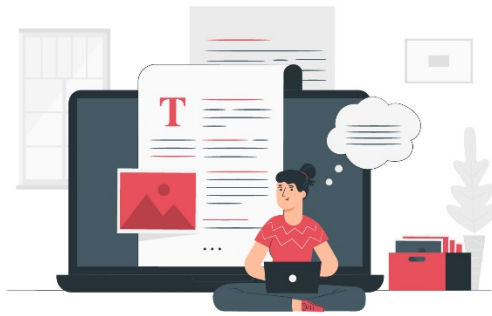


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## **The Depiction of a Masculine Model of Melancholy Genius in William Collins’ “Ode to Fear”**

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### **Abstract:**

This study aims to investigate the work of William Collins’ “Ode to Fear” in terms of the representation of the melancholic mind of the authorial persona and the subjective experience of the state. The study suggests that the authorial persona deliberately provides a masculine model of melancholy genius and gender the melancholy itself to construct a cultivated melancholic self and promote himself as a knowledgeable author. The study furthermore suggests that the historical author transposes his dark melancholy on the symbolic into a form of white melancholy as the implied author on the semiotics through poetics. The persona thus achieves a recuperation on the textual realm via negation and sublimation and provides a therapeutic cure for both the historical and implied readerships as well as for himself. The study is primarily based upon the theories of Julia Kristeva and Robert Burton and distinguishes white melancholy from dark melancholy in terms of being the aestheticized form through art. In this regard, the narrative delivers a maternal realm for the authorial persona to manage his melancholy states while he directly confronts, contends with and challenges against the condition within the text itself, overcoming his melancholy in the end.

**Keywords:** Collins, dark melancholy, semiotics, melancholy, ode.

### **Introduction**

Despite his tragically brief career, Collins gained recognition for his prodigious literary output that has substantially contributed to the legacy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century British poetry. The quintessence of his lyrics is determined as “tenderness, tinged with melancholy, beautiful imagery, a fondness for allegory and abstract ideas, purity and chasteness of sentiment, and an exquisite ear for harmony” (Barbauld vii). In this regard, his verse is correspondingly significant in that it reveals the melancholic and destabilized nature of the

author. According to Johnson, what Collins is afflicted with is not simply a melancholic temperament fitting to a scholar but a disorder characterized by “not alienation of mind but general laxity and feebleness, a deficiency rather of his vital than intellectual powers: what he spoke wanted neither judgement nor spirit” (7). His condition was indisputably associated with and triggered by the demise of his uncle as well since “the approaches of this dreadful malady he began to feel soon after his uncle’s death, and with the usual weakness of men so diseased, eagerly snatched that temporary relief with which the table and the bottle flatter and seduce” (Johnson 3). Baker diagnoses what Collins suffered during his lifetime with a form of madness and states that “William Collins, Christopher Smart and Cowper spent periods in madhouses. Yet this bleak picture is only a part of the story of melancholy and poetry in the period, and only a part of the story of the poetry of those writers” (Ingram et al. 86). Therefore, it might be suggested that the mental health of Collins was accordingly impaired by the available socioeconomic conditions of the era. In a period when “it was a time marked by inappreciation of genius and by the tyranny of booksellers” (Ross 42), making a living out of writing as a financially dependent author and earning a reputation as a man of letters was mentally challenging particularly for a poet like him whose “the immortal “Odes” of Collins had been left unsold on the book sellers' shelves” (Ross 43). Due to these financial problems and other reasons related with family tragedies, he had been in and out of house of lunatics at intervals even though most scholars reach a consensus that the illness was initially ignited by the death of his uncle. In light of recent medical findings, the retrospective diagnosis of the poet’s mental condition with manic-depressive disorder might prove correspondingly probable although there is not one single explanation for the case as the evidence suggested by the texts and scholars of the period is not sufficient in itself (Wendorf 99). Yet, it might be suggested that the personality of Collins is essentially what leads to the emergence of the disorder in the poet in the first place, a significant aspect of the close relationship between illness and character, and his subjective experience of melancholy manifests itself in his poetics in the form of scholarly malady, not of as a mood state. Within this framework, the present paper analyses the ode of the poet in terms of the relationship between the representation of the poetic persona and the subjective experience of melancholy. The study suggests that the implied author purposely provides a depiction of a masculine model of melancholy genius to promote himself and the poetic self as an intellectual and cultivated man. The study furthermore indicates that the authorial persona achieves a recuperation on the textual realm and transforms the dark melancholy the historical author experiences into a white melancholy with the implied author via poetics. As the critical reading of a text covers the examination of the specific “period” in which the text was written,

the present study aims to examine “the implied author, the historical context of the work, and textual elements” (Çıraklı vi).

### **Theoretical Review: Masculinized Melancholy and Aestheticized Experience**

The emergence of humanism and reformation in the Renaissance era annihilates the scholastic notion of melancholy of the medieval period established within the framework of theology and morality, and redefines the concept as the natural temperament of the man of genius or *homo melancholicus*. The view that there exists an essential relationship between melancholy and intellectual pursuits flourishes primarily in this age and remains prevalent throughout the later periods. The association of melancholy with intellectually inspired genius assigns the term to manly qualities, gendering the concept within itself while female melancholy is naturally suggested to be caused by the bodily factors, such as menstruous blood and female sexuality. This anew and increasingly masculinized form of melancholy genius is particularly promoted by the male scholars of the era and the ensuing ages, such as Marsilio Ficino and Robert Burton, especially the latter might be universally acknowledged to endorse the idea of melancholy as a scholarly malady and a direct outcome of excessive love for learning and overmuch study, associating the temperament with the style of life and voluntary solitariness of the male intellectuals.

Burton provides an account of male melancholic subjectivity that “inevitably represents melancholy in the man of genius and genius in the man of melancholy” (Radden 47) and categorizes two types of melancholy, melancholy in disposition and melancholy in habit, the former is classified as a kind of mood or transient feeling whereas the latter is identified as “a chronic or continue disease, a settled humour, as Aurelianus and others call it, not errant, but fixed; and as it was long increasing, so now being (pleasant, or painful) grown to a habit, it will hardly be removed” (Burton 128). Scholars are continuingly subject to melancholy in habit which is aggravated by the distinctive style of life they are compelled to lead. Enforced solitariness, being an avid admirer for literary interests and intellectual aspirations, an eternal search within for the sublime and the creative impulse, emotional excess that proves essential to the creativity itself, a streak of masochism in the artistic personality and overriding ambition burning within to self-actualize substantially contribute to the inborn tendency for melancholy and the saturnine nature of the male subject. He is drifted towards melancholy meditations and deep contemplations as

these fantastical and bewitching thoughts so covertly, so feelingly; so urgently, so continually set upon, creep in, insinuate, possess, overcome, distract and detain them, they cannot, I say, go about their more necessary business, stave off or extricate themselves, but are ever musing, melancholizing, and carried along... (Burton 209)

Hypersensitivity of the scholar about his elusive inner self and his ongoing attempt at self-understanding makes him vulnerable to sorrow and fear, which in itself constitute the core characteristics of melancholy. Apart from this, abiding love for learning, overmuch study, sedentary and monastic life, the search for an identity and a source of inspiration and the disorderly imagination cause the disease of the learned in the male subject as "many men (saith he) come to this malady by continual study, and nightwaking, and of all other men, scholars are most subject to it" (Burton 256). Being a victim of this scholar's malady, Burton "combines his roles of patient and physician to help his reader throughout the work" (Lund 145) so that he provides the intended readers with a portrayal of the disease in such a way that "in some cases melancholy is seen as a cause of genius, and in others as a consequence of it" (Bowring 33).

Writing of the melancholic experience through constructing a poetic self and reconstructing the identity as a writer tranquilizes the mental suffering since literature offers a form of redemption for the afflicted subject. Burton creates a narrative out of his dark melancholy to ease his mind by writing, stating that "I write of melancholy by being busy to avoid melancholy" (36) so that the act of writing provides a powerful antidote for the malady while the act of reading the book soothes the already melancholic temperament of his readers. As a transformative act, writing in itself and for itself brings the writing and thus transformed persona into his own subjective confrontation with the content of his melancholy for "the exploration of the meaning of the 'self' and the interpretation of the meaning of melancholia in relation to that search for the self as represented in written self-portraits" (Ingram et al. 142-143) only becomes possible via writing. Writing enables the subject to begin a new search for self-knowledge, self-discovery, identity and a brand new self via building an I and revealing the unknown self so that in a way these turn out to be "narratives of transformation that depict a shift from a self that has become fractured by suffering to one that emerges whole, cleansed and redeemed" (Ingram et al. 157).

Burton's notion of writing as a therapeutic device is theoretically supported by Julia Kristeva in her *Black Sun*. Kristeva establishes a strong connection between the melancholic

writer and melancholic writing, emphasizing that what enforces the subject to utter silence forms the central and essential core of his writing, securing a firm bond with the language. The very essence of melancholy is captured as “a noncommunicable grief” (3) and asymbolia that ends up with the loss of speech for the subject to such an extent that he pretends to be dead and reunites with the lost Thing amid this muteness and sadness. The boundary between the self and the lost Thing is so merged and blurred that the loss becomes a part of the self that is now wholly lost. This unconscious introjection and incorporation brings about a form of masochism in the melancholic subject who can only achieve in managing this state through poetic production and poetic form “which decomposes and recomposes signs, is the sole “container” seemingly able to secure an uncertain but adequate hold over the thing” (14). Literary creation is the textual evidence of the affect, the only sign of object constancy, so that “it transposes affect into rhythms, signs, forms” as the ““semiotic” and the “symbolic” become the communicable imprint of an affective reality, perceptible to the reader” (22). This textualization of the affect helps the subject grasp the core of the melancholy, recover the loss with aesthetic productions and overcome the symbolic breakdown. The denial of the signifier is surmounted with the use of negation that in fact “will be understood as the intellectual process that leads the repressed to representation on the condition of denying it and, on that account, shares in the signifier’s advent” (44) in a way “that inserts an aspect of desire and unconscious idea into consciousness” (45). Without negation or sublimation, the denial ends up with the psychosis on the part of the subject. Via literary creation that “insures the rebirth of its author and its reader or viewer” (51), the melancholic recreates a new self and identity for himself so that “hence such a fiction, if it isn’t antidepressant, is at least a survival, a resurrection” (51). The semiotic realm of the poetic production provides a maternal realm for the melancholic who reaches a form of forgiveness and establishes a new relationship with his own self since “writing, however, is the strange way that allows him to overcome such wretchedness by setting up an “I” that controls both aspects of deprivation” (145). Through negation, the melancholic identifies with the third form, the sublime, except for the loss, the lack or the nonrepresentable Thing itself. Within this framework, the present paper aims to analyse the ode of Collins in terms of the representation of the melancholic character as the disease of the learned man basing the critical discussion upon the masculine model of melancholy outlined by Burton and to reveal that the historical author wilfully constructs and presents a masculinized version of melancholy to promote himself and the poetic self as a well-read man of letters. The study accordingly suggests that the historical author transposes, transfigures and transforms the dark melancholy he is afflicted with on the symbolic into a milder form of white melancholy via the aestheticized

experience through the signs and semiotics. The study chiefly makes use of the theory of Kristeva related to negation and sublimation to support this argument. In this respect, the text functions both as the symptom of and cure for the melancholy states of the historical and implied authors while the act of reading turns out to offer a remedy for the attentive readers, both historical and implied.

### **The Analysis of the Narrative**

"Ode to Fear" might be referred to as one of the most remarkable poems in the complete collection even though "William Collins produced a small body of work, and his modern reputation as a poet rests primarily on one slim, twelve-poem volume" (Bergstrom 29) entitled *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects* (1746). For Marion, "Ode to Fear" is a work that is to be distinguished from the other odes in the volume in that "the next poem in Collins' volume of odes, the "Ode to Fear," provides probably the best example of the conjunction in his work of fervent invocation and an obscure syntax, of intense self-consciousness and a consequent failure of poetic expression" (125). In the first place, the very title of the narrative turns out to be a direct reference to the melancholy of the historical author and provides the implied and historical readers the clue of overcoming the state of fear, anxiety and dejection, at least within textual realm, since "Collins, of course, draws attention to the twofold role of personification in the title of his work, and his readers knew that they were being invited to imagine the "reality," as it were, of the personification" (Bergstrom 30). The term 'ode' literally refers to the poetic form that consists of three sections as strophe, antistrophe and epode, and "there was the ode where one was supposed to have more freedom, though as a matter of fact this form was almost as completely petrified as the didactic poem or the satire" (McKillop 7). Besides the intrinsic simplicity and uniqueness of the literary form, Collins prefers the ode and "abandons the traditional lyric themes for the subjects of poetry and other poets" (M. Collins 363). In terms of the associations of the ode, it might be suggested that it has positive connotations, and the prosodic implications note a positive state. "Ode to Fear" implies that the poetic persona has the courage of surmounting, or at least, directly confronting with fear itself, and once penned, the text turns into a means of evident relief, alleviation, cure and therapy for both the reader and writer as well as the textual evidence of the melancholy state of the authorial persona. Therefore, the poem initially provides a hint of transformation of dark melancholy into a white melancholy through aesthetic representation in itself and for itself. The paradoxical combination of ode and fear acknowledges the ambivalence rooted in the nature of the suffering mind and the twofold characteristic of the psychological state inherent

in the very essence of the melancholic persona: pain and pleasure are merged and blurred or both hated-and-loved object/Thing of melancholy.

Poetic diction is characterized by the extreme sensibility and overactive imagination of the historical author. Primarily, the narrative's beginning and ending with the phrases "Thou" and "Thee" implies the gruelling dominance of the Goddess Fear throughout the narrative over the awfully hypersensitive and hesitant authorial persona of Collins. Obscurity and ambiguity of the addressee's identity till the very end of the first stanza, the use of repetitive phrases, the poetic self-consciousness, the elusive structure and syntax prevailing the text despite the allegorical form as well as the abundant employment of exclamation and question marks over the course of the text all signify that the persona feels helpless, timid, aghast, hysterical and terrorized in the very presence of Fear even though he makes a bold attempt to hold a dialogue with and confront against her. The frustration and discomfort of the authorial persona shapes his discourse and style as Marion states, "the difficult syntax of such an opening reflects the poet's obvious attempt to phrase his initial address so carefully, respectfully and comprehensively, that he packs too much into too few lines" (125). As Collins deifies the Fear with such strong expressions as "the world unknown" (line 1) and "with all its shadowy Shapes is shown" (line 2), he simultaneously languishes and weakens himself in her presence and eventually yields to her. As a matter of fact, the persona's attributing such supreme qualities to the Goddess may be explained as another reason for his escalating melancholy and anxiety over the course of the narrative even though it should be emphasized that "the poems are ultimately not about the emotions themselves, but about the poetic manifestation of them" (M. Collins 363).

Thou, to whom the world unknown  
 With all its shadowy shapes is shown;  
 Who see'st appalled the unreal scene,  
 While Fancy lifts the veil between:  
 Ah Fear! Ah frantic Fear!  
 I see, I see thee near.  
 I know thy hurried step, thy haggard eye!  
 Like thee I start, like thee disordered fly.  
 For lo, what monsters in thy train appear! (Collins 22-23)



The poem begins with an invocation, a form of depressed voice of the speaker, who addresses the personified "Fear," which, according to Burton, is the main characteristic of melancholia with sorrow, as he defines the concept "fear and sorrow are the true characters and inseparable companions of most melancholy" (152). As "their beginning is commonly abrupt and bold; often a spirited apostrophe" (Barbauld xviii), the narrative opens abruptly with a direct address to the personified Fear. Wendorf interprets the initial lines of the narrative as "in the poem's opening lines, poetic imagination melodramatically lifts the veil separating the author from the "shad'wy Tribes of Mind," the world of cloudy forms that lies within" (112). Similarly, the persona commences to unveil his hitherto secret mind and soul with the text, lifting the veil between himself and his intended readers. In line (5), the poet calls out as "Ah Fear! Ah frantic Fear!" (line 6) in a way that is hysterically distraught and overcome with fear, and perceiving fear as frantic as he becomes over the course of the text. In return, Fear challenges the poetic persona and makes her very presence known and be felt, as the speaker wails in a paranoiac way "I see, I see thee near" (line 7) which in fact signifies the attack of typically chronic melancholy. The self-confessed melancholic persona is represented to be already familiar with "thy hurried step" and "thy haggard eye" (line 5), in a way comparing Fear with the hawk to reveal the excruciating pain of melancholy. He moreover stutters and gives a murmur of agitation as he states that "Like thee I start, like thee disordered fly" (line 7) that as a matter of fact unbosoms his disorderly imagination and chaotic mood state. Therefore, the poetic persona perceives and discerns Fear as he is, and the mental state he truly experiences at the moment of writing shapes his language and discourse as he envisages Fear. He stutters, murmurs and reveals repetitions and hesitations over and over on the textual realm. In (line 9), the persona keeps addressing the Fear ejaculating "For lo" and talks about the "monsters" that Fear masquerades and brings forth. These monsters might signify the recurring symptoms of melancholy that afflict him now and then.

Danger, whose limbs of giant mould  
What mortal eye can fixed behold?  
Who stalks his round, an hideous form,  
Howling amidst the midnight storm,  
Or throws him on the ridgy steep  
Of some loose hanging rock to sleep  
And with him thousand phantoms joined,  
Who prompt to deeds accursed the mind;

And those, the fiends who, near allied,  
 O'er nature's wounds and wrecks preside;  
 Whilst Vengeance in the lurid air  
 Lifts her red arm, exposed and bare,  
 On whom that ravening brood of fate,  
 Who lap the blood of sorrow, wait;  
 Who, Fear, this ghastly train can see,  
 And look not madly wild like thee? (Collins 23)

The speaker refers to the monsters Fear falls pregnant, such as danger and vengeance. In these lines, the persona compares and contrasts the Fear with external objects, describes her with vivid imagery in order to draw a more concrete and real image of the Fear he is exposed to and often haunted with. His use of personal pronoun is significant in that it reveals the persona's attitude towards and the relationship with these concepts or conflicting emotions. He refers to Danger as he, Fear as she and Vengeance as she, which implies that these accompanying symptoms are all welcome on the part of the historical author, except for the Danger itself. Moreover, that the persona writes about all those things that Fear harbours within his Train, such as Monsters, Danger, Vengeance, Phantoms and Sorrow, explicitly reveals that there occur times when he is enslaved, conquered and vanquished by Fear and his reign. He turns out to be as mad and frantic as the Fear itself, and perceives Fear as he perceives himself: wild, delusional, insane and overtly hysterical. The mood he is in shapes his perception towards melancholy in addition to towards himself so that he experiences the loss of a coherent self and the loss of a sense of self. The boundaries of the self and melancholy are already blurred.

### **Epode**

In earliest Greece, to thee, with partial choice,  
 The grief-full muse address her infant tongue;  
 The maids and matrons, on her awful voice,  
 Silent and pale, in wild amazement hung.  
 Yet he, the bard who first invoked thy name,  
 Disdained in Marathon its power to feel;  
 For not alone he nursed the poet's flame,  
 But reached from virtue's hand the patriot's steel.  
 But who is he whom later garlands grace,

Who left awhile o'er Hybla's dew to rove,  
With trembling eyes thy dreary steps to trace,  
Where thou and furies shared the baleful grove?  
Wrapt in thy cloudy veil, the incestuous queen  
Sighed the sad call her son and husband heard,  
When once alone it broke the silent scene,  
And he, the wretch of Thebes, no more appeared.  
O fear, I know thee by my throbbing heart:  
Thy withering power inspired each mournful line:  
Though gentle pity claim her mingled part,  
Yet all the thunders of the scene are thine! (Collins 23-24)

The epode section provides the readers with a masculinized version of melancholy associated with genius and creative talents. To construct a cultivated poetic self and reveal the relationship between melancholy and artistic temperament, the persona alludes to the literary muse and Greek drama. He suggests that scholars make use of melancholy as a muse to derive inspiration while they retire within themselves and experience contemplative solitude. Through providing the readers with a comprehensive account of literary history, the poet promotes himself as a scholar as well, showing intelligence and knowledge on his part, and states that he accordingly transforms his melancholy into poetic production like his predecessors.

The persona correspondingly refers to the history of the Fear, starting with the "earliest Greece" (line 26) and, with the choice of the word "partial" (line 26) implies that throughout history, artists are at times exposed to Fear with willing obedience and at times Fear victimizes them despite their strenuous efforts to be set free. Scholars often deliberately melancholize and invoke the muse of melancholy to produce works of art so that melancholy becomes the transformative object, a form of inspiration and a precondition for philosophical insights. Such willing obedience is a direct reference to masochistic facet of melancholy at the same time since pain and pleasure, cure and sickness, and symptom and cause are harmoniously co-mingled in melancholy. As an artist, you have to suffer to write, but as an individual, you desire to be released from the agony; your melancholy becomes the ideal disease of self-expression while it aggravates the pain and sometimes leads to inhibitions. On the part of the historical author, the phrase "partial choice" (line 26) pertains to the melancholic willingness of the poetic persona and the poet in that the persona and the poet together remind of the Goddess Fear of

their own deliberate choice so that she can endow mercy on them and help them keep writing and surviving.

The poet compares the goddess Fear with the Furies (line 37), regarding them as similar in terms of avenging and echoing from the depths of the underworld. The Furies are, as a matter of fact, believed to be the avengers of the evil, “especially those that involved bloodshed in a family or among kin” (Nardo 52). Since the punishment of the Furies does end in the underworld, the Goddess Fear, too, continues her revenge and retribution plaguing the melancholic persona with her whips and torches like those of the Furies both in life and after death. The Fear is thirsty for revenge, for punishment and for never-ending wrath while the urge to fall into self-exile and being doomed to exhibit irrational and self-destructive behaviour is at times caused by the sense of fear. It is the Goddess Fear that leads Jocasta to suicide and Oedipus to permanent spiritual and physical exile from the viewpoint of the persona.

In the last stanza of the epode (lines 42-45), the melancholic persona reveals his subjective experience of Fear once more, addressing “O Fear” and stating, “I know Thee by my throbbing Heart” (line 42). The poet gripped in the hands of melancholy displays psychosomatic symptoms which can be read as a reference to Burton's description of melancholy as both a physical and spiritual disease. He keeps addressing melancholy as "Thou" and states that "thy with'ring Pow'r" (line 43) of melancholy "inspir'd each mournful Line" (line 43) which might be interpreted as the relationship between literature and disease, literature serving both as a symptom of and a cure for melancholy. What leads the poet to compose such powerful lines and helps him overcome his feelings of dejection via textualization is melancholy that has afflicted him for years as an individual and an artist. Collins once more refers to the melancholy as the malady of scholars, stating that melancholy is strongly suggestive of artistic temperament and that is why he is subject to this disease without any clear underlying cause and writes in order to tranquilize his mental suffering and regulate his mind. Furthermore, what Collins mourns for in these lines as a poet is not due to death, loss (absence) of a beloved person. His suffrage, however, signposts his prolonged anguish due to his lifetime occupant melancholy (presence), which is a poetic representation of manic-depressive state of mind co-mingled with fear and anxiety. It is this very Fear and melancholy that manipulate the poet gradually, stirring his nerves as well as lines. As the poetic persona claims sincerely and earnestly begging the Goddess Fear for mercy, he approves the supremacy of Fear over anyone and anything. As Collins praises Fear, he asks for her Favour through acknowledging her strength via his poetry as well.

### **Antistrophe**

Thou who such weary lengths hast past,  
Where wilt thou rest, mad nymph, at last?  
Say, wilt thou shroud in haunted cell,  
Where gloomy rape and murder dwell?  
Or, in some hollowed seat,  
'Gainst which the big waves beat,  
Hear drowning seamen's cries, in tempests brought?  
Dark power, with shuddering meek submitted thought,  
Be mine to read the visions old  
Which thy awakening bards have told:  
And, lest thou meet my blasted view,  
Hold each strange tale devoutly true;  
Ne'er be I found, by thee o'erawed,  
In that thrice hallowed eve, abroad,  
When ghosts, as cottage maids believe,  
Their pebbled beds permitted leave;  
And goblins haunt, from fire, or fen,  
Or mine, or flood, the walks of men!  
O thou, whose spirit most possest (Collins 24-25)

In the antistrophe section, after providing a brief outline of the history of Fear, the poet compares the Goddess Fear with a nymph growing restless. The persona compares his ever-present melancholy to a female figure once more, revealing the intimate relationship between him and melancholy personified as a lustful dame or mistress in the traditional notion of the literary muse. He in fact endeavours to persuade the Goddess, or the mad Nymph, to favour and have mercy on him as if in a frenzied prayer. Both from within and from without the narrative, the persona desires to make use of the dark and ultimate power melancholy relinquishes so that he might achieve in perceiving the already written manuscripts of his melancholic preceding scholars and create in the same way, making a frantic search for the sublime within. This is another reference to the intellectually inspired melancholy genius and artistic temperament. The persona deliberately promotes himself as the victim of this scholar's malady that has for centuries been plaguing the other male intellectuals as well. In this respect, melancholy functions as the literary muse for the writing subject who transforms and transposes his agony

into a work of art while he correspondingly instrumentalizes this melancholic inspiration to become an awakened man of letters. In a way, he entreatingly asks Fear to treat him compassionately so that he will not be easily distracted away with any other things, including the melancholy itself, during meditation and creative process so that he can wholly absorb himself in artistic ambitions and productions like a true scholar. This extreme poetic self-consciousness causes the persona to be simultaneously overcome with self-doubts and insecurities as a literary man as well.

The sacred seat of Shakespeare's breast!  
 By all that from thy prophet broke,  
 In thy divine emotions spoke;  
 Hither again thy fury deal,  
 Teach me but once more like him to feel:  
 His cypress wreath my meed decree,  
 And I, O fear, will dwell with thee! (Collins 25)

In the final lines of the poem, the persona regards this habitual disposition as the normal temperament of the male scholars, revealing the melancholy as the core characteristic of an artist. He alludes to Shakespeare and other noted litterateurs, such as Aeschylus and Sophocles, and establishes his pleadingly mode throughout the stanza, to be transformed into simply one of them, dreaming of having the necessary potential and ambition as well as creative talents and inspiration within. By referring to all these famous bards over the course of the text, he truly places emphasis on the fact that melancholy is at the core of the creative inspiration that nourishes all authors throughout history and he accordingly uncovers his deep desire to possess that kind of creative skill within as a blossoming poet. He consequently promotes the poetic self as a very cultivated persona, having read and memorized each detail regarding the scholars and their works. He defines and depicts these Bards the Goddess Fear bestows inspiration on as "thy Prophet" (line 66) and what they experience and represent in works "in thy Divine emotions" (67), comparing the disease to a kind of religion, the authors to holy saints and the work to holy books. This indicates that the poet deems these authors and their works that the Goddess Fear blesses them with as sacred and heavenly. In the lines "Hither again thy Fury deal/Teach me but once like Him to feel" (lines 68-69), in the form of a solemn prayer, the persona states that he is mentally prepared for "thy Fury" (line 68) if Fear becomes willing to teach him to write just like Shakespeare did in the past. He is voluntary to bear the eternal

torture of Fear if he is endowed with the genius of Shakespeare. As a matter of fact, this reminds us of the story of Doctor Faustus, who makes a pact with the Devil and sells his soul for knowledge and power, symbolizing the overreaching ambition and ungratified desire for power of the Renaissance man. Similarly, the persona reveals his volition to surrender his soul to the Goddess if she accepts to grant his humble wish to be an eminent scholar. In the last couplet, "His Cypress Wreath my Meed decree/And I, O Fear, will dwell with Thee!" (lines 70-71) he makes an allusion to Milton in order to remind his intense passion to be transformed into one of these male intellectuals so that he seeks consent of Goddess to be her eternal liege.

### **Conclusion**

Collins allegorizes the psychological and physical symptoms of melancholy in his narrative. The dark melancholy he is afflicted on the symbolic is transposed into the white melancholy of aesthetic representation via semiotics and textualization. Thus, the narrative turns out to be the textual evidence of the melancholic affect that afflicts the persona. The malady that enforces him into asymbolia and denial from without the narrative provides the focal point for his work as an artist from within the narrative. Through negation and sublimation, he achieves in securing a firm bond with the language, identifying not with the loss, the lack, or the affect but with a third form, the text and the poetic form. He overcomes his dark melancholy within the textual realm through thematising the malady so that, via textual representation, the disease is transformed into a kind of literary object in his life while it is in the beginning a subject. His subjective experience of melancholy manifests itself in the form of the disease of the learned that is promoted as wholly masculinized. He deliberately provides a poetic account of male melancholic subjectivity to promote the poetic self as a cultivated and accomplished man of letters. Via writing, he recreates a new identity and self for himself while the act of reading the narrative leads to the rebirth of its readers so that the narrative provides a therapeutic cure for both himself and the readership, narcotizing the consciousness. The formless and groundless structure of melancholy is textualized and envisaged in the poetic production so that the persona comes to understand that he in fact instrumentalizes his melancholy to reach the sublime and self-actualize as an artist. He experiences his melancholy in the form of fear, rather than sadness, which might signify the presence of extreme poetic self-consciousness and the anxiety of authorship. So his melancholy turns out to be a personal text where the readers can read and interpret the character of the author. The author aims to satisfy his neurotic ambitions in the form of prestige to become and remembered as one of the literary geniuses. It is possible to suggest that he accordingly suffers from the neurotic character,

experiencing self-delusions and insecurities about his creative talents. The narrative enables the author to overcome the loss of the sense of a coherent self and disorderly imagination so that in the final analysis the text becomes about the art of poetry. The writer suffers from the creative anxiety aggravated by the fear of failure.

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