel an insurmountable *ennui* in explaining how *ennui* works.'⁵ Beyond the melancholy of *ennui* there is a dark angst which characterises the Swedish culture, and permeates Bergman's films. A combination of a national character of detachment, against the strongly seasonal light, with the long white nights of summer and the enduring darkness of winter, evokes a particularly melancholy *genius loci*, a spirit of the place.

Bergman's films *Wild Strawberries* (1957) and *Shame* (1968) are pervaded with a sense of sorrow, of things passing, of the end of summer and the plunge into autumn, with the winter lying in wait beyond. In *Wild Strawberries*, the main character, Isak, is approaching death, and recalling his life, in day dreams, memories, a movement towards darkness. The final scene of *Shame* conveys a fatalistic relationship with the world, as the two characters, Jan and Eva, hold one another, recalling moments from the past. The final passage of Bergman's script reads: 'On the sev-

enth day a storm blows up, there is a heavy rain. The survivors slake their thirst with the poisoned water. [The film ends].⁶ The bleak relationship with mortality is the central theme of *Winter Light* (1963), with the priest, Tomas, in a state of turmoil over his failing faith. His counselling of one of his parishioners, Adam Persson, ends catastrophically when Tomas's doubting is transferred to the already morose Persson, whose nihilism stems from reading about the Chinese having an atom bomb, and about their growing sense of hatred. Tomas's bleak counsel only adds to Persson's predicament, culminating in his suicide. Tomas rails against 'God's silence', and expresses the sense of religious melancholy, of a god who leaves him lonely and abandoned.

Mortality, religion and death were explored to their extremes in *The Seventh Seal* (1957). The contingency of life was symbolically expressed in the chess game which the knight, Antonius Block, played against Death, literally playing for his life. Bergman's screenplay evokes the sense of alienation and abandonment, a type of *deus absconditus*, that is felt by the knight and colours the film: 'The knight returns to the beach and falls on his knees. With his eyes closed and brow furrowed, he says his morning prayers. His hands are clenched together and his lips form the words silently. His face is sad and bitter. He opens his eyes and stares directly into the morning sun which wallows up from the misty sea like some bloated, dying fish. The sky is gray and immobile, a dome of lead. A cloud hangs mute and dark over the western horizon. High up, barely visible, a seagull floats on motionless wings.'⁷

The melancholy pervading the films of Russian direc-

tors Andrei Tarkovsky and Alexander Sukurov, and Greek director Theo Angelopoulos, is a poetic, nostalgic imagery from timeless places. Tarkovsky's haunting works are not dependent on narrative for their melancholy, but on the emotional content of the imagery. In his films *Nostalghia* (1983) and *Mirror* (1975) the melancholy of memory suffuses the imagery, with fragments of houses, landscapes in afternoon light, portrayed as misty recollections. Moments of surrealistic reverie, rain, dripping water, the overturned apple cart in *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), the strange water-logged landscape of *Stalker* (1979). In *The Sacrifice* (1986), *Mirror* and *Solaris* (1972), a figure levitates, defying our connection with the physical present. Tarkovsky explained the connections between his own nostalgia and that which is present in *Nostalghia*, as 'a complex sentiment, one that mixes the love for your homeland and the melancholy that arises from being far away ... I wanted the film to be about the fatal attachment of Russians to their national roots, their past, their culture, their native places, their families and friends.'⁸ Alexander Sokurov's remarkable film *Russian Ark* (2002) was filmed in a single take, moving through the halls and courtyards of St Petersburg's Hermitage museum. As an historic narrative it also embodies this melancholic connection between Russians and their soil, the sense of *toska*.

Angelopoulos's first film *Reconstruction* (1970) explored the relationship between Greeks and their landscape. The film was based on a real village and conveyed the desolation occurring as part of the depopulation of the villages in the Greek countryside during the mid-twentieth century. The themes of loss and displacement also appear in his later film *The Weeping Meadow* (2004), a Greek tragedy,

as the refugees from Odessa make their way to New Odessa. As in the films of Tarkovsky, the images of rain and water-soaked landscapes evoke the intense nostalgia of the time. A floating funeral moves across a watery landscape, black flags tied to the boats, a massive flood engulfs the refugees' village. The buildings are left abandoned, derelict skeletons.

A Melancholy Art Exhibition

Melancholy in art is an enormous topic, with an overwhelming array of possible means to tackle it – chronologically, thematically, typologically, or even forensically. This latter approach could be deployed, metaphorically speaking, as an examination of images to discern their melancholic content. It could be possible to identify the evidence of melancholy in such a way, finding the clues within works. Dogs, bats and owls, for example, are bearers of melancholic content. The dog of Dürer's *Melencolia I* is a 'fellow sufferer', and the connection is made back to the dog hieroglyph of the Egyptian alphabet, which signified spleen. The dog is considered 'more gifted and sensitive than other beasts, has a very serious nature and can fall a victim to madness, and like deep thinkers is inclined to be always on the hunt, smelling things out, and sticking to them'.⁹ Bats and owls appear at twilight, and are also connected with melancholy, and the frontispiece to Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* includes a number of such creatures. On the other hand, a thematic exploration offers the opportunity to point out some family resemblances, and the 'Blue Guide' plots three particular dimensions of melancholy in art, one related to technique

(low-tech), one to content (memory works), and one to subject matter (the empty and lonely).

Low-tech Photography

Photographs are inherently melancholy. They immediately evoke the past, things lost, memories, that which is 'dead' already, and Roland Barthes calls this 'the melancholy of Photography itself'.¹⁰ Infused with the ache of absence, photographs are portals to fugitive moments, as in filmmaker Chris Marker's declaration, 'I claim, for the image, the humility and powers of a madeleine.'¹¹ Recalling Marcel Proust's iconic mnemonic moment in *Remembrance of Things Past*, where the small cake triggers childhood memories, Marker relates photography to the melancholy of memory, the unattainable presences of the past.

Old photographs in particular seem steeped in melancholy, their distance from the viewer more pronounced, perhaps faded, sepia-toned, other-worldly. The connection of melancholy and memory in photography represents the presence of 'aura', something that Walter Benjamin argued was lost when photographs moved from having value as part of the 'cult of remembrance' to succumbing to their 'exhibition value'. Aura inheres within the connectivity to intimacy, to the sense of an original, authentic presence, and Benjamin believes, 'It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty.'¹²

The shift towards technology, and mass appreciation of art, transforms the quality of the image, and its distance from the receiver. With this goes the loss of its aura. There is a legacy of this loss in contemporary photography, a striving to reclaim that melancholic content, and this is often through a resistance to the available technology. As a contrast, the photographs aspire more to the rudimentary approach to photography which produces the kind of effects philosopher and art historian Hubert Damisch alludes to: 'It is no accident that the most *beautiful* photograph so far achieved is possibly the first image Nicéphore Niépce fixed in 1822, on the glass of the camera obscura – a fragile, threatened image, so close in organization, its granular texture, and its emergent aspect, to certain Seurats – an incomparable image which makes one dream of a photographic *substance* distinct from subject matter, and of an art in which light creates its own metaphor.'¹³

Niépce took his photograph with a 'camera obscura', literally a 'dark room', with an eight hour exposure. This pinhole camera technique is one of the means of bypassing technological precision, and used by photographers seeking an auratic content in their work. One particularly evocative set of images consists of those made by Volkmar Herre of Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Fleur de L'Air* project in Provence, France. The images Herre captured are achingly beautiful and evocative of a past golden age. Garden theorist John Dixon Hunt connects the process of taking the photographs in such a way, which requires a retardation of time, with the slowness that a garden represents – it is a place where time slides by slowly. He wrote, 'Simultaneously, and beyond the ineluctable quiddity or 'thingness'

of the rocks, trees and earth, the extraordinary light translates everything into praeternatural scenery.¹⁴

American-based Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto also works against the grain of contemporary photography to capture an auratic quality. Through technical adjustments of film speed, filters, and by using a wooden cabinet camera, Sugimoto is able to reproduce the conditions of early nineteenth-century photography. In his serenely beautiful seascape series, for example, Sugimoto used exposures of an hour and a half to capture the image. The photographs are otherworldly and, as suggested by the title of his 2006 exhibition at the Mori Art Gallery in Japan, the images evoke *The End of Time*. A further technique deployed by Sugimoto is to intentionally make the photographs out of focus. Through making the focal point twice the point of infinity, the images float within an imprecise time and space. Just recognisable in the architecture series are the iconic forms of the Eiffel Tower, the Guggenheim, the Empire State Building, Tadao Ando's Church of Light, and Le Corbusier's Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut.¹⁵

While Sugimoto returns to photography's origins to create the conditions for melancholy's capture, even recent technology is already gaining a nostalgic quality that also allows for an eschewing of technical precision. Invented in the late 1940s, Polaroid cameras became very popular during the 1960s and 1970s, with the unique feature of instantly printing their own photographs. The instantaneous feature of the Polaroid has now been superseded by digital cameras, and the technology rapidly moved into obsolescence, to the extent that in early 2008 Polaroid announced that the film for the cameras would

no longer be manufactured. The images taken with Polaroid cameras have an auratic quality in that each one is an original, rather than multiple prints from a negative, or prints that have been manipulated in a dark room, or more recently, digitally.

Filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky created a body of photography using a Polaroid camera. The blurb for the book *Instant Light: Tarkovsky Polaroids* describes how the images capture moments from his life, for example those in Russia which 'have the radiant melancholy of lengthening shadows and trees looming through mystical dawns near [his] country dacha...'¹⁶ The photographs in the book are remarkable transports of time and place, tracing the locations of film shoots, travels and domestic scenes. Screenwriter and companion of Tarkovsky, Tonino Guerra, wrote about one of the images which captures a moment in their travels through Italy, 'I remember when we entered the little church on the edge of the water-filled square, where the mist rising from the water gave a sense of distance to the landscape of ancient houses. The warm light that morning streamed through the dusty windows and came to rest on faded decorations on a wall. He surprised me sitting on a pew, as though I were just the right shadow to accentuate the caress of the sun beyond my dark body. These images leave with us a mysterious and poetic sensation, the melancholy of seeing things for the last time.'¹⁷

The disappearance of film for the Polaroid camera resonates with the work of British photographer Jacob Carter, who uses film stock which expired before 1970, utilising the unpredictable results as a means of bypassing technical precision. Disposable cameras are also very

low-tech approaches to photography, allowing the exactness of digital imaging to be suppressed in favour of other presences. In a series called *Do You Realise* (2006) New Zealand photographer Patrick Reynolds used a disposable camera to capture images of his family's annual holiday to the seaside. It was the first time his father hadn't been able to come along on the holiday, due to his ill health, and the images were partly to show to him when they returned to the city. His father died soon after the photographs were released, suffusing these images of poignant nostalgia with an even deeper melancholy. The series title echoed the lyrics from a song by The Flaming Lips, and Reynolds said, '...I realised that the lyrics... summed up what I was feeling and therefore what I was trying to express with the photographs: beauty but with a shadow.'¹⁸ Reynolds' images from the series are all black and white, vignetted, imperfect, and echo the qualities of his earlier monochromatic photographs in which '[v]ision is burdened with a corporeal melancholy'.¹⁹

Monochromatic photography can evoke a sense of time, nostalgia, a connection back to a pre-colour era, like Orhan Pamuk's description of Istanbul as 'black and white', as though the colour had drained out of the place itself. Laurence Aberhart uses black and white as a means of limning the world, so much so that one of his friends was surprised to look through his viewfinder one day and see the world was still in colour. Like the Bechers and Hiroshi Sugimoto, Aberhart uses an ancient, wooden, large format camera – a 100 year old 8 by 10 Korona view camera. In his images there is a sense of stillness, absence, pathos, 'deserted, empty. The people have gone,

leaving only the cryptic remains of their culture. His New Zealand is a ghost town.²⁰ Such a lingering contemplation of absence effects a powerful resistance to the culture of happiness, the carving of space for the shadowy, a withdrawal from the insistent cacophony of colour that intrudes on a meditative experience of the world. The images have the effect of obscuring rather than revealing, and they have aura. This is the antithesis of the actions of the ‘contemporary masses’, as Benjamin explained, of those who seek to ‘pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura’, to remove the uniqueness from everything. Benjamin’s definition of aura relates to a sense of distance, rather than a need to have everything close-up, revealed, exposed, as though ‘while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, that branch’.²¹ And in Aberhart’s photographs, the melancholy of aura is palpably there – in toning his photographs with gold in the early 1980s he achieved an effect ‘like a light you sometimes encounter during the ‘magic hour’ of dusk, when lowering sun softens shadows, activates the light-sensitive edges of your visual field, and makes each leaf, stone and thing look uncannily present.’²²

Memory works

Albums and archives also draw upon photography’s melancholy evocation of times gone by, of the pathos of the dead-already. Barthes’ vision of the photograph bringing back the dead, and Sontag’s conception of the photograph as a ‘death mask’ infuse this particular medium with

a profound mnemonic role. Even when the images encountered are not of familiar places or people, the photograph's memory task bestows upon it a melancholic dimension, such is the potent relationship between melancholy and memory.

The strange dislocation between viewing a photograph and not knowing the place or person pictured is echoed in the concept of 'found' photographs. Whether from newspapers, archives, or literally found on the street, 'found' photographs have a quality of anonymity, and their uniqueness further amplifies the aura of the original. When the 'found' photograph is used in a specific context, whether being exhibited in a gallery, or as an illustration in a book, it takes on the 'magic' of that setting in the way described by Marcel Duchamp in his development of the 'readymade'. German artist Gerhard Richter used an array of found photographs as the basis of his massive memory work, *Atlas* (1962–2006). Richter repainted the found photographs, in a photorealist manner, intensifying the effect of their anonymity. The photographs included 'found family snapshots and vacation photos, advertising and fashion photographs, news photos and celebrity shots by *paparazzi* (and even a photograph of the moon's surface from one of the Apollo missions).'²³ Richter organised his images onto panels within his *Atlas* project, sometimes illustrating a particular theme, such as landscapes or portraits. But other panels are more reminiscent of the arbitrary juxtapositions of objects in an archive, or images on a magazine page, or fragments of memory in the mind's eye.

Joseph Cornell juxtaposed texts, objects, photographs and ephemera, creating enigmatic mnemonic shadow-

boxes. The discarded objects of life are encapsulated within the boxes to create surreal *mise-en-scènes*, melancholy fragments of affective beauty. Mexican poet Octavio Paz wrote *Objects and Apparitions* for Cornell, describing these melancholic fragments:

Monuments to every moment,
refuse of every moment, used:
cages for infinity.

Marbles, buttons, thimbles, dice,
pins, stamps, and glass beads:
tales of the time.²⁴

Like the tradition of *vanitas*²⁵ paintings, these items seem to bear the weight of a symbolic dimension, yet they are elusive and mysterious in their meaning. In *A Dressing Room for Gille* (1939), Cornell placed a cut-out of a reproduction, probably from a magazine, of Watteau's melancholy clown, Pierrot, or the Gilles. The Pierrot figure stands, looking awkward and poignant, against an array of harlequin-patterned papers, in this small room, this box of shadows. Another assemblage, *Object (Roses des Vents)* (1942-1953), appears at first like a collection of memorabilia from voyages to exotic places. This immediately brings a sense of melancholy, as some of the most intensely poignant moments of life come at the end of travels to other places. Yet, Cornell's box is even more melancholy, since these fragments are from journeys never taken. The lid of the box has a map of the Great Australian Bight, no doubt a place about as far away as Cornell could imagine from his home on Utopia Park-

way in Queens, New York. The box itself is divided into a series of small compartments, covered by a panel which has twenty-one compasses, each with the needle pointing in a different direction. The compartments contain such curious things as an image of the moon, faraway peninsulas, enigmatic balls, and places marked with map pins. It is a memory work, a doleful diorama of an imagined exotic world.

Constructing memories from fragments, or infusing the works of the present with signs from the past, suspends them in time, gaining a sense of a frozen infinitude. The quality of aura bestows something arrestingly poignant upon them, and they can become melancholy emblems, touchstones. Anselm Kiefer's works draw in references, quotations, moments from the near and distant past. A group of sculptures, collectively titled *The Angel of History*, are vehicles for the past. On the wings of each of a group of fighter jets sculpted from lead are elements from the past: fragments of bygone eras, texts, teeth, hair, flowers and, most significantly, one of the jets carries an enigmatic polyhedron. It is the very same polyhedron that sits beside Albrecht Dürer's melancholy angel five centuries before, and the resonances echo: Kiefer's 1990-1 work is titled *Melancholia*.

It would be easy to fill an entire *Field Guide* with the melancholy qualities of Kiefer's work. There are layers upon layers of evocative referencing and formal manoeuvres which are suffused with the grey blackness of German melancholy – if not a German Autumn then perhaps a German Twilight. One of Kiefer's works is in fact titled *Abendland (Twilight of the West)*. The work is a built-up surface, a mixed media mélange of rubbing, paint and

applied textures. Hovering above the horizon is a rubbing of a manhole cover from a past era, here standing in for the sinking sun. Twin rail tracks move up the page, merging then separating. And the whole sits within the alchemical moment of twilight, melancholy's time. The title is a reference to Oswald Spengler's book from 1918, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, translated as *The Downfall* – or *The Decline – of the West*. Spengler's sense of *Untergang* was in terms of a transitional time, a sunset (*sonnenuntergang*), or indeed, a twilight – the melancholy of things imminently lost. Kiefer's work therefore carries layers of melancholy baggage – while *Abendland* is technically the 'Occident', *Abend* is 'evening', which adds further weight to the image.

The memory of things, of cultures and places that have disappeared, of buildings and people, persists as a form of residue. Dowsers use a term from physics for these metaphysical echoes. In physics, 'remanence' refers to the residual magnetism in a medium once the magnetic field is removed. In dowsing, this idea is transposed to the remaining energy, of a residual stain that is left as a trace, trails where things have been moved, etheric traces of absent presences. It is these etheric melancholy moments which are captured in the work of British sculptor Rachel Whiteread. Through sculpting negative space, by taking casts of the interior of rooms, or even entire houses, Whiteread creates a type of 'lost object', a ghost of space. Freud's essay on *Mourning and Melancholia* described how the ego cannibalises or ingests the lost object, and this scenario seems played out in Whiteread's room casts, where the room itself has gone, in some cases demolished, but appears to have been absorbed by the remaining form. In

the work *Ghost* (1990), Whiteread had the aim of 'mummifying the air in the room and making it solid', and created an 'afterlife' for an abandoned room from a terraced house in North London. Rachel Carley classified this particular kind of ghostly manifestation as a 'fetch', 'the ghost of someone living who is about to die'.²⁶

Across London, another artist Rachel divined the remanence of another abandoned room. *Rodinsky's Room* is a project by artist Rachel Lichtenstein, recorded in a book written together with one of London's experts on 'museums of melancholy', Iain Sinclair.²⁷ Lichtenstein became obsessed with the room of David Rodinsky, a Jew who had lived above a synagogue in London's East End and disappeared in the 1960s. An iconic photograph of the room taken by Danny Gralton had captured the abandoned state of the room in a serene image, 'composed like a Vermeer painting, with a tactile quality that made the viewer want to reach out and touch the wallpaper so seductively dripping off the walls, that made the viewer gaze in wonder at the headline on a newspaper on the table, ISRAEL REBORN, perfectly positioned in the foreground. The light from the weaver's windows falling on the book-laden table added to the feeling that one was looking at an old Dutch masterpiece.'²⁸ This *vanitas*-like image fuelled Lichtenstein's curiosity, and was the beginning of an exhaustive process of research and investigation to unravel the mystery of Rodinsky. Working as artist, curator, researcher, Lichtenstein's life became focussed on Rodinsky and the book, *Rodinsky's Room*, itself became a portable museum of melancholy.

Rooms with the wallpaper dripping off, and the enigma of absent presences, pervade the work of photog-

rapher Francesca Woodman. The melancholy ambience of the photographs by Woodman, mostly of herself, is intensified with the realisation that she committed suicide at the age of just 22, in 1981. In the photographs Woodman often appears to be merging into the house itself, as though camouflaging herself. Reminiscent of the relationship between psychasthenia and the wish to disappear, as in the melancholy of clowns (Chapter 2), Woodman's work exhibits her being-seen-not-wanting-to-be-seen. She was often in motion in her work, and consequently appears slightly blurred; the resonances with the idea of a 'ghost' are chilling.²⁹ Woodman's photographs have an intense sense of memory, and a palpable presaging of her death.

Memory is also written into Tacita Dean's artworks, capturing the poignancy of abandoned places. In her film *Sound Mirrors* (1999), Dean recorded the acoustic mirrors on England's south coast. These large concrete structures were the pre-radar method of detecting enemies approaching, as the concave form concentrated the incoming sound waves to allow for monitoring, like huge concrete ears. Once at the cutting edge of technology in the 1930s, the acoustic mirrors were quickly abandoned with the advent of radars, and fell into ruin. Dean's film captures both the visual spectacle of decay and the aural emanations of these eerie ears. The melancholy of recent ruins was also the subject of her films, *Delft Hydraulics* (1996), which featured a machine for measuring wave impact which had been superseded by subsequent technologies, and *Bubble House* (1999), depicting a futuristic looking house, reminiscent of a flying saucer, in a state of abandonment.

In *The Russian Ending* Dean created an invented inventory of events. The melancholic iconography included images of explosions, shipwrecks and funerals, constructed from a series of second-hand, 'found' images.³⁰ Dean's works constructed the past, and blurred the boundary between documentation and fabrication. The postcard realities were made into large photogravure prints which were then glossed as faux film stills or treatments. At this point they received a second melancholic inflection, since the reference to the Russian ending recalls the age when films were made with alternative endings for different countries. Films made for American audiences had to end happily, while for Russians, a culture steeped in *toska*, they needed to end tragically.

Emptiness and Loneliness

The individual depicted as isolated, abandoned, apart, is often set against a landscape of loneliness – on the seashore as in the case of Edvard Munch's *Melancholia* (1902), or beneath the vaulted vastness of the night sky as in Anselm Kiefer's *Sternenfall* or 'Falling Stars' (1995). Kiefer's work is a kind of self portrait, a figure lying prone on very rough ground, staring at stars. There is an echo of what Cioran described as the interior and exterior boundlessness of melancholy, that 'interior infinitude... whose borders are ungraspable'.³¹ And speaking of a later exhibition, also called 'Falling Stars', Kiefer explained, 'What you see is despair. I am completely desperate because I cannot explain why I am here. It's more than mourning, it's despair.'³²

Pitting the self against the vastness of landscape emphasises the interior and exterior infinity, and is a

compelling characteristic of the work of the nineteenth-century German Romantic painter, Caspar David Friedrich. Images like *The Abbey in the Oakwood* (1808–1810) are a litany of melancholy emblems, with Gothic ruins, dead trees, isolated figures, and a brooding, low-light sky. The bleak loneliness of the image runs through Friedrich's work, with the cool colour palette emphasising the ambience of isolation. Using colours like a ghostly blue, and green-black seas, the paintings have been described as having a similar mood to German Romantic musical compositions, an emphasis on the low strings. One of Friedrich's most palpably lonely images is *Monk by the Sea* (1808–1810), where the dark figure of a Capuchin monk stands at the edge of the sea, with a brooding sky above. Friedrich's contemporary, the German Romantic writer Kleist, conveys the lonely infinitude of this image: 'It is a wonderful thing to look out over an infinite watery waste, engulfed in an endless solitude at the seashore under a gloomy sky... the picture affects my heart, deeply moves me so that I become the Capuchin monk myself and the picture becomes the sand dune ... Nothing can be sadder and more uncomfortable than this position in the world. The only spark of life in the wide realm of death is the lonely central point in a lonely circle... like the apocalypse... boundlessness ... it has nothing but the frame for a foreground, it seems that when one looks at it it were as if one's eyelids were cut away...' ³³

Giorgio de Chirico's lonely melancholy is found in the city, where solitary figures, or more often only their shadows, glide through empty squares. The titles alone of de Chirico's works evoke the empty melancholy of the scene: *Melancholy and Mystery of a Street* (1914), *Nostalgia*

of the *Infinite* (1911), and *The Melancholy of Departure* (1916). De Chirico's renderings of the Italian squares were often warped, subtly, by multiple perspective points to create an uneasy space, while the lighting of the late afternoon, near dusk, brings long shadows. Psychoanalysis of de Chirico's paintings has suggested many references to the loss of his father in phallic presences, seen in smoke stacks, columns, trains and bananas. This sense of loss, and its perpetuation, is quintessential Freudian melancholy, in distinction from mourning, a means of absorbing the loss and feeding off it. The images have also been diagnosed as being symptomatic of intestinal disorders,³⁴ migraine or epilepsy.³⁵ Notably these complaints are all associated with melancholia.

American painter Edward Hopper also excavated urban loneliness in paintings often populated by only one person, empty places, images of loss. Throughout his body of work Hopper's images are filled with loneliness, at the times of day which are most melancholy, the late afternoon with low glancing light, twilight, or night scenes lit to emphasise the sense of isolation. His image *Nighthawks* (1942) depicts four people in an American diner, in the dead of night. Each of the four is completely absorbed in their own introspection, and although they are physically present, there is instead an absent, empty feeling. The light spills out of the diner, a cool, unforgiving light. Basing the image on his own Manhattan neighbourhood, Hopper described it as 'painting the loneliness of a large city'.³⁶

The emptiness of industrial areas, the wrecks and ruins, suggest a particular kind of melancholy, captured in the work of the German photographers, Bernd and Hiller Becher, and the Canadian, Edward Burtynsky. The Bech-

ers pioneered the detached and stark photography of industrial buildings, their black and white images of the skeletal forms recording the structures as enigmatic icons of a passing age. Their photography has covered 50 years in the German industrial district, and occasionally further afield.³⁷ Their books, with titles including *Water Towers* (1988), *Gas Tanks* (1993), *Grain Elevators* (2006), and *Cooling Towers* (2006), suggest that species of melancholy which is characterised by the collector: the obsession with endless documentation, repetition.

Along the way Bernd Becher taught at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, where his students included Candida Höfer, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, and Thomas Struth, all of whom have continued to excavate melancholy from the everyday. Capturing the presence of absence, Höfer photographs places which are usually connected with intense human activity – the Louvre, libraries, factories – at times when they are empty.³⁸ Gursky's work amplifies the tedium of repetition in the everyday, evoking that Sisyphean species of melancholy, the ache of eternal recurrence. Vast facades of identical windows, views of cities, of the stock-market, in which the melancholy sublimity is a culmination of many small elements combined.³⁹ The detached techniques of surveillance, as practised by the police during the German Autumn, inform the work of Thomas Ruff, including night shots of abandoned sites which look like 'crime scenes'.⁴⁰ Struth has also focused on empty streets, views of the most ordinary, regular and tedious parts of the urban fabric. As Guy Tosatto asks, 'Why these common buildings, these dull streets, these insignificant views? The question immediately gives way to an insistent melancholy, the melancholy associated with these

familiar places whose strangeness and solitude are suddenly brought to light.⁴¹

Like the presaging of a death, Edward Burtynsky recorded the preparations for the flooding of the Three Gorges in China, in what Carol Diehl called a 'photographic elegy'.⁴² The poignant scenes of the cultural layer of the landscape being removed, and the realisation of what is imminent, are captured with an eerie fascination. Images of the impacts of mining, as seen in the devastated forest amidst uranium tailings in Elliot Lake, Ontario (1995), present a starkly poignant view of the landscape. Even in these sites of devastation, Burtynsky finds beauty, and this is the particular paradox of melancholy. Recalling the words of Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Baudelaire, both of whom found beauty in sorrow and death (see Chapter 1), the landscapes of Burtynsky's mines, quarries, and vast industrial infrastructure, assume this contradictory perception of beauty. His *Shipbreaking #8, Chittagong, Bangkok*, (2000)⁴³, for example, captures the scene of a watery landscape, with ruin-like elements. In the middle of it all, and barely discernible, are the figures of the labourers carrying out the dangerous task of breaking up the ships for scrap. The spectre of the 'heartless picturesque' looms in these images, these are the landscapes of 'heroin chic', the images which pose the moral question of finding beauty in landscapes that are built on suffering.

A Library of Melancholy Literature

As with any of the domains within this 'Blue Guide', the library of melancholy literature could fill a book on its own. The mind wanders first to the many icons of melan-

choly writing in the tradition of Romanticism and its allies, Goethe's *Werther*⁴⁴ Chateaubriand's *René*⁴⁵, and Pushkin's *Onegin*⁴⁶, are all exemplary melancholy characters. The laments of Milton's *Il Penseroso* (1631), Coleridge's *The Nightingale* (1798) and Keats's *Ode on Melancholy* (1819), all converse with the melancholy of nature, from Milton's 'arched walks of twilight groves, / And shadows brown that Sylvan loves' to Coleridge's 'most melancholy bird', and Keats's 'sovrán shrine of Veil'd Melancholy'. Melancholy in nature is experienced as an ultimate destination in James Beattie's *The Triumph of Melancholy* (1760), where after wandering through many affective states, the traveller yields at last to melancholy itself: 'Long I have laboured to elude thy sway! / But 'tis enough, for I resist no more.'⁴⁷ Thomas Warton finds the 'cheerless shades, / To ruin'd seats, to twilight cells and bow'rs, / Where thoughtful Melancholy loves to muse / Her favourite midnight haunts' in his *The Pleasures of Melancholy* (1745).⁴⁸

Taking it as read that such overtly melancholy classics already have a place in this library, along with the various works mentioned in passing through this book, the 'Blue Guide' turns to some further thematic constellations of ideas that inform the expression of melancholy. Three clusters are explored: the hybrid form of literature which includes found photographs or similar illustrations; a metaphoric connection of city as self which explores the exportation of ideas of melancholy to settings for novels; and incomplete works which echo the impossible task of the collector.

Photographic-literary works

As with the melancholy art exhibition sketched above, a library of melancholy might include works which emphasise aura and memory. The aura of the found photograph, as in the work of Gerhard Richter and Tacita Dean, is embedded within the writings of Georges Rodenbach, André Breton and WG Sebald, for example. Within these works, which hover between the autobiographical and the fictional, the use of ambiguous images infuses the writing with a melancholy weightiness. The books are steeped in memories, of recollected journeys on foot, through the city of Bruges for Rodenbach, Paris for Breton, and along the South Coast of England and through Germany for Sebald. These memories are constructed and/or re-constructed with the help of the monochromatic images. The often poor quality of these photographs embodies a feeling of nostalgia and the images are sometimes uncaptioned, unassigned, with no indication of their provenance.

Bruges-la-Morte is the title of Rodenbach's novel – 'Bruges-the-Dead' – and the combination of melancholy text and sombre images creates a profound sense of a mourning city. The images, which are mostly anonymous postcards or stock views, are almost completely devoid of people, and in some cases the figures have been cut out of the pictures. There is a mood of eerie silence and stillness, and the views are stage-managed by the author so that this version of Bruges resists any familiar connections that might undo the weight of his text. The text is suffused with a bleak atmosphere, and the photographs reinforce the idea of *memento mori*, reminders of death, the central theme of the novel.

In André Breton's *Nadja*, photographs of Paris are interspersed in the text, along with other graphic material, including drawings, pages of handwriting, and engravings. Like Bruges in Rodenbach's images, Breton's Paris is mostly vacant, or certainly empty of the events to which the narrative alludes. The scene of a dinner outside the City Hotel is poignantly deserted, and the image which relates to a remembered walk through the Tuileries Gardens together is similarly desolate. The photographs are not always anonymous and, in fact, some are attributed to fellow surrealist, Man Ray. The images in the book are captioned and recorded in a list of illustrations, which lends them a certain 'authenticity.' Yet, they hover at the edge of reality since, although 'autobiographical', it is not clear when Breton's *Nadja* slides into fiction. The captions apprehend the images and coerce them into the story. The art of the readymade is again at play and, in this case, it is the act of captioning which elevates the sometimes seemingly trivial images into elements of significance. The drawings are done by Nadja, the seductive and elusive central figure of Breton's tale, adding a layer of poignancy to the work. Nadja is seemingly suffering from schizophrenia, and ends up in a lunatic asylum. Breton's indifference to all of this, despite his attraction to her, brings again the spectre of a heartless form of aesthetic, of finding beauty because of, or in spite of, the suffering of others. The closing passages of *Nadja* emphasise this contradictory form of melancholy aesthetic, 'Beauty is like a train that ceaselessly roars out of the Gare de Lyon and which I know will never leave, which has not left', and in Breton's famous mantra which closes the book: 'Beauty will be CONVULSIVE or will not be at all.'⁴⁹

Enigmatic and elusive, the images in WG Sebald's novels convey a curious quality, almost like stills drawn somewhat arbitrarily from a film. Some resonate strongly with the text, as in *The Rings of Saturn*, where a *vanitas*-like photograph of a skull sitting on a small pile of books appears amidst the passage on Thomas Browne, author of *Urn Burial*.⁵⁰ By implication this is Browne's skull, since Sebald is relating the tale of how Browne's skull and a lock of his hair had been left firstly to a parish councillor and then to the hospital museum, where they were displayed under a bell jar. Yet the image does not show a skull under a bell jar, so the enigma persists, and eludes capture, while at the same time adding a weighty, melancholic gravitas to the text. At times the images ground the text, when a direct reference is made to a photograph, such as, for example, the photograph of Sebald himself in *The Rings of Saturn*, where he leans against a Lebanese cedar at Ditchingham. This is part of a lament for the loss of trees to old age and disease, which proceeds in the pages either side, and which is supported by a further photograph of a forlorn field filled with dead and dying poplars.⁵¹ All of this is also foreshadowing a certain end to many of the other trees, as it was in the period preceding the hurricanes that swept through south-east England in 1987.

In addition to the photographs with their auratic, nostalgic mood, there are also fragments of diagrams and paintings punctuating Sebald's novels. In *The Emigrants* there is a hand-drawn diagram of a railway station, as well as family photographs, photographs of unspecified places, and a copy of pages from a diary.⁵² *Vertigo* includes advertisements, Sebald's passport, a train ticket, fragments

from Giotto's frescoes, a page from a calendar, all of which serve variously to support the text or to act in seeming independence of it.⁵³ Their 'readymade' nature infuses them with a surreal quality, such that even the most banal and quotidian qualities are elevated to something somehow mystical and significant.

City as Self

Melancholy distinguished itself from the other humoral types in many ways, one of which was that it became a quality that was not only found in people but also was recognisable in landscapes of all types, including urban areas. There are resonances between the melancholy of the self and that of the city, for example, and a number of authors make this explicit, forming a particular constellation of melancholy literature. This type of metaphorical connection is an echo of Sigmund Freud's conception of Rome as a model of the human mind. Rome's layers upon layers of urban development were, Freud prognosed, similar to memory. His analogy is ambiguous, however, as he pointed out that if Rome was in fact a human mind, a 'psychical entity', rather than a built form, 'Where the Coliseum stands now we could at the same time admire Nero's Golden House; on the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not only the Pantheon of today as bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but on the same site also Agrippa's original edifice; indeed, the same ground would support the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the old temple over which it was built.'⁵⁴ So, although the city might be like the mind in the way it gathers up layers of memory, it is also unlike the mind as some parts are demolished and rebuilt; everything doesn't co-exist. Despite this

ambiguity, the resonances between the city and self remain a powerful metaphor, and one that has particular potency with the exporting of the idea of melancholy to the urban fabric.

Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul* is an extensive meditation on the soul of that city, in the peculiarly Turkish melancholy of *hüzün* – of the 'feeling that the city of Istanbul carries as its fate'.⁵⁵ It is in the passage on the *hüzün* embedded in the iconic black and white films set in the city that there are strong echoes of a Freudian investment of the self in the city. Pamuk recalls that in these films the anguish of a heart-broken hero comes not from the individual himself, but 'it is almost as if the *hüzün* which infuses the city's sights and streets and famous views has seeped into the hero's heart to break his will. It then seems that to know the hero's story and share his melancholy I need only to look at the view.'⁵⁶ For, it is in the view that one finds either the brooding presence of the Bosphorus, or the back street ruins, and there is that sense, in Istanbul, of it all being there at once, very much in the manner of Freud's hypothetical version of Rome.

Hugues, the main character from Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte*, relates how he selected the city of Bruges as a home because of its melancholy. He explains that 'cities especially have a personality, an autonomous spirit, an almost externalized character corresponding to joy, to new love, to renunciation, to widowerhood. Every city is a state of mind, and one hardly needs to stay there for this state of mind to communicate itself, to spread to us in a fluid that inoculates and that one incorporates with the nuance of the air.'⁵⁷ Hugues' relationship with the city as cipher of the self is circular, as he grows unlike the city for

a time, when he finds a new relationship with which he tries to overcome the grief of the death of his wife. Eventually the relationship fails, and he becomes once more like the city, 'finding himself again the brother in silence and melancholy of this mournful Bruges, this *soror dolorosa* [sad sister]. How right he had been to come there at the time of his great grief! Mute analogies!'⁵⁸

Joris-Karl Huysmans' *Against Nature* (1884), Gustave Flaubert's *November* (1910), and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938), all exhibit the *ennui* of the self in the city, with all three central characters battling with their relationship with their broader setting. Their melancholy is the core of their being, as in Flaubert's nameless narrator who declares, 'If you had asked me what it was I needed, I wouldn't have been able to tell you; my desires had no specific object, and my sadness had no immediate cause; or rather, there were so many objects and so many causes that I wouldn't have been able to isolate a single one of them.'⁵⁹ Huysman's central character, Des Esseintes, had found 'hatching in the dismal forcing-house of *ennui*, the frightening climacteric of thoughts and emotions'.⁶⁰ He had a figure of *Melancholia* which he treated almost like a religious icon, and would spend hours meditating in front of it. The central characters of all three novels suffer from *ennui*, and various related melancholic feelings, effecting a melancholic camouflage with their contexts, so that the city and the self begin to melt together. Flaubert's nameless narrator has a hatred of being 'jostled by the crowd', feeling like a 'wild beast tracked down in its lair'.⁶¹ And in Sartre's *Nausea*, Roquentin expresses all of the melancholy that comes from disenchantment with the world, the tedium, the bourgeoisie, and the very nature of existence itself.

Des Esseintes, Flaubert's 'I', and Roquentin, all want to disappear, to become camouflaged, the melancholy ploy of not wanting to be seen. Flaubert's character struggled with the 'restless surge of wicked, cowardly, idiotic and ugly men'. Being part of this crowd brought him anguish, the feeling of being 'like a piece of seaweed swept along by the ocean, lost in the midst of the numberless waves that rolled and roared on every side of me.'⁶² This tension of being part of the masses, yet not wanting to be there, or being like seaweed, echoes with Caillois' psychasthenia, of the act of camouflage, with particular resonance with 'the fish Phyllopteryx, from the Sargasso Sea, [which] is simply "torn seaweed in the shape of floating strands"'⁶³. As outlined in Chapter 2, the strategies of camouflage are often more revealing than concealing, so at the same time as attempting to disappear one can become even more obvious than before.

There are echoes still of the humoral tradition, and the relationship to the physiology and seasonal metaphors of melancholy. Flaubert's character's *November* is the fear of having reached a premature *autumn*, that very point upon the ancient constellation of melancholy. Des Esseintes also gravitates to autumn, in his recognition of how Baudelaire had 'laid bare the morbid psychology of the mind that has reached the October of its sensations, and had listed the symptoms of souls visited by sorrow, singled out by spleen'.⁶⁴ Rodenbach's Hugues is also drawn to the melancholy moment of the city, setting out for his 'usual twilight stroll, despite the relentless late autumn drizzle, shedding tears, weaving into the water, tacking the air, pricking the still surface of the canals, capturing and paralysing the soul like a bird trapped in the wet meshes of an endless net.'⁶⁵

The characters evoked by Flaubert, Huysmans, and Sartre, all share the sensation of 'nausea', and it is significant that Sartre's book of that name was originally titled *Melancholia*, emphasising the root of this mood of revulsion of the self in relation to the milieu. The characters suffer a feeling of claustrophobia brought about by the paradox of camouflage, of the struggle to exist, yet not exist. A melancholy born of the boredom of the age, and of that conundrum that has persisted for two and a half millennia: fear and sadness *without cause*. This conflicted existence was also captured in Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, where the young aesthete is, as translator Alastair Hannay puts it, 'the modern hero, richly egocentric, tragically melancholic, excitingly nihilistic, daringly imaginative'.⁶⁶ And Flaubert's narrator has that very mood of a masochistic enjoyment of the condition of ongoing sadness: 'I am just amazed that there is still room in my heart for suffering; but man's heart is an inexhaustible reservoir of melancholy: one or two moments of happiness fill it to the brim, but all the many miseries of humanity can easily congregate and find lodgings in it together.'⁶⁷

Nausea is a symptom associated with 'hypochondriacal melancholy', another of which is vertigo, according to Robert Burton's sixteenth-century *Anatomy of Melancholy*. And *Vertigo* is the title of another melancholy investigation of the self in space, the work of WG Sebald. In one passage Sebald navigates the anguish of the self in the city, of how there is 'something peculiarly dispiriting about the emptiness that wells up when, in a strange city, one dials the same telephone numbers in vain. If no one answers, it is a disappointment of huge significance, quite as if these

few random ciphers were a matter of life or death. So what else could I do, when I had put the coins that jingled out of the box back into my pocket, but wander aimlessly around until well into the night.' He relates the onset of paranoia, the hallucinations which follow him in the city, of the vision of Dante walking a short distance ahead of him, 'with the familiar cowl on his head, distinctly taller than the people in the street, yet he passed by them unnoticed. When I walked faster in order to catch him up he went down Heinrichsgasse, but when I reached the corner he was nowhere to be seen. After one or two turns of this kind I began to sense in me a vague apprehension, which manifested itself as a feeling of vertigo.'⁶⁸

Roquentin's nausea has a similarly paranoiac sense, and his relationship with his surroundings disturbed him: 'The Nausea is not inside me: I feel it out there in the wall, in the suspenders, everywhere around me. It makes itself one with the café, I am the one who is within it.' The city echoes this melancholic alienation, a place where, 'I can't feel myself any longer; I am won over by the purity surrounding me; nothing is alive, the wind whistles, straight lines flee in the night. The boulevard Noir doesn't have the indecent look of bourgeois streets, which try to charm the passers-by: it is simply a reverse side... The boulevard Noir is inhuman. Like a mineral. Like a triangle... Straight, dirty corridors, with a howling draught and wide, treeless pavements. The[se boulevards] are almost always outside the town in those strange districts where cities are manufactured, near goods stations, tram depots, slaughter-houses, and gasometers... The Nausea has stayed over there, in the yellow light.'⁶⁹

The Incomplete

Incompletion is a melancholy trait, reflecting the deferral of closure, and is manifested in unfinished books. In *The Rings of Saturn* WG Sebald describes the work of nineteenth-century writer Edward FitzGerald, who was at times afflicted by what he called the ‘blue devil of melancholy’.⁷⁰ FitzGerald inhabited a hermitage for a period and worked on introspective projects – extensive correspondence, and making notes towards a ‘dictionary of commonplaces’, constructing a glossary of nautical terms, and also a Sévigné dictionary referencing the corpus of correspondence by Madame de Sévigné. This project, like all of his others remained incomplete.

Another literary lacuna is Gustave Flaubert’s *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, a collection of clichés and platitudes, intended to illustrate idiocy. This in itself is a boundless enterprise, and could go on forever, so it is not surprising that it remains in incomplete form amongst Flaubert’s oeuvre. It is a companion piece to the novel *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, the story of two copy-clerks who give up their day jobs to pursue their interest in the world of ideas. Amongst the entries in the ambitious and unfinishable dictionary of idiocy is ‘melancholy’: ‘Sign of a noble heart and a lofty mind.’⁷¹

The Sisyphean task of the lexicographer, the encyclopaedist, is illustrated by Reşat Ekrem Koçu, author of the *Istanbul Encyclopedia*. After toiling for nearly 30 years Koçu finished his eleventh volume, having reached the letter G. It had taken him from 1944 to 1951 just to get from A to B, in some 1,000 pages, documenting what he referred to as ‘Strange and Curious Facts from Our History’. Orhan Pamuk casts Koçu as one of the

'*hüzün*-drenched souls who helped create an image of a twentieth-century Istanbul as a half-finished city afflicted with melancholy'.⁷² The not even half-finished encyclopedia is thus a metaphor for the city at large.

Some works remain incomplete because of the author's demise, others because they are unfinishable since they deal with infinitudes, and a third species are written to be incomplete. This last ploy is a means of achieving a melancholy delay in resolution, of unsettling the text. Italo Calvino's *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller* does just this, and evades a sense of ever finishing the book, of being able to put it aside. Within the novel are ten incomplete novel fragments, all of which are of distinct genres. While on one level an iconic post-modern manoeuvre, it also achieves a sense of gravitas, since each incomplete novel contains a fragment of one sentence, which embodies a moment of melancholy: 'If on a winter's night a traveller, outside the town of Malbork, leaning from the steep slope without fear of wind or vertigo, looks down in the gathering shadow in a network of lines that enlase, in a network of lines that intersect, on the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon around an empty grave – What story down there awaits its end?'⁷³

A Melancholy Playlist

Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* made the prognosis that, 'Many men are melancholy by hearing Musick, but it is a pleasing melancholy that it causeth, and therefore to such as are discontent, in woe, fear, sorrow or dejected it is a most present remedy; it expels care, alters their grieved minds and easeth in an instant.'⁷⁴ Music and

melancholy are potent partners. Around the seventeenth century melancholy took its 'poetic' turn, and became an enhanced self-awareness, a heightened sensibility. One of the key shifts at the time was the role of music – not as an antidote to pathological melancholy, a cure or therapy but, as Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl describe it, 'to soothe and at the same time nourish this ambiguous bitter-sweet mood'.⁷⁵

The connections of music and memory are strong, and a remembered piece of music acts as a compelling memory trigger. Music, in this sense, is the locus of nostalgia, and an often personal sphere of melancholy, a connection to life events, recollections of moments in time. Music can also evoke melancholy beyond the personal, into a collective response to something as simple as the sound of an instrument, or as complex as the content of the lyrics.

Certain musical instruments seem naturally to elicit a sense of melancholy. The piano accordion's nostalgic East European tones, or the plaintive strains of a violin, for example, or Chinese instruments like the two-stringed violin-like *erhu*, or bamboo flute, the *dizi*, with their fragile notes suffused with melancholic tone. The sound of whistling, as in Goldfrapp's track 'Lovely Head' from the album *Felt Mountain* (2000), or a violin, as in the deliciously poignant instrumental, 'Fawn', on Tom Waits's album *Alice* (2002). The Armenian double-reed instrument, the *duduk*, which has a haunting, ghostly sound, the 'combination of an alto clarinet, a Gypsy violin and a contralto's sigh',⁷⁶ or the bagpipes, with their melody offset by the brooding drone, which in the tradition of the Irish were used to 'accompany their dead to the grave, making such mournful sounds as to invite, nay almost force the bystanders to weep'.⁷⁷

Many cultures have a traditional style of melancholy music, in the form of laments, love songs, and ballads. The *enka* style of music developed in 1860s Japan, the first time the Japanese pentatonic scale was blended with Western musical scales, and is a particularly emotional style of singing. *Enka* singers use a vibrato singing technique and their formal performances in traditional dress have become reservoirs of Japanese nostalgia and identity. Like those of the Portuguese *fado* or the Greek *rebetika*, *enka* lyrics relate stories of suffering, love, and death. The *saudade* of the *fado* is echoed in the *duende* of the Spanish *flamenco*. Federico García Lorca, in his passionate description of *duende*, located this deep, brooding melancholy within the *flamenco* singing of Manuel Torre. On hearing another singer perform his flamenco work *Nocturno de Generalife*, Torre declared, 'All that has black sounds has *duende*.'⁷⁸ *Duende's* dark melancholy is also found in the Argentinean *tango*, traditionally played on the guitar, violin and flute, and later by the iconic *bandoneón*, the button accordion. Developed by European immigrants in the early twentieth century, Argentinean *tango* expresses a romantic melancholy of fatalism and love. Crossing the world to Finland, the *tango* took on a new cultural overlay, with the different melancholy sense of *kaiho*, of loneliness and longing.

Within the vast realm of classical music there are numerous melancholy works. From the early moments of Western classical music, melancholy is there in the religious music of Hildegard of Bingen. Hildegard saw music as a type of therapy for those afflicted with melancholy, and also a vehicle for conveying her ideas, as in *Ordo Virtutum*, the 'Order of the Virtues' (1151). The dark

species of religious melancholy, the enduring of suffering, permeates JS Bach's *St Matthew Passion* (1728), of which the aria 'Erbarme dich mein Gott' is an extraordinarily moving and evocative musical passage, with a solo violin and vocalist singing the text which translates as, 'Have mercy, my God / for the sake of my tears'. The aria was used by Tarkovsky as the opening for his final film *The Sacrifice*, where it accompanies an equally moving visual, as the camera pans slowly across Leonardo da Vinci's *Adoration of the Magi*.

The brooding melancholy of death haunts the funeral marches of Grieg and Wagner, and Handel's 'Dead March' from his *Saul* opera (1738). Chopin's 'Death March' and his 'Waltz no. 7' are extremely redolent melancholy pieces. In evoking the sense of *toska*, Russian political prisoner AS Arzhilovsky explained how it was captured within this piece of Chopin's, recalling how, 'Misha played two waltzes by Chopin, and I broke down in tears. The sounds of the immortal composer just scraped my soul. His waltz no. 7 is full of tender sadness, full of deep tenderness for the irretrievable past. I long to put this into words, every note is so dear to me, so much a part of my long-suffering soul.'⁷⁹ Chopin's contemporary, Beethoven, writes his own suffering into his work, most notably in the movement 'Malincolia' from the Quartet op. 18, No. 6 and the 'Largo' of the Piano Sonata op.10, No.3, which was explained by Beethoven himself as the 'description of the state of mind of a melancholic'.⁸⁰

The German sense of *wehmut* is found in the work of Gustav Mahler, from the German-speaking former Austrian Empire. His *Symphony No. 9* (1909-1910) is one of the most melancholy works, written after learning that

his wife had been unfaithful, which evoked his motif of 'death in the midst of life'. The excavation of the melancholy from earlier religious music was the foundation of the early work of French composer Erik Satie. His enigmatically titled *Gymnopédies* (1888) and *Gnossiennes* (1890) have a strongly melancholic atmosphere. The *Gymnopédies*, for example, make reference to ancient Greece, and the practice of gymnastic exercises, and were described as having an 'antique flavour' with phrases floating 'mournfully over a slow pulsing bass', inhabited by a 'shadow show' and 'phantom figures'.⁸¹ Satie's music is characterised by repetition, the Sisyphean aspect of melancholy, and his original intention was that the music was to be a mere background – what he called 'furniture music'.

Modern minimalist classical composers also mined earlier sacred music as sources for melancholy, as in the work of Arvo Pärt, Henryk Górecki and Giya Kancheli. Estonian minimalist Pärt's work resonates with medieval sources, and conveys a search for the numinous, the holy other, that which is sacred and beyond the known. Pärt describes how rather than seeking 'colour', he 'draws with black and white'.⁸² One of Pärt's musical expressions was what he called 'tintinnabulation', or a bell-like sound, as in his *Passo Domini nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem*, which produces an indefinable melancholy.⁸³ Górecki, from Poland, is also a 'sacred minimalist', and his best-known work is the Third Symphony, the *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, in which the slowly paced music is accompanied by three melancholy texts: a lament from the fifteenth century, the writings of a teenage prisoner in a Gestapo prison cell, and a folk song. The spiritual works

of Belgium-based Georgian composer Kancheli are characterised by silences and sounds that have an aura, paralleling that which is effected by a reduction of technology. His *Svietlaja piechal* ('Light Sorrow' or 'Sweet Sadness') is a piece that dwells on silence or near-silence, and John Cage described it as a 'work of innocence' and noted how the boys' voices effected 'the absence of technology'. Kancheli himself wrote how he 'wanted the voices of children to remind us of angels we have never heard... The piece is dedicated to the memory of children killed in World War II.'⁸⁴

The melancholy of music, then, has an extensive history, ranging from the traditional instruments and forms of music to the vast classical canon. Within all of these two main forces are at work – form and content. 'Formal' aspects include those elements which affect the shape of music, its tempo, texture, timbre, while the effects of content are derived through the lyrical components, or the referencing to other familiar fragments of music in the form of a 'quotation' or 'sample'.

Formal manoeuvres that bring about a mood of melancholy often build upon an idea of defamiliarisation, or *ostranenie*. A theory developed by the Russian Formalists, in particular Viktor Shklovsky, this was a means of altering the apprehension of that which has become habitual.⁸⁵ Ways of defamiliarising or 'making strange' include the practices of placing things in different contexts (such as the readymade), or changing them in some way, altering their colour or texture, or somehow subverting the way in which a work is encountered. In melancholy music this might be achieved by a shift in tempo. For example, Kancheli's *Life without Christmas* is an excep-

tionally slow piece of music, which Susan Bradshaw suggests is exceeded only by Olivier Messiaen's *Quatuor pour le Fin du Temps*, the 'Quartet for the End of Time'⁸⁶ – a tempo which is described as 'infinitely slow'.⁸⁷

The process of slowing down is entwined within the idea of defamiliarisation, as the belief was that, if the apprehension of the art is 'retarded' or slowed down, it can be better appreciated. This resonates strongly with the needs of melancholy, which 'hates haste', and the feeling that, as in nostalgia, things are recollected out of time, out of place. In music, defamiliarisation through altering tone and texture can have a potent melancholy value. In composing the music for Bill Morrison's film *Decasia*, Michael Gordon sought to bypass the way in which music is habitually received. Instead he aspired to achieve 'the equivalent of the look of decayed celluloid in music'.⁸⁸ In his mind there was an image of a piano which had been sitting untuned for 100 years, and these notional untuned pianos can be heard on the score. The orchestra itself is detuned, so that they play $\frac{1}{8}$ th of a tone higher or lower, to convey the sense of imprecision and instability.

Detuning was a technique used on the Smashing Pumpkins' album, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* (1995). The central theme of the album was of life and death, and of the human condition, particularly the pervasive sense of sorrow. A wide variety of instruments is used on the album, including such 'low-tech' effects as salt shakers and scissors, but significantly it was the guitars which added the overarching melancholy effect. By tuning all the guitars down half a step the overall mood of the music is lower, with an enhanced sense of gravity. The

guitars were also put in a dropped D tuning on some tracks, which has an added melancholy value.

A dropped D tuning detunes the bottom string from E down to D, meaning it is possible to play in the key of D with a lower bass tonic, or key note of the chord, than normally possible with standard tuning. This gives the effect of a 'drone'. There are further variations of this, as in the double dropped D tuning which means the top string is also tuned down to D, and it is this tuning which gives the poignant feel of The Doors' 'The End' (1967). A variation of the dropped D tuning is the shift to D minor, as in Skip James's intensely poignant 'Hard Time Killing Floor' (1931), which expressed the anguish of depression times, and featured in the Coen Brothers' film *O Brother Where Art Thou* (2000).

While the range of formal manoeuvres can alter the way in which music is received, overlaying it with a melancholy ambience, the content of music is also a bearer of melancholy. Lyrics can embed melancholy into music, from the heart-rending songs of Country and Western music, to the ache of the Blues; or in the writings of the 'messiah of melancholy', *The Cure's* Robert Smith; or the lyrical melancholy genius of 'American Troubadour', Bob Dylan. The melancholy of lyrics is more akin to the literary tradition, as a form of poetry, like the troubadours and balladeers of the past, and there are two contemporary poets who convey distinctive melancholic types – Tom Waits and Nick Cave.

Tom Waits is the Edward Hopper of lyric writing. Called the 'prince of melancholy' by film director Francis Ford Coppola, Waits comes from California and

recorded his first album in 1973. From that first album, *Closing Time*, he has conjured up the imagery of the melancholy margins of American society. During his early years this reflected a world, very familiar to him, of 'drunks, hookers, petty thieves, small-town refugees, greasy dives, all-night drives, used car lots, hotel shootouts'. Where singers like Bruce Springsteen sing about such characters, 'Waits sings as one'.⁸⁹ The echoes with Hopper's imagery are amplified in the name of his 1975 album, *Nighthawks at the Diner* – the title of Edward Hopper's painting from 1942. From the poignant love-songs, as in those written for Coppola's *One from the Heart*, to the sketches of the low-life world and shadowy streets, a deep mood of melancholy percolates through Waits' music, like the vision conjured up by his 'Nighthawk Postcards':

There's a blur drizzle down the plateglass
as a neon swizzle stick stirrin' up the sultry night air
and a yellow biscuit of a buttery cue ball moon
rollin' maverick across an obsidian sky⁹⁰

The visions of memory and nostalgia suffuse the lyrics, aided by the accompaniments like the violin, accordion, or even a calliope – a steam organ. The poetry of the lyrics set the scene for such melancholy moments, as in 'Barcarolle':

And the train whistle blows
And the carnival goes
Till there's only the tickets and crows here
And the grass will all grow back⁹¹

Nick Cave's melancholy is of a different flavour, coloured with the anguish of centuries of religious and love melancholy. England-based Australian Cave's lyrics have strong connections to the lengthy genealogy of melancholy. In 'The Song of Joy', for example, a ballad which circles around how 'all things move toward their end', there is a line ('No wonder', people said, 'poor mother Joy's so melancholy'⁹²) which seems to reach back through the centuries to lines from Burton's seventeenth-century *Anatomy of Melancholy*: 'A thousand pleasures do me bless, / And crown my soule with happiness / All my joyes besides are folly, / None so sweet as melancholy.'⁹³

Cave's lyrics echo the angst of the Desert Fathers, with their apprehension about Christ's presence in their world, the melancholy of *deus absconditus*. St John of the Cross even makes a cameo appearance in one of Cave's songs, 'There She Goes, My Beautiful World', which recalls how 'St. John of the Cross did his best stuff imprisoned in a box'⁹⁴, a reference to his time of imprisonment in a cell, during which he wrote *Dark Night of the Soul*. Love and religion are tightly entwined in Cave's music, with the 'actualising of God' coming through the medium of the love song, in a way which is often ambiguous, such that the songs might be sung either to God or to a romantic love interest.⁹⁵ At other times, the lyrics seem to make a direct appeal, and express the distress of religious anguish, as in the track 'Oh My Lord':

Oh Lord, Oh my Lord
Oh Lord
How have I offended thee?

Wrap your tender arms around me
Oh Lord, Oh Lord
Oh My Lord⁹⁶

Cave declared, 'The love song must resonate with the susurrantion of sorrow, the tintinnabulation of grief.'⁸⁷ Cave's profound attention to melancholy is reinforced in almost prayer-like or liturgical litanies, lists of travesties and agonies, as in 'People Ain't No Good', with its plea:

To our love send a dozen white lilies
To our love send a coffin of wood
To our love let all the pink-eyed pigeons coo
That people they just ain't no good
To our love send back all the letters
To our love a valentine of blood
To our love let all the jilted lovers cry
That people they just ain't no good⁹⁸

The melancholy mode of repetition is also expressed in the obsession with a single object of desire, as in the mantra uttered over and over in 'Black Hair':

Full of all my whispered words, her black hair
And wet with tears and good-byes, her hair of
 deepest black
All my tears cried against her milk-white throat
Hidden behind the curtain of her beautiful black
 hair⁹⁹

The Architecture and Landscape of Sadness

As part of the contemporary obsession with eliminating sadness, architecture and the designed landscape aspire to the state of an untroubled paradise. The advertising material for new housing developments, condominiums, and parks is dominated by images of sunlit scenes, trees, water, moments of Arcadia. Alain de Botton's book *The Architecture of Happiness*¹⁰⁰ in its title alone asserts a certain perspective on ideals for the built environment. While what Botton is advocating is more complex than an unqualified 'happiness', and might instead be called a feeling of wellbeing, it does signal a particular preoccupation in contemporary society. Wellbeing is, after all, a condition of balance, one that also requires sadness. As theologian Thomas Moore warns, 'If we do away with Saturn's dark moods, we may find it exhausting trying to keep life bright and warm at all costs. We may be even more overcome then by increased melancholy called forth by the repression of Saturn, and lose the sharpness and substance of identity that Saturn gives the soul.'¹⁰¹

Searching for an architecture of melancholy is fraught with pitfalls. The heartless picturesque always lurks nearby, deriving aesthetic pleasure from the suffering of others. In the context of the designed environment – i.e. architecture and landscape architecture – could this mean that poorly designed places could be sources of melancholy? After all, they are often sites of suffering, the contemporary version of Will Fern's hovel in *The Chimes*. A useful distinction is found in Susan Sontag's words: 'Depression is melancholy minus its charms – the animation, the fits.'¹⁰² Although writing about a mental state, Sontag's

description could apply to the designed environment, where sad buildings, sad parks, are nothing more than depressive because of their poor design, their bad lighting, and their spatial dysfunctionality. Such places are not melancholy, they are simply depressing.

Beyond the fascination with the black melancholy of the heartless picturesque, the noble picturesque also persists in landscapes ravaged by time and poverty. In his honouring of his native Istanbul, Orhan Pamuk captures such a vision. From the outset, with an epigraph by writer Ahmet Rasim ('The beauty of a landscape resides in its melancholy'¹⁰³), Pamuk traces the way in which the city's past is suffused in the collective melancholy of the people – in the Turkish melancholy of *hüzün*. Although it is also the stain of a great deal of suffering, the melancholy is received with a sense of grace and poignancy, rather than the detached pleasure of the ladies drawing Will Fern's hovel in their sketchbooks.

While it is important that architecture and landscape can elicit positive, 'happy' feelings, there needs to be places to feel sorrow. Churches and cemeteries provide formalised settings for grief, mourning and contemplation, but beyond such places there are other sites which might be sought out for their melancholy. Places like the retreat described by John Evelyn, writing of a space made for solace and meditation: '... I made... the stews & receptacles for Fish, and built a little study over a cascade, to passe my Melancholy hours shaded there with Trees, & silent enough...'¹⁰⁴ Where, then, should the 'Blue Guide' plot places of melancholy? The silent places of memory, ruins, darkness and shadows.

Memory

The melancholy of memorials is perhaps, at first, an obvious connection. As markers of things lost they are the archetypal apparatus of grief. But memorials can become 'invisible' and fail in their melancholic potential.

Through the use of clichéd forms – the man-on-a-podium, for example – they fail to become effective, affective moments in the landscape, to trigger an emotional response. Other memorials fail through their efforts to 'close the wound', to create a sense of completion at the site of tragedy. One of the primary ways this is done is through a type of memorial arithmetic, with the attention focussed on numbers, how many dead, the date, the time. Arguably such 'data' can objectify the nature of loss, through denaturing it, turning it into mere numbers, in order to bring resolution and an end to grief. Yet, if sites of memory simply become tick-boxes, how might they move the beholders, to appreciate the tragic, to experience melancholy? The 'Blue Guide' seeks out those memorials which transcend the landscape wallpaper of statues and plinths, and strives to look beyond the tidy logic of numbers and dates.

Some of the most melancholy memorials are those which do not say much at all, leaving the viewer to make an effort, to become part of it, and to consequently form an affective bond. These memorials are not simply objects, but experiences. They invite participation rather than mere observance. The point is not seeking to find a 'cure' for grief, but accepting that sorrow is a necessary component of our human condition. Sometimes the experience may hang over the visitor like a question mark, something unsolvable, beyond comprehension, a wound

kept open through the work of the memorial. The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial (1982) in Washington DC, designed by architect and sculptor Maya Lin, effects such a sense of the ineffable, the unspeakable, through a form which is a metaphorical gash, an opening in the ground. Lin's memorial design challenged all that had gone before, providing the antithesis of a figure on a podium, instead pushing a memorial wall down into the ground, a wall that is incised with the names of over 58,000 American servicemen dead or missing in action. The question of how a visitor might sense grief at the loss of people not known to them, what Rico Franes calls the 'stranger memorial', is central to the nature of melancholy.¹⁰⁵ The 'lost object' of melancholy is not necessarily a known person or thing, but something far less tangible. A site that remembers 'strangers' can become such an intangibility, and the melancholy is imbued by the more universal apprehension of death, love and loss.

Two extended sets of memorials provide some of the most melancholy markers of loss. Memorials to the Jewish Holocaust and to the Irish Potato Famine can be found at far flung points of the globe. Two recent Jewish Holocaust memorials provide places of suspended grief through their abstraction of the magnitude of loss. The challenge of providing a setting for the memory of such an event is one which pushes design to its limits. Literary theorist Terry Eagleton suggested that such was the enormity of this tragedy that it 'beggard[ed] representation' and the 'only appropriate response would be screaming or silence'.¹⁰⁶ To effect a design equivalent of such a response is to find the profound space of melancholy, one which architect Peter Eisenman sought

through an obstinately abstract memorial in Berlin, near the Brandenburg Gate. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (2004) is obstinate because it resists symbolism, it rejects an easy slide into closure, and instead the 2,711 concrete stelae, vertical rectangular forms, stand for something ineffable, something beyond the symbolic, things that are beyond reason. A second example is the Garden of Stones (2003) at New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage, by the British sculptor, Andy Goldsworthy. Despite efforts to derive the symbolism in Goldsworthy's work, to say what the stones 'mean', to count them, to reduce them to figures, the memorial is at its most powerful when considered as an abstract expression of something beyond a ready reduction to facts and figures. The large stones sit on a terrace which projects from the museum, with their bulky forms appearing somehow uncanny in the space, unexpected. This unease is deepened by the appearance of small trees growing out of the tops of each stone, a contradiction, a resistance to an 'easy reading' of the complexity of memory.

Not far from the Garden of Stones in New York is artist Brian Tolle's Irish Hunger Memorial, one of over 30 memorials to this tragedy around the globe. Again it uses the motif of stones, but in this case they are explicitly symbolic, referring to the Irish counties, and also take the form of a recreated Irish cottage as a ruin. The memorial uses sound as well, through playing recordings of narration of diary entries that recount the experience of the famine. The strongly scripted nature of the memorial, in terms of its orchestration of the visitor's experience, can detract from the gravity of grief, and the melancholy is most palpable beyond the script, when the austerity of

the ruined cottage or the vertiginous edge of the memorial, which juts out into space towards the Hudson River, can be contemplated and when it is allowed to remain unresolved. At the Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney, Australia, another memorial to the Irish Potato Famine, designed by Hossein and Angela Valamanesh (1999), effects a sense of abandonment and pathos. With a table and shelves with the most spare of possessions, a few books, a basket, there is a profoundly melancholy air to the memorial. An empty plate sits on the table. These remainders hold within them small universes of loss. The departure of things, of wholes, of lives, of loves, leaves the pain of residual stains, 'stranded objects'.¹⁰⁷ Inhering within remnants these are the phantom presences that prevent closure, with the paradox that it is *absence* which becomes palpable.

Memorials to individuals too can offer the contemplative experience of melancholy. Those memorials which transcend the object-centred single gesture allow for a sense of slowness and percolation. American landscape architect Lawrence Halprin's memorial to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, on the edge of the Tidal Basin in Washington DC is such a site. It is a memorial which opposes the monolithic and massive gestures of the nearby Lincoln, Washington and Jefferson memorials, and instead is composed of a series of landscape 'rooms', each one a meditation upon phases of Roosevelt's life. Water is a constant present, echoing these phases through its character, and as a whole the memorial seems not about closure, but about experience and engagement. The memorial to Walter Benjamin at Portbou on the border of France and Spain is also an engulfing, experiential site.

This is the place where Benjamin may have committed suicide, while fleeing from Nazi Germany, yet the details of his death remain unclear. Such ambiguity and the resistance to closure are expressed in the memorial designed by Israeli sculptor, Dani Karavan. The memorial, again, is not a simple object, but a serial space which ‘little by little, involves your body and soul in meditation and emotion’.¹⁰⁸ Incorporating texts from Benjamin, and based around a connection through a rectangular rusty tunnel, the memorial places the visitor into a relationship with the sea, the sky, and their own shadow projected into the tunnel by the sunlight. The view of the swirling sea below, framed by the rusty tunnel, evokes an image of turmoil, forever in motion, as though possessed by an ongoing energy and agitation.

Ruins

Jean Starobinski writes of ruins in the context of an ancient monument, the very thing that had been established as a ‘monition’, a perpetuator of memory, and its ‘melancholy resides in the fact that it has become a monument of lost significance... but awareness of this oblivion implied awareness of the necessity of remembering.’¹⁰⁹

The role of ruins as a trigger for memory casts them in the role of the *ubi sunt*, the lament of ‘where are?’, such that contemplating a ruin might bring forth the litany of melancholy loss.

The potency of ruins as repositories for melancholy memories is connected to the paradoxical practice of building ruins. During the eighteenth-century cult of ruins it was common for them to be constructed on English country estates, taking the form of structures like

decaying temples. Immediately assuming an air of a past era, they infused the site with the gravity of time passing. The National Monument on Calton Hill in Edinburgh, a memorial to the dead of the Napoleonic Wars, was never finished and thus appears as though a ruin, with its 'melancholy aspect gracing many prints and postcards as if it had been a place of worship for ancient Scots.'¹¹⁰

This evocation of the passing of time via ruins is a commentary on the melancholy of our place in time. Louis Kahn designed buildings as ruins to make a nostalgic connection to past ages. 'I thought of the beauty of ruins... of things which nothing lives behind ... and so I thought of wrapping ruins around buildings,' he explained.¹¹¹ Controversially, Albert Speer, the architect for the Nazis, developed an idea of 'ruin-value' to anticipate how a building would look once ruined. Through this, he believed, the values that had been instilled into that architecture would persist as some kind of residue within the ruin. He had his Zeppelin stadium at Nuremberg depicted as though in ruin to show how it would look 'after generations of neglect, covered with ivy, with collapsed pillars, the walls here and there fallen down, but in broad outline still clearly recognizable.'¹¹² British architect John Soane also adopted an idea of ruin-value, of that melancholic yearning for a future that is past, and had Joseph Michael Gandy paint his monumental Bank of England in London (1830) as though it was a ruin. Giambattista Piranesi, the eighteenth-century Italian artist, also sought to evoke a memory for things not yet seen, and the imagery of time claiming structures of grandeur 'command their intensely poignant impact precisely through his interpretation of this melancholic contrast

between their past glory and their present dilapidation'.¹¹³

Thomas Macaulay, the nineteenth-century poet, historian and politician, described a future where a 'New Zealander' (i.e. a Maori), a visitor from an Arcadian paradise, would witness London in ruins. In 1840 he wrote of imagining the melancholy day when 'some traveller from New Zealand shall in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's'.¹¹⁴ Gustave Doré made an engraving called *The New Zealander* in 1873, which appears to illustrate Macaulay's vision. The 'wizard-like' figure, the New Zealander in his cloak, holds a sketchbook, and is drawing the ruins of St Paul's.¹¹⁵ As Woodward suggests, the New Zealander as a visitor from a young colony would have represented the 'dominant civilisation of the future' for Victorians.¹¹⁶ This vision of seeing London in ruins, as a melancholy spectacle, is the denouement in Bernard Smith's extensive study of *European Vision in the South Pacific*, and as a concluding 'amen' his final words are: '*Et in Arcadia Ego*'.

The prospective envisioning of ruins as objects of latent melancholy is echoed in American environmental artist Robert Smithson's concept of 'ruins in reverse'. Observing the buildings and highways under construction during a field trip to his native suburban Passaic, New Jersey, Smithson wrote, 'That zero panorama seemed to contain *ruins in reverse*, that is – all the new construction that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't *fall* into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they are built'.¹¹⁷ Passaic becomes, in Smithson's imagining, a place of monuments, a liminal condition, hovering at the cross-

ing over between present and past, solid and void, where space is a form of time. He declares a number of elements of the quotidian suburban landscape as 'monuments', recording them in photographs taken with his Instamatic camera. 'The Fountain Monument', is where six large pipes emerge into the river, and 'The Sand-Box Monument' is a poignant playground terrain, of a wooden box once a container for sand and now simply a type of mark, a ruin. Yet, here it is elevated to a metonymic mnemonic for time immemorial, a small fragment speaking for a much greater memory: 'This monument of minute particles blazed under a bleakly growing sun, and suggested the sullen dissolution of entire continents, the drying up of oceans – no longer were there green forests and high mountains – all that existed were millions of grains of sand, a vast deposit of bones and stones pulverized into dust.'¹¹⁸

Drawn to the marginal conditions of suburbia, Smithson's exploration of time within this unheroic landscape sheds light upon the paradox of monuments. Smithson's monuments stand as stranded objects, the very act of his designation removing them from the fabric of the everyday, making them instant, readymade markers of loss. Indeed, Smithson's monuments achieve a melancholy aesthetic through their very imprecision. What, for example, is the Sand-Box Monument (also known as the Desert Monument) a memorial *to*? Smithson describes how it 'became a map of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness', yet it is, perhaps, as much about the enigmatic sense of loss which dogs the melancholic, an indefinable loss of things. If there was a clear sense of what was lost, we could mourn it, grieve it, move on. Yet, this feeling of

objects stranded, branded as monuments, lingering as wounds, of sadness without a cause, suffuses the suburban waste-land with eternal poignancy.

These marginal landscapes of loss, the *terrain vague* of the suburbs and city margins, are significant repositories of melancholy in the city. The idea of the *terrain vague* was coined by the Spanish architect and writer, Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, and based on a phrase from film-making, meaning an empty, abandoned space.¹¹⁹ These were identified as spaces of opportunity within the city, but unfortunately they are all too often seen as sites of development. To leave these sites, to allow them to persist as the melancholic ruins for the twenty-first century, would be a response to the city as self, to the internal equilibrium required by the city as much as the psyche. Yet, just as the culture of the pursuit of happiness seeks to expunge sadness from the human condition, there is a parallel in the landscape of ruins. Despite, or because of, the memories that inhere in the decaying industrial hulks, the abandoned shipyards, the mouldering factories, the reaction is often to 'tidy' the sites up. This is a constantly repeated theme, as though the melancholy of these sites is threatening, inconvenient, antithetical to an uncomplicated existence. Sites like Sydney's Cockatoo Island, for example, a former prison and shipbuilding yard, which was an eerie ruin within the otherwise idyllic harbour. The relics of the prison buildings, the abandoned cranes and docks, had been left as a slowly decaying site. Cockatoo Island's dark presence is now being erased, and the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust is transforming it into a public park, with places for camping, and interpretation of the remnant elements of the site. This is just one

example of similar projects around the world, where for various reasons – commercial, public safety amidst the industrial ruins, and the suppression of sadness – places of dark memories are replaced by uncomplicated parks.

Darkness and Shadows

The falling of darkness and the play of shadows suggest the time of melancholy. Those liminal times between seasons, and between day and night, evoke the lingering sense of time passing. Darkness can be seen as distinct from light, or from happiness, and both senses are inherent in melancholy. The effect of darkness is profound, as in the description by the psychiatrist Eugène Minkowski: 'Dark space envelops me on all sides and penetrates me much deeper than light space, the distinction between inside and outside and consequently the sense organs as well, insofar as they are designed for external perception, here play only a totally modest role.'¹²⁰ Minkowski's description of melting into darkness, of merging with it, is related to the melancholy of camouflage, of disappearing, as Caillois adds, 'While light space is eliminated by the materiality of objects, darkness is "filled", it touches the individual directly, envelops him, penetrates him, and even passes through him: hence "the ego is permeable for darkness while it is not so for light"; the feeling of mystery that one experiences at night would not come from anything else.'¹²¹

Darkness draws veils, boundaries between things dissolve into the indeterminate light of dusk. The eye succumbs, and there is a drift into poignancy. There is no coincidence that pupil dilation occurs not only with darkness, but also with sadness. An architectural experience of

this is the *camera obscura*, literally the ‘dark room’, but rather than the room used for processing photographs, this is like entering the camera itself. A darkened room with a small hole to the outside world, an aperture, lets in light as a lens does into a camera. This image is projected onto a surface, whether the wall, floor, or a table. The pupil of the eye is dilated in darkness, a physiological occurrence that mimics the state of sadness, and this complements the contemplation inside a *camera obscura*. The outside world is conveyed into the dark space almost like a ‘real time’ video link, but here it is unmediated by technology; it is real, or more precisely surreal, with its otherworldly quality and praeternatural light. *Camera obscuras* were popular during Victorian and Edwardian times, as a spectacle, and can still be found in places like Foredown Tower, in Portslade, Brighton and the Observatory in Bristol and on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. A contemporary *camera obscura* was created in the ‘Garden of Australian Dreams’ at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, designed by landscape architects, Room 4.1.3 – an echo of darkness of a different kind, as it resembles the helmet of the outlaw Ned Kelly.

Étienne-Louis Boullée, the visionary eighteenth-century French architect, sought the darkness of death in his designs. His ‘architecture of shadows’ was not so much a play of dark against light, but dark against darker, as he explained, ‘the black picture of an architecture of shadows depicted by the effect of even blacker shadows’.¹²² This effect had occurred to him when walking in the woods, when he was struck by the sadness in nature, and he wanted to express the extreme melancholy of mourning through the creation of a ‘buried architecture’. The

ideas are introduced in his *Architecture: Essay on Art*, the subject of melancholy in architecture is explored, and he seeks the means to achieve it. He recalls standing on the edge of the woods in moonlight and suddenly seeing his own shadow:

By a particular disposition of the mind, the effect of this simulacrum seemed to me to be of an extreme sadness. The trees drawn on the ground by their shadows made the most profound impression on me. This picture grew in my imagination. I then saw everything that was the most somber in nature. What did I see? The mass of objects detached in black against a light of extreme pallor. Nature seemed to offer itself in mourning, to my sight. Struck by the sentiments I felt, I occupied myself, from this moment on, in making its particular application to architecture.¹²³

Notes

1. Nick Cave, *The Secret Life of the Love Song; The Flesh made Word*.
2. Jean Clair, 'Saturn's Museum', pp.28 and 32.
3. 2004 Melancholia, LA Freewaves, 9th Biennial Festival of Experimental Media Arts, How Can You Resist? Los Angeles.
4. Seymour Chatman and Paul Duncan, *Michelangelo Antonioni: The Complete Films*, p.95.
5. Ingmar Bergman, *From the Life of the Marionettes*, p.37.
6. Jessie Kalin, *The Films of Ingmar Bergman*, p.131.
7. Ingmar Bergman, *The Seventh Seal: A Film*, p.39.
8. Andrei Tarkovsky in Vida T Johnson, and Graham Petrie, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue*, p.159.
9. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, p.323.
10. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p.79.

11. Chris Marker, *Immemory*.
12. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p.226.
13. Hubert Damisch, 'Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image', p.72.
14. John Dixon Hunt in Pia Maria Simig, *Fleur de L'Air: A Garden in Provence by Ian Hamilton Finlay*, no page numbers.
15. See Marco de Michelis and Robert Fitzpatrick, *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Architecture*.
16. Giovanni Chiamonte and Andrey A Tarkovsky, *Instant Light: Tarkovsky Polaroids*.
17. Tonino Guerra in *ibid*, p.9.
18. *Sunday Star Times Magazine*, 29 January 2006, p.17.
19. Allan Smith, 'Romanticist and Symbolist Tendencies in Recent New Zealand Photography', p.111.
20. Robert Leonard cited in Justin Paton, 'Living Proof'. In Laurence Aberhart, *Aberhart*, p.282.
21. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p.222-223.
22. Justin Paton, 'Living Proof'. In Laurence Aberhart, *Aberhart*, p.280.
23. Charles W. Haxthausen, 'Review: Gerhard Richter. New York'.
24. Octavio Paz, 'Objects and Apparitions – for Joseph Cornell' (trans. Elizabeth Bishop). In Dore Ashton, *A Cornell Album*, p.115.
25. *Vanitas* means 'emptiness' in Latin, a reference to life's transience. *Vanitas* painting was developed in the Netherlands and Flanders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and was a technique of still life painting, in which the objects depicted were imbued with particular symbolic dimensions. These items were *memento mori* – reminders of death – like skulls, fading flowers, rotting fruit, and symbols of time such as hourglasses and clocks.
26. Rachel Carley, 'Domestic Afterlives: Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost*', p.26.
27. See, for example, Iain Sinclair, *London: City of Disappearances*.
28. Rachel Lichtenstein in Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair, *Rodinsky's Room*, p.32.
29. See for example Herve Chandès, *Francesca Woodman*.
30. Jordan Cantor, 'Tacita Dean at Peter Blum Gallery 2002', p.138.

31. EM Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair*, p.30.
32. Anselm Kiefer in Alan Riding, 'An Artist sets up House(s) at the Grand Palais'.
33. Bernd Heinrich Wilhelm von Kleist cited in Linda Siegel, 'Synaesthesia and the Paintings of Caspar David Friedrich', p.204.
34. See Peter Toohey and Kathleen Toohey (2004), 'Giorgio de Chirico, Time, Odysseus, Melancholy, and Intestinal Disorder'.
35. Olaf Blanke Theodor Landis, 'The Metaphysical Art of Giorgio de Chirico: Migraine or Epilepsy?'.
36. Rolf Günter Renner, *Edward Hopper, 1882-1967: Transformation of the Real*, p.80.
37. See Susanne Lange, *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work*.
38. See Constance Glenn, Virginia Heckert and Mary-Jane Lombino, *Candida Höfer: The Architecture of Absence*.
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42. Carol Diehl, 'The Toxic Sublime', p.120.
43. See Edward Burtynsky and Lori Pauli, *Manufactured Landscapes: The Photographs of Edward Burtynsky*.
44. See for example the new translation in the Modern Library series, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.
45. François-René Chateaubriand, *Atala and René*.
46. Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*.
47. James Beattie, *The Poetical Works of James Beattie*, p.129.
48. David Fairer, Christine Gerrard, *Eighteenth-century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, p.392.
49. André Breton, *Nadja*, pp.159-160.
50. WG Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, p.11.
51. *ibid*, pp.63-65.
52. WG Sebald, *The Emigrants*.
53. WG Sebald, *Vertigo*.
54. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp.17-18.
55. Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, p.80.
56. *ibid*, p.95

57. Georges Rodenbach, *Bruges-la-Morte*, p.73.
58. *ibid*, p.72.
59. Gustave Flaubert, *November*, p.21.
60. Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, p.133.
61. Gustave Flaubert, *November*, p.90.
62. *ibid*, p.24–25.
63. Roger Caillois, ‘Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia’, p.20.
64. Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, p.133.
65. Georges Rodenbach, *Bruges-la-Morte*, p.21.
66. Alastair Hannay, ‘Introduction’ in Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, p.9.
67. Gustave Flaubert, *November*, p.21.
68. WG Sebald, *Vertigo*, p.35.
69. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, p.43.
70. WG Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, p.205.
71. From the *Dictionary of Received Ideas* in Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, p.316.
72. Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, p.141.
73. Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, p.258.
74. Robert Burton, *An Anatomy of Melancholy*, p.459–460.
75. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, p.231.
76. Jon Pareles, ‘Melancholy Melodies in Armenian Tradition’.
77. Edward Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland*, p.58.
78. Federico García Lorca, *In Search of Duende*, p.49.
79. Cited in Shelia Fitzpatrick, ‘Happiness and *Toska*: An Essay in the History of Emotions in Pre-war Soviet Russia’, p.368.
80. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, pp.238–239, note 59.
81. W Wright Roberts, ‘The Problem of Satie’, p.315.
82. Geoff Smith, ‘An Interview with Arvo Pärt: Sources of Invention’, p.24.
83. Wilfrid Howard Mellers, *Celestial Music?: Some Masterpieces of European Religious Music*, p.14.
84. Ivan Moody, ‘Giya Kancheli: An Introduction to His Music’, p.50.

85. Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique'.
86. Susan Bradshaw, 'Giya Kancheli – 'Life without Christmas''.
87. Christopher Mark, 'Messiaen: 'Quatuor pour la fin du temps' by Anthony Pople', p.144.
88. Michael Gordon, Sleeve notes, *Decasia: The State of Decay*.
89. Geoffrey Himes, 'Tom Waits', In Mark Montandon, *Innocent When You Dream: The Tom Waits Reader*, p.57.
90. Tom Waits, *Nighthawks at the Diner*.
91. Tom Waits, *Alice*.
92. Nick Cave, *Murder Ballads*.
93. Robert Burton, *An Anatomy of Melancholy*, p.xi.
94. Nick Cave, *Abattoir Blues*.
95. Nick Cave, *The Secret Life of the Love Song; The Flesh made Word*. Also in Nick Cave, *The Complete Lyrics 1978-2001*.
96. Nick Cave, *No More Shall We Part*.
97. Nick Cave, *The Secret Life of the Love Song; The Flesh made Word*. Also in Nick Cave, *The Complete Lyrics 1978-2001*.
98. Nick Cave, *The Boatman's Call*.
99. *ibid*.
100. Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness*.
101. Thomas Moore, *The Care of the Soul*, p.46.
102. Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors*, p.50.
103. Orhan Pamuk *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, frontispiece.
104. Roy Strong, *The Renaissance Garden in England*, p.216.
105. Rico Franses, 'Monuments and Melancholia'.
106. In Jacky Bowring, 'To Make the Stone[s] Stony: Defamiliarization and Andy Goldsworthy's Garden of Stones', p.184.
107. 'Stranded objects' is Eric Santner's term, who in turn attributes it to a colleague who provided it unknowingly. See Eric L Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory and Film in Postwar Germany*.
108. Germain Viatte, 'Passages', In *Dani Karavan: Passages – Homage to Walter Benjamin*, p.78.
109. Jean Starobinski, *The Invention of Liberty, 1700-1789*, p.180.
110. Susan Stewart, 'Garden Agon', p.119.
111. See Kent Larson, *Louis I. Kahn: Unbuilt Masterworks*.
112. In Jürgen Straub, *Narration, Identity and Historical Consciousness*, p.249.

113. Tarnya Cooper, 'Forgetting Room and the voice of Piranesi's 'Speaking Ruins'', p.115.
114. Thomas Macaulay in Bernard H Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p.332.
115. See Gustave Doré and Blanchard Jerrold, *London: A Pilgrimage*.
116. Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins*, p.1.
117. Robert Smithson in Ann Reynolds, *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere*, p.114.
118. Robert Smithson, 'The Monuments of Passaic', p.51.
119. Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, 'Terrain Vague'. In Cynthia Davidson (ed) *Anyplace*.
120. In Roger Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p.30.
121. *ibid*.
122. Boullée in Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, p.170.
123. Boullée in *ibid*, pp.168-170.

By Way of Conclusion:
Melancholy and the Imagination

By Way of Conclusion: Melancholy and the Imagination

*There is no imagination that is not overtly, or secretly,
melancholy.*

Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*¹

The *Field Guide* began by announcing its advocacy of melancholy, and ends with the entreaty that while an ‘architecture of happiness’ is necessary, so too is an architecture of sadness, all of those words and worlds where melancholy can inhere, a habitat for a depth of being.

The complexities and contradictions of melancholy’s place within the science of psychiatry, and the aspiration towards a ‘cure’, will continue to be in tension with melancholy’s association with genius, beauty, and creative impetus. The worry is that the over-diagnosis of melancholia, and the treatment of sadness, will throw the baby out with the bathwater. To lose the depths of melancholic contemplation as a consequence of the elimination of sadness is a spectre which haunts the objectification of melancholy.

David Cooper, in his introduction to Michel Foucault’s seminal work *Madness and Civilization*, described how in reading the book:

one is awakened to a tragic sense of the loss involved in the relegation of the wildly charismatic or inspirational

area of our experience to the desperate region of pseudo-medical categorization from which clinical psychiatry has sprung.²

This profoundly resonates with another potent passage from that same year, Giorgio Agamben's lament for the relegation of the imagination in contemporary culture:

Nothing can convey the extent of the change that has taken place in the meaning of experience so much as the resulting reversal of the status of the imagination. For Antiquity, the imagination, which is now expunged from knowledge as 'unreal,' was the supreme medium of knowledge.³

To lose melancholy is to be deprived of one of the imagination's refuges, the dark interior realm where thoughts fly. They fuel one another. Melancholy slows things, allows for percolation, facilitates solitude and solace for imagination. And imagination makes space for melancholy, they work together to construct the allied experiences of nostalgia, reverie, sorrow, shadows. The *Field Guide* proffers destinations for the imagination, an aerial perspective, an overview, a tool for embracing the human condition.

Notes

1. Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, p.6.
2. David Cooper, Introduction. In Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, p.viii.
3. Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*, p.11.

A Note on Laurence Aberhart

A Note on Laurence Aberhart

Laurence Aberhart's photographs are 'eloquent ciphers for loss, time and beauty'.¹ In their curious emptiness, stillness, they evoke the very core of a melancholy which seems both universal, and also particularly tuned to the darkness of New Zealand. When contemplating the question, 'What does melancholy look like?', Aberhart's photographs would come to mind, their brooding presence recalling memories that remain mired somewhere just beyond the present. The images in this book capture just a small fragment of his oeuvre, many of which featured in a major show which has toured New Zealand over the past couple of years, and which is represented by the book *Aberhart*.² The cover image of the *Field Guide*, 'Last Light, Tolaga Bay, 30 May 1989', presents an icon of melancholy; hovering at a liminal place, where the sea meets the sky, at a liminal time, the time of twilight. And it is, as in the case of the most profoundly melancholy events, a paradox. Tolaga Bay is located on New Zealand's East Coast, and it is the part of the country, and the world, that sees the first light of every day, such is its proximity to the dateline, and it is here that Aberhart captures the 'last light'. The keying into time, that singular preoccupation of melancholy, of Saturn, of Chronos, is carefully marked in Aberhart's work. Across the four decades of his oeuvre, each photograph has its exact date as part of the title.

Laurence Aberhart's work is represented in all of the major galleries in New Zealand, as well as in Australia at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. In the USA his work is in the Readers Digest Collection, Pleasantville, and the Hallmark Card Collection, Kansas City. And in France at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. Aberhart has been awarded Fulbright and Moet and Chandon Fellowships, and has been the artist in residence at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Recent exhibitions include *Serial Works: Last Light & Domestic Architecture*, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia (2003); *Laurence Aberhart*, The Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2002); *Asia, Japan*, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia; *Macau, China, Japan*, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand; *Ghostwriting: Photographs of Macau*, Macau Museum of Art, Macau; John Batten Gallery, Hong Kong; *Laurence Aberhart in Japan*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand (2001).

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia, for supplying the cover image, and to Victoria University Press, Wellington, New Zealand, for the remaining images. Special thanks to Laurence Aberhart for the use of his photographs.

Notes

1. David Eggleton, *Into the Light: A History of New Zealand Photography*, p.146.
2. Laurence Aberhart, *Aberhart*.

Further Reading and Bibliography

Melancholy, melancholia, and all that circles around it, is a vast sphere of thought. While this *Field Guide* is intended as a means of appreciating the idea of melancholy, by necessity it can only hint at some of the extensive debates and discourses on the topic. There are some substantial major works on melancholy, with particular thematic or disciplinary focuses. In terms of melancholy within art, Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl's significant tome on *Saturn and Melancholy* traces that particular thread in great detail, with the culmination of the work being a thorough discussion of Dürer's *Melencolia I*. A critique of Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl's discussion is developed by Giorgio Agamben in *Stanzas* (1993). More recently, a major exhibition on melancholy in art was staged by the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais in Paris (2005), and the catalogue, *Mélancolie: Génie et Folie en Occident*, published by Gallimard is a comprehensive overview of the various melancholic expressions in art. It is well-illustrated, and contains essays on a number of themes. To date, the catalogue is only available in French.

A number of the historic texts on melancholy have been republished and are available as recent editions. There is a range of versions of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, including the very accessible short version published by Dover, *The Essential Anatomy of Melancholy*

(2002). Unfortunately Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl's key work, *Saturn and Melancholy* has never been republished, and the only editions are those from 1964. Some foreign-language editions are available through specialist rare bookshops, but copies in English seem even rarer. Andrés Velázquez's *Libro de la Melancholia* (1585) was recently republished by M. Baroni (2002), but is only available in Spanish. Jacques Ferrand's *A Treatise on Lovesickness* (1623) was translated into English and published by Syracuse University Press (1994).

Jennifer Radden's *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (2000) presents a number of extracts from key sources, and a major critical essay, with an emphasis on the history of psychology. A complementary source to this is the earlier work by Stanley W Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (1986), which presents a chronology of the relationship between melancholia and clinical depression. And even earlier, Michel Foucault's seminal *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961) is useful further reading for a deconstruction of 'mental illness' including melancholia.

Two recent conferences present a breadth of scholarship on melancholy. From the realm of the humanities, 'Culture and Melancholy' was the topic of the conference held in 2002 at the University of Kent, England, with papers published in *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 33, 2003. As is characteristic of many studies of melancholy, the conference exhibited melancholy's resistance to a simple explanation. And from the domain of science, the conference 'Melancholia: Beyond DSM, Beyond Neurotransmitters' was held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2006,

with papers published in a special issue 433 of *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 2007. Again the discourse is characterised by a grappling for definitions of melancholia.

There are also a number of more specific studies, exploring melancholy at particular time periods or tight disciplinary focuses, for example Jeremy Schmidt's *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul* which focuses on Early Modern England and Max Pensky's *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning* which provides a detailed overview of the early twentieth century as it relates to Benjamin and his peers. The melancholy of the twentieth century in relation to issues of race is explored in Paul Gilroy's *Postcolonial Melancholia* and Anne Anlin Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race*. Dylan Trigg's book on *The Aesthetics of Decay* and Robert Ginsburg's on *The Aesthetics of Ruins* explore some of the haunts of melancholy, and provide useful complementary reading.

In the field of psychology, and particularly psychoanalysis, Julia Kristeva's *Black Sun* is an important source on the relationship of melancholy to the human condition. The writings of Hannah Segal and Melanie Klein both extend the work on Freudian psychoanalysis and melancholy, developing their own ideas, for example in the relationships to the death drive, and to the creative impulse. Esther Sanchez-Pardos's *Cultures of the Death Drive: Melanie Klein and Modernist Melancholia* provides an in-depth discussion, and relates Klein's works to the reading of contemporary literature. For further reading on the specific relationship between melancholy and genius see Kay Redfield Jamison's *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*. Further reading in the area of psychiatry covers a vast spectrum ranging from

Peter D Kramer's promotion of the psychiatric perspective on melancholy as depression to Dan G Blazer's *The Age of Melancholy* which supports the efforts psychiatry needs to make, not only in pharmaceutical terms, but also in reaching a better understanding of the sociology of depression. Blazer voices concerns over the numbing effects of contemporary culture, longer working hours, increasing individualisation and isolation, and assaults by the advertising industry. At the other extreme, Allan V Horwitz and Jerome C Wakefield's *The Loss of Sadness*, takes the view that psychiatry is constructing illness for diagnosis, and this is causing a substantial exaggeration in the terrain of mental illness. Eric G Wilson's *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy* argues for melancholia as an essential part of creativity.

Memoirs of melancholia, or what are more recently called 'depression memoirs' are a further form of reading on melancholia. In *Speaking of Sadness: Depression, Disconnection, and the Meanings of Illness* David Carp recounts his own, and his interviewees' experience of depression. Rick Moody's *The Black Veil* is one of the most well-known of such contemporary accounts.

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