



## Medea's Lovesickness

### *Eros and Melancholia*

I come at last to that heroic love, which is proper to men and women, is a frequent cause of melancholy, and deserves much rather to be called burning lust, than by such an honourable title.

—ROBERT BURTON, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*

“Here comes the downpour, here the lightning and the cursed hail,  
the roar of thunder and the croaking of frogs.”

Thus speaking with each rapid breath, the slender maid,  
already close to death, enflames  
the fire which love has spread throughout her limbs.

—SRÌ HARSA-DEVA (trans. Ingalls [1965, 232])

Erotic infatuation is violent. Love comes unexpectedly and overwhelms its victim. Its attack brings speechlessness, swooning, silence, blushing, insomnia, the sweats, and weeping.<sup>1</sup> It vanquishes the strongest of wills. When eros remains unconsummated (whether intentionally or merely through circumstance), there is persuasion,<sup>2</sup> then, if that is unsuccessful, rape.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes neither persuasion nor rape are useful. The very old must endure their lack of consummation, as must lovers permanently separated, through death, distance, conclusive rejection, physical infirmity, or gender.<sup>4</sup> This enforced endurance may lead to acts of violence, anger, and crime, especially crime if it is a woman who is subject to the frustration.<sup>5</sup> Or it may lead to a melancholic lovesickness—anorexia and eventual death.<sup>6</sup>

Violence remains the most common reaction to erotic frustration.<sup>7</sup> Valerius Flaccus's description of Medea's lovesickness, completed by 92 or 93 C.E., is typical of this tradition. Medea was a young, barbarian princess from Colchis in what is now Georgia. When the young Greek adventurer Jason first arrived in Colchis in pursuit of the Golden Fleece, Medea had no inkling of the emotional turmoil that the force of erotic passion would create in her life. It led her to

abandon her family, to murder her brother and, later, her own children, and to take up a vagrant life on the Greek mainland. Erotic infatuation was connived at by Jason's divine patron, Juno, who intended Medea's assistance for her favorite. Without Medea's help, Juno believed, Jason would fail in his mission for the fleece, and her divine plan would be awry. So Juno gave Medea a girdle that would inflame passion (*Argonautica* 6.467 ff.), and when this was not sufficient for the task, she had Venus herself visit Medea, disguised as her aunt Circe (*Argonautica* 7.193 ff.). The overwhelming power of erotic infatuation was guaranteed by supernatural agents.

Once Medea had been infected (erotic infatuation is compared to a sickness by Valerius),<sup>8</sup> she underwent the symptoms that were typical of the erotic tradition. Medea was on fire and could not take her eyes off Jason. She was subject to *furor*. She blushed. She experienced *languor*. She suffered insomnia and inconstancy of purpose. Had Jason proposed then and there and had this been accepted by Medea's father, Aeetes, all would have been well. Consummation would have provided the cure for the sickness. But love was frustrated by her father's intransigent opposition to Jason's quest. Aeetes had no intention of letting the fleece go to a Greek stranger. Marriage, therefore, was out of the question.

Medea's erotic frustration intensified and gave way to mania and violence. She raged angrily like a bacchante (*Argonautica* 7.300–22). Elsewhere we read of more disquieting symptoms. Medea has become like the crazed Orestes of Euripides' play of the same name. This was, I should emphasize, the melancholic mythological hero with whom the last chapter began. Here is how Valerius, describing Medea, makes the connection with Orestes and continues—but in an amatory context—this tradition (*Argonautica* 7.144–52).

Fresh fear broke her sleep,  
 And she sat bolt-up in bed. She recognized her servants and her      145  
 Loved home, she who just now rushed through Thessaly's cities.  
 She is like mad Orestes who, in his blind terrors, snatched up  
 A sword and struck at the phantom squadrons of his cruel mother.  
 Snakes and the wild, terror-inducing whip made him quake in fear.  
 He thought that he was again thick in the bloodshed of that      150  
 Impure Spartan woman, and that then, tired, returning from the  
     goddess's  
 Counterfeit slaughter, he'd collapsed on the breast of his unhappy  
     sister.

Poor Medea. She is constrained by the respect and love for her family that a liaison with Jason would mean abandoning. She is constrained, too, by her fa-

ther's hostility toward Jason. This would render any illicit liaison extremely dangerous. So it is that her erotic frustration boils over.

In the passage I have just quoted, Medea's symptoms are provided with the most remarkable of depictions. That comparison with Orestes demands especial attention, in three ways. First, Orestes was mad, subject to mania and violence, at least in the Euripidean version. So, too, this simile suggests, is Medea. Second, Orestes was diagnosed as a melancholic. The comparison may suggest that Medea was too. Third, implicit in this portrait of Medea is the linking of melancholia, lovesickness, and violence. This last point is crucial, for it represents a view that we do not share. Love, lovesickness, and depression enjoy in our era a banal symbiosis that was not necessarily reflected in antiquity. Love was not always associated with lovesickness.<sup>9</sup> Nor was lovesickness necessarily associated with melancholia. Nor was it necessarily depressive.

The focus of this chapter will be on the tenuous relationship between these three conditions, but especially on lovesickness<sup>10</sup> and melancholy.<sup>11</sup> Five conclusions will be offered. First, the depressed, fretting, passive, and physically ill lover (sometimes termed the love melancholic), though present in ancient literature, is more a cliché of medieval and modern literary experience. The dominant reaction to frustrated love in ancient literature was manic and frequently violent. Second, lovesickness, in its literary depictions, mirrors the distinctions that the ancient medical writers posited for melancholia itself: there was a depressive type and there was a manic type. Third, the depressive variety of lovesickness, though always on the cards (just like depressive melancholia), becomes more frequent late in antiquity, above all during the first century of our era. Fourth, these dominant traditions of amatory mania and depression find exact parallels in those associated with melancholia proper and depression. Fifth—and this conclusion can only be foreshadowed here—these manic and depressive reactions to the trauma of erotic infatuation are means by which individuals attempt to restore the integrity of the self.



Although the doctors may have thought lovesickness a depressive condition, that is not the way it is depicted in the majority of ancient literary texts. Lovesickness, displayed in a violent or manic fashion, receives descriptions in almost all of the periods of ancient literature. The popular prejudice for mania seems to match that which we observed for melancholia in the last chapter. This type of reaction to erotic trauma, I am suggesting, matches closely that of the Euripidean Orestes of the last chapter. Mania, then, is the dominant amatory cliché for the representation of erotic frustration. One of the best—and

most representative—descriptions of the experience may be found in Apollonius Rhodius’s version of the love of Medea for Jason (composed about 250 B.C.E.; that should not be confused with the version composed by Valerius Flaccus in 92 or 93 C.E.). Let us therefore stay with this barbarian heroine for a little longer. We will find that the symptomatology of Apollonius’s portrait is explicit, consistent, and far more lavish in its detail than that of Valerius Flaccus. The initial attack of love produces a violent, physical reaction. Subsequent frustrations recapitulate, though in a more pronounced manner, this emotional reaction. The descriptions, as we will see in the next section, match those used of melancholy but lack the precision of humoral diagnosis. The two Medeas, it will also be apparent, though separated in compositional time by three and a half centuries, offer an experiential continuum. This affective continuum provides us with a version of lovesickness (or love melancholy) that, like the dominant form of melancholia, was predicated on violence and activity; that is, erotic infatuation was “conceptualized” in much of antiquity in a way that matches the conceptualization of melancholia. In the pages to follow, but beginning with the representative Medeas, I will attempt to demonstrate this.

Medea’s infection is precipitated by Hera.<sup>12</sup> Wishing to help Jason succeed in gaining the fleece from King Aetes, she persuaded Aphrodite to have Eros make Medea fall in love with Jason (*Argonautica* 3.36–110). When Eros wounds Medea (3.284–98), the subjection to love is sudden and complete.

He [Eros] shot at Medea. Speechlessness [*amphasiê*] overcame her.  
 And back from the high-roofed hall he 285  
 Sped laughing, and the shaft burnt in the girl,  
 Deep below her breast, like fire [*phlogi eikelon*]. Continuously  
 She cast bright glances at the son of Aeson. In her turmoil  
 Her clever wits left her breast. No memory  
 Did she sustain. Her heart was flooded with a sweet agony [*aniê*]. 290  
 As a woman heaps kindling on a smouldering log  
 (A working woman for whom spinning is a livelihood)  
 To spread light through her home in the dark,  
 While she works nearby, and as, kindled from a little brand,  
 The great blaze reduces the kindling to ashes, 295  
 So, coiled within her [Medea’s] breast, stealthily smouldered  
 Woeful love [*oulos erôs*]. Her soft cheeks turned  
 To white then to red in the whirl of her mind [*akêdeiêisi noioio*].

The description of Medea’s reaction, though incomplete, gives a fair idea of the violence of her response. The imagery bears this out: Eros’s shaft is “like fire,” and Medea’s heart is full of “agony”; the shaft causes, furthermore, for-

getfulness, mental turmoil (*akédeiê*), and pallor alternating with red-colored flushing.<sup>13</sup>

Once Medea's condition has been established, it is not allowed to run its course. Her love is frustrated in two ways. First, loyalty and fear of her father, Aetes, restrain her from succumbing to the emotion. Second, Jason's own fecklessness threatens to prevent her love from reaching its obvious conclusion. In response to both frustrations, Medea's reaction is violent. *Argonautica* 3.444–71 shows how she is affected by loyalty and fear. She is racked by contradictory emotions: she cannot remove Jason's image from her imagination (3.453–58); she fears for his safety (3.459–60) but mourns him as if he were already dead (3.460–61); she hopes that he will escape unharmed (3.464–68) but that he will know of her sympathy if he does perish (3.468–70). These contradictions seem to be the result of the illicit nature of Medea's passion: love impels her to hope for Jason's success, but this, she knows, will be at the expense of her father. Medea's "lovesickness" results in part from a conflict between *aidôs* (a sense of shame) and *himeros* (desire) (3.653). The former dictates loyalty; the latter dictates that she follow her longing for Jason. This ambivalence is especially evident in the dream sequence at 3.616–32<sup>14</sup> and in her actions (3.645–68) after the first monologue (3.636–44). She hesitates to leave her room but hangs on its exit. She casts herself writhing onto her bed. She weeps. Finally her aunt Chalciope hurries to her (3.670 ff.). She manages to disguise her willingness to assist Jason as concern for Chalciope's sons who are now in the company of the Argonauts (3.681 ff.). There follows the description of another bout of anguish. The symptoms of her condition are becoming more and more explicit (3.755–65).

Quickly did her heart within her breast throb.	755
.....	
A tear of pity ran from her eyes, and within, unceasingly,	761 <sup>15</sup>
Pain wore her away burning through the skin along the nerve	762
Endings right up to the muscles of the neck beneath the head,	763
Where pain is the most severe whenever grief [ <i>anias</i> ]	764
Is cast by the tireless loves [ <i>akamatoi erôtes</i> ] into one's mind	
[ <i>prapides</i> ].	765

Despite this physical anguish, Medea does not take to bed and begin to fade away. She makes her decision. *Erretô aidôs* [Let shame perish], she states (3.785). She will betray her parents. Medea herself gives a name to the condition: it is *atê*, a violent delusion.

In *Argonautica* 4 there is no longer a conflict between shame and desire. Medea has abandoned Colchis.<sup>16</sup> Her passion is frustrated now by the

fecklessness of Jason, who seems likely to give in to the threats of the pursuing Colchians. Near the beginning of this book, Medea's lovesickness is described with real precision: her eyes are filled with fire, and her ears ring; she clutches at her throat, pulls at her hair, groans, is suicidal (4.16–23). These physical woes seem the product partly of frustrated love, partly of fear.<sup>17</sup> Later, when the Colchians manage to cut off the *Argo's* party (4.303–38), Jason, sensing their situation is hopeless, strikes a deal (*synthesiê*) with the Colchians. They will keep the fleece but leave Medea on a nearby island with its priests of Artemis. Judges can later arbitrate her future (4.339–49). Medea's reaction to this treachery is not to swoon, take to bed, begin a wasting illness, or even contemplate suicide; rather, it is to threaten violence. She wrathfully argues that Jason is under oath to protect her (4.358–59, 388). If abandoned, she threatens, she will curse him. Jason at once backtracks and hatches a plan to murder the leader of the Colchians, Medea's brother, Apsyrtus (4.395–20). There follows a most extraordinary personal intrusion into the narrative (4.445–51).<sup>18</sup>

Wretched Love, great woe and great object of hatred for humans,    445  
 Because of you destructive strife, groaning, and wailing,  
 and countless other pains pierce us.  
 Against the sons of our enemies arm yourself and rouse your spirit  
 And cast hateful madness [*stygerê atê*] into Medea's heart.  
 For how, then, with awful death did she overcome                    450  
 Apsyrtus in his hot pursuit? That is the next part of my song.

Medea's lovesickness then reaches its apogee of violence. The bloody murder of her brother, Apsyrtus, follows. In the thrall of passion, Medea, it seems, will go to any length.

I have dwelt at such length on these versions of the Medea story because they provide such detailed (and moving) instances of the realization of the violent power of frustrated passion. Medea's lovesickness—and there can be no other word for it (she is still a virgin, and a young one at that)—leads her to remarkable acts of violence. In Apollonius's reading of the emotion of lovesickness, the onset of love and, later, its frustration—the lover's trauma—can lead to violent physical and emotional disorders. It can lead, furthermore, to acts of violence, even murder. Not only does Apollonius graphically illustrate its effects, but he also editorializes on its dangers.

Love in Apollonius's version of the story of Medea is a typical, if extreme, instance of what seems to have been the prevailing ancient view of the dangers of lovesickness. (Frustrated love—lovesickness, we would say—leads not to a fretting, passive, depressed state of mind but to mania and violence.) Let me

offer a few other examples to illustrate and to bolster this contention. The tragic heroine of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dido, suffers like her model Medea. Her love for Aeneas, like that of Medea for Jason, has been thrust upon her by divine scheming (*Aeneid* 1.657 ff.).<sup>19</sup> Dido's infection is likened to a wound (*Aeneid* 4.1–2, 67), and it burns like fire (4.2, 66). Like anyone who is lovesick, Dido becomes insomniac (4.5) and anxiety-ridden (4.9 ff.). But like Medea, she sees giving in to her passion as a form of betrayal (4.27; cf. 4.172), and giving way to the passion results in exactly this (4.86–89, 193–94). Also like Medea, she is betrayed, in her case by Aeneas. The “betrayal” comes after Jupiter sends Mercury to Aeneas (4.237–78) to warn Aeneas that he must remember his mission and cease from Carthaginian affairs. But before Dido meets Aeneas, she senses that treachery is afoot. Her reaction is not depressive but manic. Dido rages through the city like a bacchante (4.300–303) to meet Aeneas. Dido, her love frustrated and after an unsuccessful attempt at persuading Aeneas to delay sailing (4.416–49), again reacts violently: she sets about planning her own death (4.450–552). Notice that Virgil compares her to Pentheus, an embodiment of violent anger, and (as does Valerius with his Medea) to Orestes, that emblematic figure for melancholia (4.469–73).<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere he stresses her anger.<sup>21</sup> Dido's soliloquy, delivered as she watches the Aeneadae sail away, shows no relaxation of anger (4.590–629): she summons the sun, the gods, and the Furies to avenge her, on Aeneas first, then on all of his descendants. Soon afterward she suicides. Orestes stands out: Virgil's paradigm for madness, this hero recapitulates the Euripidean version of melancholy that was investigated in the last chapter. His invocation emphasizes again the conceptual, discursive, and experiential symmetry that exists between melancholy and lovesickness.

Among Virgil's other love-blighted, if not lovesick, protagonists, such as Corydon (*Eclogues* 2—which is based on Theocritus's *Idylls* 11),<sup>22</sup> Cornelius Gallus (*Eclogues* 10), or Orpheus (*Georgics* 4),<sup>23</sup> only Orpheus gives signs of breaking the violent amatory paradigm and of showing symptoms of real depressive lovesickness (*Georgics* 4.508 ff.).<sup>24</sup>

Beneath a high cliff near the waters of the lonely Strymon  
He wept . . .  
Like a nightingale lamenting beneath a poplar's shade  
Who laments her young, which a harsh ploughman  
Cannily has taken still unfledged from the nest.

Yet even he meets a most violent end (*Georgics* 4.523–27). Perhaps Virgil's amatory reservations are based on Epicureanism. Lucretius's famous descriptions and rejection of love and its effects (*On the Universe* 4.1037–1287) seem in line with Virgil's view of lovesickness as a dangerous, violent *pestis* (see Beecher

and Ciavolella 1990, 52–53).<sup>25</sup> For the Epicurean Lucretius, love is “a disease of the soul that slowly pervades the entire body, just like madness, and that must be eradicated before it completely upsets the physiopsychological balance of the man” (Beecher and Ciavolella 1990, 52). Most important for the present discussion is Lucretius’s opinion that the onset and effects of love produce not a state of depressive enfeeblement but madness. Lucretius is to the point: love is a madness (*rabies*, 4.1083) and a dangerous one at that (4.1079–83).

What they [sc., lovers] have sought, they press close to and make pain  
For the body, and they fasten teeth to lips,  
And kiss vehemently, because their pleasure is not unalloyed,  
For there are secret goads, which compel them to harm the thing  
itself,  
Whatever it is, whence arise those seeds of madness [*rabies*].

His contemporary Cicero does not tell us of lovesickness, but he has his suspicions of love. In the *Tusculan Disputations* (4.75), which I surveyed briefly in connection with melancholia in the last chapter, he notes of love that “of all disturbances of the soul there is assuredly none more violent,” adding, “the disorder of the mind in love is in itself abominable.” Horace’s *Satires* 1.2, another Epicurean diatribe against love (which might as well be designed as advice for Corydon in *Eclogues* 2), reproduces the same vision of love, if not lovesickness, as a type of dangerous mania.<sup>26</sup>

There exist in ancient literature many other examples of manic lovesickness. Here I will confine my survey to just a few. There is, for example, Catullus’s Ariadne (whose characterization owes much to Apollonius’s Medea). Love-blighted and frustrated in poem 64, she is compared to a bacchante (v. 61), and she eventually works herself into a frenzy and, like Dido or Valerius’s Medea, is “maddened” (*furens*; see vv. 124, 154). Scylla, the heroine in the pseudo-Virgilian *Ciris*, owes much to Ariadne. In her mania she will go to any length to consummate her love for Minos. So, too, behaves Medea in Ovid’s *Heroides* 12, who is frenzied rather than depressed. Much, much later the Roman emperor Caracalla fell in love with his stepmother, Julia, who, “as if through carelessness, had uncovered the greater part of her body” (*Historia Augusta, Caracalla* 10). He was encouraged by her compliance: “his disordered madness was given strength to carry out the crime, and he contracted the marriage, which . . . he alone should have prohibited.” The description and language used of Caracalla’s emotions might be compared to those used of a mad (*furiosus*) slave who is said to have attacked Hadrian (*Historia Augusta, Hadrian* 12).

The violence inherent within erotic trauma is particularly emphasized in the writings of one of Virgil’s near contemporaries, the Greek Parthenius. He



composed for Virgil's friend the elegiac poet Cornelius Gallus (himself a victim of love in *Eclogues* 10) a handbook of sorry tales concerning eros (for the text see Edmonds and Gaselee 1916 and Lightfoot 1999). There are thirty-six erotic stories in Parthenius's collection. Of these, only two (17 and 26) refer to the wasting effects that frustrated love can bring to bear upon an individual. But approximately twelve of these relate tales that highlight the potential and actual violence that can be wrought by frustrated love (cf. Crump [1931] 1997, 108).<sup>27</sup> This is not the place to look at all of these stories in detail. Instead I will cite just two representative tales, the stories of Periander (17) and of Apriate (26) .

Periander, the bloodthirsty tyrant of Corinth, became, at a very young age, the object of his mother's erotic affections. At first she satisfied herself simply with hugging the boy. Later, assuming the cover of another woman and the disguise of night (she would not let Periander see her), she slept with her son, pretending that she was arranging this assignation for another woman. Periander developed for the "woman" a passion equal to that of his mother for him and, eventually, decided that he must learn the identity of the woman with whom he had been sleeping. He pressed his mother to reveal the identity of his paramour.

But when his mother refused, alleging the shame felt by the woman, he made one of his body-servants conceal a light in the chamber: when she came as usual, and was about to lay herself down, Periander jumped up and revealed the light: he saw that it was his mother he made as if to kill her. However, he was restrained by a heaven-sent apparition, and desisted from his purpose, but from that time on he was a madman, afflicted in brain and heart; he fell into habits of savagery, and slaughtered many of the citizens of Corinth.<sup>28</sup>

The madness to which Periander becomes subject is the product of his frustrated love. We have witnessed this type of emotion before. Notice that this madness manifests itself as violence.<sup>29</sup>

The story concerning Apriate is very brief, but it, too, illustrates well Parthenius's understanding of the effects of frustrated eros.

Trambelus, the son of Telamon fell in love with a girl named Apriate in Lesbos. He used every effort to gain her: but, as she showed no signs at all of relenting, he determined to win her by strategy and guile. She was walking one day with her attendant handmaids to one of her father's domains which was by the seashore, and there he laid an ambush for her and made her captive; but she struggled with the greatest violence to protect her virginity, and at last Trambelus in fury threw her into the sea, which at that point happened to be deep inshore. Thus did she perish.<sup>30</sup>

All of Parthenius's stories are brief and to the point. Unfortunately they do not usually dwell upon the physiological symptoms of frustrated eros: we see no inner and visceral anguish, such as that suffered by Medea, nor is there reference to madness such as that suffered by Caracalla. Trambelus nevertheless seems to have suffered love very badly—at any rate, he was willing to go to extreme lengths to gain his way with Apriate. We do not know if, in his frustration, he raged like Medea and Dido. But the end product was similarly violent. Frustrated by Apriate's repeated rejections, he became angered and drowned the young woman. This violent outcome was followed by an equally violent coda. When, later, Achilles was ravaging Lesbos, he came into contact with Trambelus, and this cycle of violence continued. Achilles killed Trambelus with a violent wound to the breast.

Not all of Parthenius's tales reproduce or imply the physiological disorders of lovesickness that I have outlined in this chapter. That concerning Periander does. Those tales that do not, like that of Apriate, still seem to participate in and to reproduce an emotional experience of a comparable order. Certainly the violence to which those suffering from frustrated love resort seems to match that with which we have become familiar.

A further pair of illustrations will test these conclusions. These concern the lovesickness of Phaedra as it is depicted by Euripides (*Hippolytus*) and by Seneca (*Phaedra*).<sup>31</sup> Euripides' heroine (sometimes compared to Dido) is certainly lovesick.<sup>32</sup> She has fallen unexpectedly in love with her stepson, Hippolytus. The infatuation has been caused by Aphrodite, who, angered at Hippolytus's insulting behavior (*Hippolytus* 12 ff.), intends to use Phaedra's love to bring him down. Phaedra's love is frustrated, for the object of her desire is the son of her still living husband, Theseus. What are the symptoms of her lovesickness? Initial impressions suggest a condition that might easily be confused with depressive melancholia. Phaedra has become bedridden (vv. 131–34) and debilitated (vv. 198–202) and seems to be unable to take food (vv. 135–38); she is pallid (vv. 174–75) and inconsistent in her wants (v. 176 ff.). If her symptoms continue she will die (vv. 38–40). But as the drama unfolds, it emerges that these symptoms are feigned (vv. 391 ff., 400–401, 419 ff.). Phaedra, mindful of *aidôs* (v. 385), *timê* (v. 329), *sophrosynê* (v. 399), and *ta esthla* (v. 331), has determined to preserve her honor and to disguise the *erôs* by starving herself to death. It seems, however, that the real symptom of lovesickness, if it is allowed to manifest itself, is mania. Thus at 188–238 Phaedra is caught off guard by the nurse and reacts in a manic fashion (v. 206; note too *emanên* at v. 241). She admits as much to the chorus at verses 243–48, and after the nurse indicates Phaedra's love to Hippolytus (v. 601 ff.), her reaction to the nurse (she does not meet Hippolytus) is angry and violent abuse (v. 682 ff.). Her offstage

suicide follows soon after, and soon after that Theseus returns to discover the body and, with it, the note that mendaciously dooms Hippolytus to a most violent death. It is significant that the contents of the letter seem to declare themselves in a most vehement manner (vv. 877–80). What, then, are we to make of Phaedra's early, seemingly depressive symptoms? I suspect that an audience saw Phaedra's illness not as the direct result of lovesickness but merely as indicating a means of attempting a suicide that would guard her honor against the onset of desire. The *modus moriendi* here is the common ancient tactic of *inedia*—starvation.<sup>33</sup>

Seneca's Phaedra also exhibits a form of lovesickness that is best described as manic, rather than depressive. Seneca's depiction of Phaedra's condition, however, is not as carefully constructed as that of Euripides. Seneca is at times more rational: Phaedra's passion, for example, can be explained away as resulting from the neglect (*Phaedra* 91 ff.) of an adulterous husband (vv. 97–98). Seneca's Phaedra also does not make much of an effort to hide her passion from the nurse: at times it is all that she can talk about (vv. 218–221, 225, 241). Seneca does skimp logically. Phaedra's decision to look after her good name (her *fama*; Euripides' Phaedra was concerned with *timê* but also with *aidôs* and *sophrosynê*) seems rather an afterthought (vv. 250–54, 258–60).

What are the symptoms of Phaedra's lovesickness? In the early parts of the play it is a violent madness (a *furor*; see vv. 184–85, 186–87, 268, and especially 339 ff.). Later, after she has determined to guard her *fama*, she begins to suffer a wasting illness (vv. 360–86), which more resembles what we would expect of depressive, rather than manic, lovesickness. It is unclear in Seneca's version whether these symptoms are feigned or whether they are simply the result of a prolonged starvation aimed at suicide. At any rate, the wasting illness does provide her with a chance to be alone with Hippolytus and to declare her love. That she is likely to have been feigning the illness is perhaps confirmed by her reaction to Hippolytus's rejection. Once spurned, she becomes angry (vv. 824–28) and guilefully dooms Hippolytus by claiming (v. 868 ff.) that he had raped her. *Furor* overcomes her in the end as well. After Hippolytus's death is reported, she comes on stage mad (v. 1156) and suicides. In the Senecan portrait of Phaedra's lovesickness, amatory infatuation is persistently, if not unequivocally, manic.

I would like to conclude this section by looking ahead from Seneca by 150 years. This will take us five hundred years from this chapter's chronological starting point, Apollonius's *Medea*. The affective symptoms of erotic trauma, we will see, change little. My target here is the didactic epic poet (or poets), Oppian. In two bizarre treatises on hunting (one on hunting land animals, a *Cynegetica*; one on hunting sea animals, a *Halieutica*), Oppian betrays a

remarkable obsession with violence and eros.<sup>34</sup> I examine here just the *Cynegetica*. Despite an intention to describe the hunter's needs (book 1), the various animals to be pursued (books 2–3), and how to hunt (book 4), Oppian in fact focuses persistently on animal “friendships and their bridal chambers of tearless love upon the hills” and on “the births, that among the wild beasts need no midwifery” (Artemis's instructions at 1.34–40). Eros becomes Oppian's real focus, and it is almost always an eros of a very violent form. So book 1 of the *Cynegetica*, after prefatory remarks (1.1–157), begins its discourse on horses with a warning against the inconveniently lustful and uncontrollable nature of mares (1.158–65).

As for horses, let them bring to the hunt proud  
 Stallions, not only because mares are inferior in speed  
 For accomplishing long courses in the woods, 160  
 But also because it is necessary to avoid the passion  
 Of the swift-footed horses and to keep mares far away,  
 In case, in their amorous desire, they neigh  
 And, hearing this, the wild beasts incontinently take to chilly flight—  
 Fawns and swift gazelles and timid hare. 165

The subsequent list of horse breeds (1.166–367) is punctuated at 1.236–38 with a remarkable utterance—“above others, again, horses honor nature, and it is utterly unheard of that they should indulge unlawful passion, but they remain unstained of pollution and cherish chaste desire”—and with an even more striking narrative panel demonstrating how horses abhor incest (1.239–70). Oppian concludes with a description of genetic manipulation (1.331–67). The catalog to follow, of the various breeds of dogs (1.368 ff.), is interrupted at 1.376–92 by the *philotêsia erga* [erotic doings] of spring—most of which are of a manic variety. Verses 1.376–92 represent such a remarkable passage that it deserves quoting in full.

If you should desire to mix two breeds,  
 Then first of all mate two dogs in spring,  
 For in spring chiefly the works of love possess the hearts  
 Of wild beasts and dogs and deadly sea snakes  
 And the fowls of the air and the finny creatures of the sea. 380  
 In spring the serpent, foul with angry venom,  
 Comes to the shore to meet his sea bride.  
 In spring all the deep sea rings with love  
 And the calm sea foams with fishes mating.  
 In spring the male pigeon pursues the female. 385  
 Horses assail the pasturing mares

And bulls lust after the cows of the field.  
In spring the rams of crooked horn mount the ewes  
And fiery wild boars mate with the sows—  
And the he-goats with the shaggy females. 390  
Yes, and mortals also in spring are prone to desire,  
For in spring the spell of love is heavy on all.

Oppian's enthusiasms do not change in *Cynegetica* 2. He describes the violent mating habits of bulls (2.43–175) and presents a fascinating panel on Syrian bulls, the hero and athletic prototype Heracles, and the lustful and violent river Orontes (2.109–58). Many other creatures are subject, like Orontes, to a woeful eros. Certainly stags (2.160–295), fighting cocks and brilliantly colored birds (2.189–90), the gazelle (2.315–325), and the lascivious partridge are. But wild goats and sheep are not (2.326–444). Oppian is very fond of goats. They are especially good to their families and care well for their aged (2.343–76). Approval for animals who will look after their young is repeated at the end of this book when Oppian comes to discuss apes (2.605–11). They have twins but love one and, in cruel thrall to eros, let the other perish.

I pass over the triple breeds of apes, those wicked mimics. 605  
For who would not loathe such a race, ugly to look on,  
Weak, loathsome, evil of aspect, crafty of counsel.  
These, though they give birth to evil-looking twins,  
Do not divide love equally between them,  
But they love one and hate and become angered at the other, 610  
And he perishes in the very arms of his parents.

Bad animals who do not care for their young are usually obsessed by physical, carnal love. Thus bears (3.139–82) will induce the early births of their offsprings so that they can return to mating. Sexual jealousy leads the male wild ass to murder its own male offspring (3.183–250). Wild boars are utterly lustful (3.364–90). Ostriches exemplify the same failing (3.480–503) as do hares (3.504–25). Of the last group, Oppian comments, “the shameless female never forgets her lust but fulfills all her desire, and not even in the throes of birth does she refuse to mate.” Violence and eros are thus closely intertwined in Oppian's amatory universe.



Ancient medicine has very little to say of lovesickness. What is said (confined to Aretaeus, Galen, Oribasius, Caelius Aurelianus, and Paul of Aegina) interprets lovesickness as a depressive illness that matches depressive melancholia

in symptoms, but not in etiology (for surveys see Beecher and Ciavolella 1990; Jackson 1986; Wack 1990). This medical tradition stands in stark contrast to the popular one. Just as we have seen with melancholia, the diagnosis of the doctors was depression, whereas the popular diagnosis was mania.

Aretaeus of Cappadocia (ca. 150 C.E.), for whom melancholy was perhaps a bipolar condition, seems to see love melancholy as a depressive, rather than a manic, illness (Marneros and Angst 2000). The following passage (Aretaeus 3.5, trans. Adams [1856, 300]) illustrates how lovesickness could easily be confused with melancholy.

A story is told, that a certain person, incurably affected, fell in love with a girl; and when the physicians could bring him no relief, love cured him. But I think that he was originally in love, and that he was dejected and spiritless [*katêphen de kai dusthumon*] from being unsuccessful with the girl, and appeared to the common people to be melancholic. He then did not know that it was love; but when he imparted the love to the girl, he ceased from his dejection, and dispelled his passion and sorrow; and with joy he woke from his lowness of spirits, and he became restored to understanding, love being his physician.

This passage, which appears in Aretaeus's chapter on melancholia, is advice for doctors. Its obvious intent is to caution physicians against a too hasty diagnosis of melancholia. The symptoms may resemble those of the illness of melancholia, Aretaeus is saying, but the actual illness may be other. The problem in this case is that lovesickness (which makes a person "dejected and spiritless") is outwardly identical to depressive melancholia. At any rate, the truth of Aretaeus's diagnosis was demonstrated by the man's cure. This took place when he declared his love to his beloved. Aretaeus's distinction may seem to us to be hairsplitting. He was, however, a humoralist and attributed melancholia to a superfluity of black bile. The sufferer in this instance was the victim not of an excess of black bile but of a psychological disturbance.

This passage, or at least the diagnosis, is echoed later in the century by Galen (as we shall see in a moment) and is eventually picked up in the "popular" literature. As we will see in the next section of this chapter, the descriptions of depressive lovesickness (which mirror the discursive chronology of depressive melancholy) invariably produced symptoms that mirror those of the medical descriptions of melancholia. But it was some time before this medical confusion was reflected and acknowledged in popular literature. This takes place (as I will demonstrate in the next section of this chapter) in Heliodorus's novel the *Aethiopica*.<sup>35</sup> The conflation of the popular and medical traditions of love melancholy offers an analogue to that conflation of the popular and med-

ical traditions concerning depressive melancholia that was evident in Persius's *Satires* 3.

Galen (ca. 130–200 C.E.) was, like Aretaeus, also a humoralist. One finds in Galen, therefore, the same careful distinction between melancholia and lovesickness. In a detailed passage that seems to echo Aretaeus, Galen describes lovers as sometimes “emaciated, pale, sleepless, and even feverish.”<sup>36</sup> In one instance he discusses his treatment of a woman who exhibited symptoms of sleeplessness at night and restlessness during the day, taciturnity, and, when Galen consulted her, a reaction as follows: “she turned her face away, threw her clothes over her body and hid herself away completely” (quoted by Beecher and Ciavolella 1990, 51). Galen diagnosed, “Either she was tormented by melancholy, or she was grieving over some cause she did not want to confess.” Subsequently he discovered love was the problem. He discovered that her pulse rate rose when mention of the stage dancer Pylades was made. Although easily confused with depressive melancholia, the real origin of the woman’s condition—and love melancholy generally—is psychological rather than physical (i.e., it is not brought on by an excess of black bile).<sup>37</sup> Two other writers are of significance in this matter. Oribasius (326–403 C.E.) and Paul of Aegina (fl. ca. 640 C.E.) present in their discussions what seems to be a shared view of lovesickness. Oribasius, the physician to the emperor Julian, treated lovesickness as a distinct illness and attributed to it symptoms such as sadness, insomnia, hollow eyes, and an inability to cry; sufferers, he noted, “appeared to be filled with voluptuousness; and their eyelids, the only part of the body not weakened, were continuously blinking.”<sup>38</sup> For Paul of Aegina, the lovesick were “desponding and sleepless.” He describes them in “On Lovesick Persons” in terms very similar to those used by Oribasius.<sup>39</sup>

Caelius Aurelianus (fifth century C.E.), who translated the Trajanic medical writer Soranus of Ephesus,<sup>40</sup> believed that lovesickness manifests many of the symptoms of depressive melancholy: “unhappiness, mental anxiety, tossing in sleep, frequent blinking of the eyes, and disturbances of the pulse.” He wrote, “it manifests itself now in anger, now in merriment, now in sadness or futility, and now, as some relate, in an overpowering fear of things which are quite harmless.” Wack (1990, 11–12), whose translation I am quoting, links the preceding reference to anger with Caelius’s statements elsewhere correlating melancholia with anger (on which topic see the next section of this chapter). Although not humoralists,<sup>41</sup> it may be possible that Caelius and Soranus were conscious of a tradition of manic lovesickness.

The description of lovesickness in all of these writers presents a condition that, while not technically melancholia, shows the outward signs of the illness

in its depressive phase. Aretaeus and Galen are at pains to point this out. (Caelius's comments on anger may offer the only modification.) Centuries later, Avicenna (980–1037 C.E.) makes the very same point (Jackson 1986, 354–55). The link, therefore, between lovesickness, depression, and melancholia is a vital one. Lovesickness, according to the major surviving medical view, was a condition typified by sadness, insomnia, despondency, dejection, physical debility, and blinking. Aretaeus and Galen seem to have thought of the condition not (unlike melancholia) as a specific illness but, rather, as a vague psychological disturbance presumably best cured by therapeutic intercourse (on which topic see Allen 2000). Oribasius and Paul of Aegina conceived of lovesickness as an actual illness, but not one based upon an excess of the black bile.



As we saw was the case with the medical understanding of melancholia, the medical understanding of lovesickness as a depressive condition seems eventually to have been absorbed into the popular tradition. Increasingly, erotic trauma, manifest as lovesickness, was registered in poetry and in nontechnical prose as generally, though not exclusively, a passive affair. In the next section of this chapter, I will offer a brief overview of this process. The history of the coming together of these two traditions will be seen to climax with a depiction of lovesickness given by the Greek novelist Heliodorus. His narrative version of lovesickness matches that of his near medical contemporaries Aretaeus and Galen. The chronology of this “passivizing” of erotic infatuation and trauma, therefore, matches precisely that of melancholia.

The most famous ancient description of lovesickness, and the one with which I would like to begin my survey of the depictions of depressive lovesickness, is Sappho's incomplete *phainetai moi* ode (31 Campbell). This poem (translated by Catullus as his poem 51) aims to convey the experience of thwarted sexual desire. Here is the poem.

He seems to me like the gods,  
that man who, opposite you, can  
sit nearby and listen to your  
sweet voice

And to your lovely laughter. This  
sets the heart in my breast aflutter.  
For when I look at you for a moment, it's  
not possible for me to speak,



But my tongue has snapped, a light  
fire runs straightway beneath my flesh, 10  
I see nothing with my eyes, my  
ears hum,  
Sweat pours from me, and trembling  
takes hold of me. I am whiter  
than grass, and I'm little 15  
short of dying.

But all must be endured for even a poor man . . .

What is happening in this poem is not totally clear.<sup>42</sup> But it is plain that our speaker is watching another woman and a man seated together. The sight of that other woman speaking and laughing with this man induces the extreme symptoms described in stanzas three and four: speechlessness (v. 9), a burning sensation on the skin (vv. 9–10), loss of vision (v. 11), ringing in the ears (vv. 11–12), cold sweat (v. 13), trembling (vv. 13–14), pallor (vv. 14–15), and a near-death experience (vv. 15–16). These are symptoms that we will meet again and again in the course of this book.<sup>43</sup> They are always symptomatic of severe psychological frustration and are very often, but not exclusively, to be linked with eros.<sup>44</sup> What causes the frustration in this instance seems at first sight to be jealousy.<sup>45</sup> But that, as many critics have argued, is no certain thing. It might as easily be the attractiveness of the woman and the inattentiveness of the man that causes this reaction, just as easily as it could be jealousy engendered by the attentiveness of the man. What matters, however, is that desire and the speaker's remarkable symptoms are linked. What we can say with certainty is that a panic attack of the gravity of that suffered by the speaker of this poem requires a correspondingly grave etiology. In a triangular situation such as this (a triangular situation inevitably hints at the amatory), in which the language describing the perception of the other woman and the other man is emotionally charged (so, “like the gods,” “sweet voice,” and “lovely laughter”), it defies common sense to exclude erotic frustration. In such a situation an etiology is the only one I can think of that could cause such a powerful response. In the next chapter we will see reactions like those of the speaker of this poem as associated with a death threatening experience. The causative emotion here must be, to repeat, of the utmost gravity. It is then, if not jealousy, at least frustrated love. There can be no other way of describing such a condition than as lovesickness.<sup>46</sup>

Was this experience depressive or was it manic? I wish we could say, but Sappho does not tell us. The poem is incomplete, and the outcome of the speaker's emotions are not made plain. We might speculate that the resolution

displayed in the final surviving line of the poem suggests that both mania and depression have been surmounted.<sup>47</sup> Or it may be possible that Sappho had no clear understanding of or interest in formulating this issue. The sole piece of evidence from Sappho's poetry that may be relevant to this matter is equally inconclusive. In poem 94, parting from a lover makes the speaker of the poem want to die—a sure form of erotic frustration. Sappho says:

And honestly I wish I were dead.  
 She left me weeping  
 Greatly and said this to me:  
 "Alas, how terribly we have suffered,  
 Sappho; indeed I leave unwillingly." 5

And I answered her in this way:  
 "Go well and remember  
 me, for you know how we cared for you.

If not I want to remind you . . .  
 . . . . . 10  
 . . . and that we fared well."

This lacunose poem carries on to indicate that the "faring well" between Sappho and the other woman should be understood in an erotic sense. We guess at this from verses 21–23.

And on soft beds  
 . . . . .  
 you would satisfy your desire [*pothos*].

But the wish for death with which the poem commences, though doubtless genuine, is not hemmed about, at least in the poem as it survives, with the symptoms that we may associate with lovesickness in poem 31. Reluctantly, therefore, we must conclude that poem 94 does not allow us to determine whether Sappho envisaged love as manic or depressive.

Is there anything in contemporary literature that might help us with Sappho's opinions? We could compare, say, Ibycus 286 and 287 (as numbered in Campbell's collection). In Ibycus 286 the onset of love seems especially violent (in 286.10–11 the word *mania* is used, significantly associated with darkness [*eremnos*, v. 10]). In 287 Ibycus trembles at love's coming. Mania is the characterizing quality of erotic frustration and infatuation in these contexts. The onset of love in Archilochus is equally prepossessing.<sup>48</sup> These nearly contemporaneous descriptions do not conclusively help with Sappho. They suggest to me, however, that Sappho had little interest in the depressive emotion that the

*medici* later highlight. This conclusion may disappoint Sappho's many modern admirers.<sup>49</sup> To this I can only say that Sappho, just like the men of her time, was subject to the ineluctable material forces of history.<sup>50</sup>

Unambiguous depictions of depressive lovesickness are not common in ancient literature at any time.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the first are to be found in early Hellenistic literature (the period in which Apollonius imagined his version of Medea). This comes as no surprise, for it is in this period that the descriptions of depressive melancholia first begin to appear. The best is contained in Theocritus's *Idylls* 2. Here Simaetha has fallen in love with handsome, fickle Delphis. The description of her initial infatuation is remarkable. Lovesickness is like a fever, and it causes Simaetha to become frenzied (*emanên*, v. 82; cf. Phaedrus in Euripides *Hippolytus* 241). Yet, as the emotion lays hold of her, she becomes ill and takes to bed (vv. 82–86).

When I saw him I went into a frenzy, my heart burnt with fire,  
Wretch that I am, and my beauty melted away; no longer for that  
Procession did I give a thought, and how I got home  
I don't know, but a parching illness possessed me,  
And I lay on my bed for ten days and ten nights.

After ten days her skin had become dull and sallow, her hair had begun to fall out, and she had become reduced to skin and bone (vv. 88–90).<sup>52</sup>

My skin became like cinnamon bark;  
The hair fell from my head; these were left,  
Just skin and bone.

The cure came when the slave girl Thestylis coaxed Delphis to Simaetha's home. Lovemaking provided the remedy. The outlines of the condition of depressive lovesickness are all present in this story: taking to bed; physical debility leading to emaciation and, potentially, death; and a dramatically altered complexion. The cure is sexual congress.<sup>53</sup> Except for the evidence of the cure, Simaetha might have been suffering from a bout of depressive melancholia.

Theocritus's Polyphemus (a model for Corydon in Virgil's *Eclogues* 2) is also lovesick—for Galatea in *Idylls* 11. Theocritus, however, does not detail the physiology of Polyphemus's condition. At verses 10–11 he is said to love “not with apples, or roses, or ringlets but with downright frenzy [*orthais maniais*].” That does not sound depressive. Nor do verses 15–16, where he has “deep beneath his breast an angry wound that the shaft of the mighty Cyprian goddess had planted in his heart.” The only hint of a Simaetha-like passivity is suggested in verses 14–15, where he is described thus: “alone on the wrack-strewn shore, [he] would waste away with love as he sang of Galatea.” “Wasting”

(here the verbal form is *katetaketo*) is typical of the depressive lovesick. (In Ovid's depiction of the lovesick Cyclops, the latter's emotion seems to be violent; see *Metamorphoses* 13.867–69). Curiously the addressee of *Idylls* 11 is a medical man, Nicias. Whether he would be likely to take more of an interest in lovesickness than would nonmedical figures cannot be known. It is striking, however, that Nicias is also the addressee of *Idylls* 13, which concerns the rape by the love-smitten nymphs of Heracles' young lover Hylas. The passions in this poem, however, are manic. Toward the end of this poem, Heracles, bereft of his young lover but still searching for him, is described thus: "so mad a passion on his vitals preyed." Frustrated love causes Aeschinas in *Idylls* 14 to waste, as it does Daphnis at *Idylls* 7.76. This wasting, unfortunately, is accompanied by the description of few other physiological symptoms.<sup>54</sup>

An even more striking depiction of frustrated love than that to be found with Simaetha in *Idylls* 2 is to be seen in Theocritus's *Idylls* 30. In this poem an older man has fallen violently in love with a boy. The love is not reciprocated. The older man, in his passion and frustration and in his doleful realization of the limitations placed upon him by age, is driven eventually to contemplate suicide. What is most striking about this man's affective predicament is that it is likened, as Gow (1952, 2:512) strongly emphasizes, to quartan fever, a condition ostensibly unrelated to love. Here are some of the relevant verses (Theocritus *Idylls* 30.1–6):

Alas for this grievous and ill-starred passion of mine!  
 A quartan passion has held me for two months now  
 For a boy of middle beauty, yet clad he is in charm from head  
 To foot, and sweet the smile on his cheek.  
 Till now some days the woe lies heavy on me, and other days abates,   5  
 But soon no respite will there be—not even enough to compass sleep.

Quartan fever has strong links, in the eyes of ancient medical practitioners at any rate, with black bile and with melancholia. The Hippocratic treatise *On the Nature of Man* (15) points out: "a secondary reason for their [quartan fevers'] chronic character and difficult resolution is that they are caused by black bile; this is the most viscous of the humors in the body and remains the longest. As evidence of this, note the association of quartan fevers with melancholy . . ." In this poem the symptoms of lovesickness, therefore, are closely, if indirectly, to be linked with melancholia. What is most striking in this immediate context is the match established between lovesickness—a dangerous depressive condition that normally required medical attention—and depression. Such an unambiguous linkage is not to be found again until the era of the Greek novel. Perhaps, however, I should qualify my use of the word *unambiguous*. Theocri-

tus's *Idylls* 30 implies a link between these conditions. It does not make this link explicit in the manner by which Aretaeus and Galen did and as Heliodorus in the *Aethiopica* will.

There are many other examples of this condition from this period and from later. Unfortunately many of these are teasingly imprecise in their register of symptoms. There is no conjunction between the medical and the popular traditions. These examples, however, allow us to establish the traces of a periodization of lovesickness, a periodization that seems provocatively to match that for melancholy itself. Callimachus's epigram 44 diagnoses lovesickness as the cause of a drinker's sighing and heaving. Asclepiades (*Greek Anthology* 12.135) makes the same diagnosis of one Nicagoras from his tears, his bent head, and his downcast demeanor. In Callimachus's version of the story of the love of Acontius and Cydippe (which occurs within the third book of his four-book poem the *Aetia*) we have an apparent instance of lovesickness, but one that strains the concept of this definition. Acontius, in this version, had fallen in love, at first sight, with Cydippe when he attended the festivals in Delos. Acontius, violently in love with Cydippe, followed her to the temple of Artemis. He inscribed on a quince the words "I swear by the temple of Artemis I will marry Cydippe" and then threw the fruit near the girl. She picked it up and innocently read the words out loud. The oath, uttered inadvertently but nonetheless in the presence of the goddess, bound her to Acontius. Cydippe had been, however, betrothed to another. Each time her marriage date approached, she fell ill with a mysterious sickness: this was visited upon her by the goddess Artemis, who was angered that Cydippe was on the point of breaking her oath. In the meantime Acontius came from his native Chios to Athens, for he had heard of his beloved's illness. His concerns became the talk of the town. The town's people began to suggest that Acontius had cast the evil eye on Cydippe.<sup>55</sup> Resolution was reached only after Cydippe's father consulted the oracle at Delphi and learned of the oath. The god had her way and the young pair were soon after married. The illness disappeared.

What interests is the illnesses Cydippe suffered on each occasion that she was about to marry. Here is how Callimachus describes Cydippe's condition (*Aetia* fr. 75.12–20).<sup>56</sup>

But in the afternoon an evil pallor came upon her; the disease seized  
her,  
Which we blame on the wild goats  
And which we falsely call the holy disease.<sup>57</sup> That grievous sickness  
Then wasted the girl even to the Halls of Hades.  
A second time the couches were spread; a second time the maiden

Was sick for seven months with a quartan fever.  
 A third time they thought of marriage; a third time again  
 A deadly chill settled on Cydippe.  
 A fourth time her father could endure it no more.

Cydippe was not ill because of lovesickness. She was ill because of the anger of the goddess Artemis. Yet some of the symptoms of the three stages of her illness do seem to resemble those that might be associated with lovesickness (or, for that matter, melancholia): the wasting, the quartan fever (suffered by the lover of Theocritus's *Idylls* 30), the taking to bed, and, perhaps, the "deadly chill." (Cydippe's symptoms are very like those of Charicleia that I will mention later in this chapter.) For this context, what intrigues most is the subjection of Cydippe to the quartan fever. We have seen just a moment ago how quartan fever is to be associated with black bile and with melancholia and how it may be associated with lovesickness. Callimachus's tale of Acontius and Cydippe, therefore, *explicitly* denies lovesickness to the young woman but *implicitly* imputes it to her. It is furthermore most important for our process of periodization that her sickness has an implicit link with melancholy. The designation used by Callimachus for Cydippe's second bout of illness is that which Theocritus, in his *Idylls* 30, used of the lovesick. It is significant that Ovid, in his version of the affair between Acontius and Cydippe, describes Cydippe's condition in a way that could easily be confused with lovesickness and, obliquely, in a way that might imply melancholy. Ovid has Cydippe describe her condition as follows (*Heroides* 21.17–21):

The weariness hangs about me for reasons  
 I do not know. Tired, I find no help  
 From doctors. My limbs are shrunken; I am pale.  
 See me now, hardly able to write,  
 Hardly able to lift myself on my arm.

In the amatory poetry of Rome, at least until the time of Ovid, descriptions of lovesickness are not common, nor are they particularly detailed. The poet Aedituus, who survives only in fragments, admits to lovesickness when he complains of the sweats, confusion, silence, and shame.<sup>58</sup>

When, Pamphila, I try to tell you of the pain in my heart,  
 The words fail on my lips, to say what I want of you.  
 My breast is damp with sudden sweat. I am confused.  
 Silent, confused, I am ashamed and tortured.

Horace, a far better represented poet, describes jealousy (a type of lovesickness) in *Odes* 1.13 and speaks of choking, mental distraction, pallor, and tears.

In *Odes* 4.1.33 ff. he speaks of lovesickness proper, alluding to its tears and silences.

But why, alas, Ligurinus, why  
Does a tear now and then run across my cheeks,  
And why does my eloquent tongue,  
In the midst of speech, fail with scarcely decorous silence.

Propertius's addressee in his elegy 1.5, Gallus (described in verses 13–21), also has a bad case of lovesickness. This is how he is depicted.<sup>59</sup>

You will often come running, spurned  
To my door, your brave words perish in sobs,  
Your quaking shivers float on grieving tears,  
And fear etches ugly signs in your face,  
And the words you need to complain elude you,  
And you won't know who you are, or where, poor man!

Whether Gallus ends up wasting away, becoming extremely angry, or merely finding another partner, we do not learn.<sup>60</sup> There are other examples in Propertius and in his coeval Tibullus, but these are confined almost in formulaic fashion to the evocation of wasting and pallor.<sup>61</sup> What is persistently striking about these examples is—despite the obvious familiarity that the authors had with the condition—the lack of interest shown in the outcome of the condition and, indeed, the lack of seriousness with which it was taken.

Things do change, and they seem to be changing at about the time of Ovid. With Ovid, lovesickness, of what seems to be a depressive variety, is first consistently acknowledged. A very useful and detailed example of this is to be found at *Ars amatoria* 1.729–36.<sup>62</sup> The passage runs as follows (translation by Green 1982):

But let every lover be pale: here's the proper complexion  
For lovers; this gambit, please note,  
Has worked on every occasion. Pale was Orion, roaming  
The woodlands, pining for Side; pale  
Daphnis (ah, unkind Naiad!). Look lean and haggard  
As proof of your passion, don't baulk  
At hooding your lustrous curls. Sleepless nights, the pangs and worry  
Of consuming love—these will reduce young men  
To a thin nothing. If you mean to achieve your purpose  
Be an object of pity, so that passersby  
Will say at once, "He's in love."

The lover described here is not just subject to the usual pangs with which have been those to date (insomnia, anxiety, and so forth);<sup>63</sup> this one is really wasting away. There are a number of places within Ovid's books of love poetry, the *Amores*, which allude to lovesickness, though this is more along the lines with which we have become familiar in Propertius and Tibullus.<sup>64</sup> An unambiguous example of wasting lovesickness—lovesickness, that is, of the depressive, melancholic variety—is to be seen in Ovid's story of Echo and Narcissus (*Metamorphoses* 3.339–510).<sup>65</sup> In the Narcissus tale the symptoms given to lovesickness seem closely to equate with those that are associated with depressive melancholia, but the link is not made explicit. In this tale the nymph Echo had fallen in love with the handsome young Narcissus.<sup>66</sup> He fastidiously rejected her love. Echo's reaction to the rejection may be compared to that of Perdica (discussed shortly). She became grief-stricken (3.395) and anxious and insomniac (3.396); she was unwilling or unable to eat (3.397), and her bones became protuberant (as happened to Perdica, though in a slightly different manner). Narcissus was punished (3.406) for his heartless behavior. He caught sight of his own reflection in a pool and fell in love with it (3.407 ff.). Like Echo he became weak (3.469, 488 ff.) and unable to eat (3.437) and gradually starved to death (3.487–90).<sup>67</sup>

but, as the yellow wax melts  
 Before a gentle heat, as hoar frost  
 Melts before the warm morning sun, so does he, wasted with love  
*[attenuatus amore],*  
 Pine away, and is slowly consumed by its hidden fire.

He was transformed into the flower bearing his name.<sup>68</sup>

The tradition reaches full bloom in the generation following Ovid. We could say that it is inaugurated by Valerius Maximus (*Facta* 5.7.1), who recounts the famous ancient example of Antiochus, the son of King Seleucus who fell in love with his young stepmother, Stratonice.<sup>69</sup> Antiochus, either unwilling or unable to reveal his passion, fell ill, took to his bed, and began to waste away.<sup>70</sup> The physician Erasistratus, called to attend Antiochus, noticed how, when Stratonice entered the room, his pulse and breathing quickened and he flushed. (This situation resembles those described by Aretaeus and by Galen.) Erasistratus realized that the cause of Antiochus's troubles was frustrated love. King Seleucus so loved his son that, on hearing Erasistratus's diagnosis, he passed on his wife, Stratonice, to Antiochus. That selfless action afforded the cure. There are many variations of this story, within and without medical literature.<sup>71</sup> Plutarch's variant version is undoubtedly the most influential (*Demetrius* 37.2–3). In Plutarch's revisionist account, Antiochus takes to



bed and begins deliberately to starve himself as a means of controlling his passion. Antiochus's motives, on Plutarch's reading, are like those of Euripides' Phaedra. His symptoms, however, are those of the lovesick: physical debility, emaciation, a pallid complexion alternating with a flushed one, labored breathing, and a disturbed pulse rate.

Such lovesickness is not confined to the popular Antiochus and Stratonice story. A narrative clone may be found in the Vandal miniature epic poem *Aegritudo Perdicae*.<sup>72</sup> This story concerns a young man, Perdica, who was studying in Athens. Just before leaving for home, he neglected to sacrifice to Venus and Cupid. He was rewarded with a dream image with which he fell in love. The image was of his mother. Lovesickness caused him not only to reject food but also to suffer insomnia, fearfulness, and physical debility. His mother called a doctor, Hippocrates, who, by feeling for Perdica's pulse, discovered that it increased when his mother entered the room. Realizing the cause of the illness, he resigned the case. Despite his mother's ministrations, Perdica became more and more sick: he became pallid, emaciated; his nose, the tendons in his arms, and his ribs became protuberant. In the end he decided to hang himself. Once again lovesickness manifests itself in a depressive manner and in one that is easily confused with melancholia.<sup>73</sup>

Depressive lovesickness figures large in the following, rather different illustration. This one comes from the life of Marcus Aurelius (ruled 161–80 C.E.) in the *Historia Augusta* (*Marcus Antoninus* 19.12) and repeats an alarming story concerning the conception of the brutal emperor Commodus (ruled 177–92 C.E.).<sup>74</sup> It runs as follows:

Some say, and it seems plausible, that Commodus Antoninus, his son and successor, was not begotten by him, but in adultery; and they embroider this assertion, moreover, with a story current among the people. On a certain occasion, it was said, Faustina, the daughter of Pius and wife of Marcus, saw some gladiators pass by, and was inflamed with love for one of them; and afterwards, when suffering from a long illness [*aegritudo*—Cicero's term for mental anguish], she confessed the passion to her husband. And when Marcus reported this to the Chaldaeans, it was their advice that the gladiator should be killed and that Faustina should bathe in his blood and in this state lie with her husband. When this had been done the passion was allayed, but their son Commodus was born a gladiator, and not really a *princeps*.<sup>75</sup>

If in this version it is not wholly clear whence Faustina's illness derived, my preceding discussion ought to make this plain. Like Antiochus or Perdica, Faustina was so love-struck by the gladiator that she fell ill and took to her bed. Frustrated love has produced a state of physical enfeeblement. We cannot be

sure that this was depressive, but the mention of a “long illness” [*longa aegritudo*] (the noun often means “lovesickness”) points to this. The cure may seem remarkable. Yet a little thought will indicate that it offers a variation on a standard method of curing lovesickness pointed to by Aretaeus, sexual congress with the beloved. In this instance it is therapeutic intercourse by proxy. Faustina, coated with the blood of the unfortunate gladiator, undergoes with him a type of sexual union through the proxy of the ineffectual Marcus Aurelius.<sup>76</sup>

Even animals could become subject to the debilitating effects of lovesickness. Aulus Gellius, in his *Attic Nights* 6.8, reproduces this story concerning the love of a dolphin and a boy (Oppian *Halieutica* 5.448 ff. tells much the same story). The tale does not attribute melancholia to its lovesick dolphin,<sup>77</sup> but we would not be wrong, I think, to do so. (There is no explicit link between lovesickness and melancholia, I mean.) I will allow this narrative to speak for itself (Loeb translation adapted).

That dolphins are affectionate and amorous by nature is shown not only by recent history but also by tales of recent date. For in the sea by Puteoli—during the reign of Augustus Caesar, as Apion has written, and some centuries before at Naupactus, as Theophrastus tells us—dolphins are positively known to have been ardently in love. And they did not love those of their own kind but had an extraordinary passion, like that of human beings, for boys of handsome figure, whom they chanced to have seen in boats or in the shallow waters near the shore.<sup>78</sup>

I have appended the words of that learned man Apion, from the fifth book of his *Egyptian History*, in which he tells of an amorous dolphin and a boy who did not reject its advances, of their intimacy and play with each other, of the dolphin carrying the boy and the boy bestriding the fish; and Apion declares that of all this he himself and many others were eyewitnesses. “Now I myself,” he writes, “near Dicaearchia saw a dolphin that fell in love with a boy called Hyacinthus. For the fish came with passionate eagerness at his call and, drawing in his fins to avoid wounding the delicate skin of the object of his affection, carried him as if mounted upon a horse for a distance of two hundred stadia. Rome and all Italy turned out to see a fish that was under the sway of Aphrodite.” To this he adds a detail that is no less wonderful. “Afterwards,” he says, “that same boy who was beloved by the dolphin fell sick and died. But the lover, when he had often come to the familiar shore, and when the boy, who used to await his coming at the edge of the shoal water, was nowhere to be seen, pined away from longing and died. He was found lying on the shore by those who knew the story, and he was buried in the same tomb with his favorite.”<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps the most striking examples of lovesickness seeming to ape melancholy are to be found in the ancient novel (cf. Maehler 1990). Chariton (writing maybe in the middle of the first century C.E.), Xenophon of Ephesus (writing in the second century), and Heliodorus (writing in the third or fourth century) provide descriptions of frustrated young lovers that, in their similarities, seem to indicate depressive lovesickness had become a literary topos.<sup>80</sup> A link with melancholia is implicit in the cases of Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus. In Heliodorus's case, remarkably, the link becomes explicit. Lovesickness is linked with melancholia in a manner that echoes the striking formulation first offered by Aretaeus of Cappadocia.

Let us begin with Chariton. The hero and heroine of his novel, Chaereas and Callirhoe, spot one another at a public festival of Aphrodite and fall in love at once. The effect of love on Chaereas was dreadful: he was too weak to stand and began to waste away; he looked set to die (1.1). The effect on Callirhoe was worse, because, unlike Chaereas, she would not admit her condition to her parents: she lay on her bed, head covered, crying; and when marriage (not, she thought, to Chaereas) was proposed, she became speechless and sightless, and she almost expired (1.1).<sup>81</sup> Chaereas and Callirhoe were saved from death in the nick of time. They married.

Xenophon's description of the love of Habrocomes and Anthia in his *Ephesian Tale* is more detailed. The youngsters fall in love at a festival of Artemis. Habrocomes, in love (1.5), was worn out, insomniac, weary-eyed, of altered complexion; he was moaning, weeping, and praying pitifully; eventually his body wasted away and his mind gave in. Things were no better for Anthia (1.5), whose beauty was quickly fading. Had their parents not consulted the Delphic oracle and settled on marriage (1.6), Habrocomes and Anthia, who lay ill and in critical condition, would certainly have died (1.5). Xenophon's portrait has an approximate parallel in an interesting passage to be found in his near contemporary Apuleius. In his *Metamorphoses* 10 Lucius relates a tale that he had heard of a beautiful young stepmother who had fallen in love with her handsome stepson. Hippolytus-like, he virtuously rejected her overtures. Frustrated love changed to hate, and the stepmother responded by fabricating a charge of fratricide that almost succeeded. But what matters here is the description provided by Apuleius of the young woman's feigned or real love-wracked condition (10.2) (Loeb translation).

. . . her countenance was pale, her eyes sorrowful, her knees weak, her rest disturbed, and she would sigh deeply because of the slowness of her torment; there was no comfort in her, but continual weeping and sobbing; you would have thought that she had some fever,<sup>82</sup> except that she wept unreasonably . . .

This could as well be the description of the far more appetizing *Habrocomes* or *Anthia*.

Only one of the lovers in Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* shows full-blown signs of depressive lovesickness. This is the fair-skinned Ethiopian *Charicleia*.<sup>83</sup> *Charicleia* had seen the young Thessalian *Theagenes* (3.5) in the Delphic procession of atonement to *Neoptolemus*. She was at once love-struck (3.5). *Calasiris*, her subsequent guide, took her languishing in bed, her moist eyes, and her headache (3.7) for the effects of the evil eye (3.7–9) and promised to help cure it.<sup>84</sup> But her condition continued to deteriorate (3.19): “the bloom was fleeing her cheeks, and it was as if the fire in her glance was being extinguished by the water of her tears.” *Theagenes* and *Charicleia* saw one another a second time when *Theagenes* ran in the *Pythian games* (4.3–4). The effect was catastrophic. *Charicleia* became still worse, and her whole household was reduced to tears (4.5). *Calasiris* unsuccessfully attempted to cure her with incantations, incense, and laurel (4.5). *Charicleia* was subsequently examined by a doctor (4.7). *Arcesinus*, the physician, discovered at once that the root of the problem was love.

Can you not see that her condition [*pathos*] is of the soul and that the illness [*nosos*] is clearly love? Can you not see the dark rings under her eyes, how restless is her gaze, and how pale is her face—although she does not complain of internal pain? Can you not see that her concentration wanders, that she says the first thing that comes into her head, that she is suffering from an unaccountable insomnia and has suddenly lost her self-confidence? *Charicles*, you must search for the man to cure her, the only one, the man she loves.

*Charicleia*'s *nosos* is finally cured by union with her beloved, *Theagenes*.

What especially interests in Heliodorus's description of the effects of lovesickness are the indications that the physician *Arcesinus* initially took her problem to be a superfluity of the black bile. He tells *Charicles* (4.7) that he has discovered no excess of humors (*ou gar chymôn tis perittuei*). The humor in question can only have been black bile, *melaina cholé*. Further indication that *Charicleia*'s lovesickness could be confused with depressive melancholy is suggested by *Arcesinus*'s testing her pulse (4.7).<sup>85</sup> That seemed to give the game away. *Arcesinus*'s pulse test seems to mirror that applied by *Galen* and that which we have seen in the stories of *Antiochus* and *Stratonice* and of *Perdica*.<sup>86</sup>

Depressive lovesickness becomes, in Heliodorus, depressive melancholy. This admittedly uncommon tradition of depressive lovesickness, which seems to date only from the Hellenistic period, eventually absorbed the conceptual apparatus of the medical tradition, as we have it in *Aretaeus* and *Galen*, and

produced the version offered by Heliodorus. This is a link that becomes canonical in later Western literature.



Depressive lovesickness, as I hope my brief survey has demonstrated, is not at all common in the literature of the classical world. Its earliest, unambiguous examples come from Theocritus. The majority of ancient examples, however, are to be drawn from the first century of our era and later. Their appearance coincides approximately with the earliest medical discussions of the condition. While Theocritus and Callimachus may demonstrate that depressive lovesickness was a condition from which people must always have suffered, the remaining instances suggest that, as a sociological phenomenon to be taken seriously, depressive lovesickness is “discovered” in the early imperial era. Depressive love melancholy, if I may make this distinction, is something that comes late even within this uncommon tradition.

Depressive lovesickness embodies a kind of affective passivity. A query occasionally raised concerning the passivity of these *inamorati* of the first and second centuries of our era is this: is it really passivity or is it in fact the result of a literature that interests itself in the young and inexperienced and in love relationships that violate societal taboo? The depressed lovers of the Greek novel are usually young and inexperienced. One might easily blame their sense of powerlessness on their age and social station. Had they been older, more experienced, and more capable of attaining their own ends, then might their frustration have manifested itself as anger, rather than melancholy? Is the “discovery” of depressive lovesickness merely the product of a literature that takes more of an interest in the emotions of a more vulnerable class? There are, in the texts mentioned earlier, several instances that vitiate such a supposition. Chariton’s Dionysius, Callirhoe’s first suitor after her abduction by the pirates, offers one example. He is a full-grown man. Recently widowed, wealthy, friend of kings, and the father of two children, he might have been expected to react to frustration in anger, rather than in the depressed manner he does (Chariton 2.4). Similarly Theocritus’s Simaetha seems to be the victim of neither age nor inexperience. Anger, therefore, might be expected to be the reaction to her infatuation with Delphis. It was not. Medea, however, offers an example, especially in Valerius, of an angry reaction to frustrated love. Like Callirhoe or Anthia or Charicleia, she is young and inexperienced. The likelihood of her being able to marry the foreigner Jason is remote. Her response, therefore, might be expected to be one of depression. It was not. Youth and

inexperience act as an inaccurate means of predicting the reaction to love's onset and initial frustration. The same point might be made of a love that violates societal taboo. Here I am thinking of Marcus Aurelius's wife, Faustina, or of Perdica or Phaedra, or of Ovid's Byblis (see especially *Metamorphoses* 9.635–40). It could be argued that were their affections expressed openly, they might run the risk of detection and punishment. Hence come their depressive inversions. But let us compare Medea. The taboo against a relationship with Jason is every bit as strong as that, say, against Marcus Antonius's wife (who could, after all, have had a clandestine affair). For Medea, love meant betrayal of her father and her family. She knew this from the beginning. Yet her reaction was not one of powerlessness but, especially in Valerius's version, one of strong anger. What is noteworthy in the stress on passivity in love is, I contend, not its being confined to the young or to taboo breakers but its efflorescence in the first and second centuries of our era.



Love is a very dangerous emotion. When it is blocked it can lead even to death. We can, however, be quite precise in detailing the various symptoms associated with a condition such as lovesickness. When a person becomes subject to lovesickness, then we may expect the sufferer to register an initially overpowering emotion that will induce speechlessness and cause the person to fall to the ground in a black swoon. Soon they are marked by the burning wound of love. Subsequent reactions may involve depression, a sense of mourning, further swooning followed by a deathlike trance, blushing, silence, insomnia, weeping, and even the sweats. If love remains unconsummated, the victim may either sink into a wasting illness, or attempt suicide, or attempt violence on the beloved. The pattern may be replicated if jealousy is involved. The victim becomes depressed, swoons, exhibits a state resembling mourning, and weeps. She or he may subsequently begin to waste away or to contemplate suicide or may embark on acts of considerable violence.<sup>87</sup>

While ancient medical theory seems in practice to recognize only one form of lovesickness, I hope to have demonstrated that, in the literary sources, while typical symptoms of lovesickness are similar, the outcome of lovesickness exhibits two distinct forms, as I have just indicated—the medically recognized depressive form and the more widespread manic form. I would like to reemphasize now the relationship of these two outcomes of lovesickness with ancient concepts of melancholia. Ancient medical theory focused on two forms of melancholia. There was a depressive form, but the more prevalent type was violent and manic. The information on this matter has been examined in the

previous chapter. Perhaps it will suffice here to point to the evidence of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problema* 30.1.<sup>88</sup> The author of the *Problema* maintains that melancholia is the product of a superfluity of black bile. Black bile was a mixture of cold and hot. Melancholics, accordingly, fall into two broad groups, those in whom the black bile becomes very hot and those in whom the black bile becomes very cold. Where the black bile is hot, one would expect what we term the *manic phase* of this condition; where the black bile is cold one would expect the *depressed phase*. Subsequent theorists, whether humoralists or not, associate the illness with one, the other, or both of the two poles, mania or depression. Celsus, Soranus of Ephesus, and Caelius Aurelianus all associate the disease with depression. Aretaeus of Cappadocia and Galen, on the other hand, allow the bipolarity of the *Problema*.

How does this information relate to ancient concepts of lovesickness? The two types of melancholia mentioned in the *Problema* and depicted later in various medical contexts seem to match the two outcomes of lovesickness that I have been attempting to describe. Just as melancholia could be manic or depressive, so could lovesickness. The congruence is remarkable and perhaps tells us something of the popular perceptions of melancholia and lovesickness. This curious congruence, however, may provide an explanation for two other features of ancient lovesickness: (1) the paucity of descriptions of the depressive form of lovesickness and (2) this condition's relatively late appearance within literary texts.

I have argued elsewhere that the depiction of melancholia as a depressive illness rather than as a manic illness is not common in ancient literature and, furthermore, that existing occurrences appear late in the tradition. They seem to begin seriously in both popular literatures at about the time of Seneca. The same tendencies seem to be observable in the ancient descriptions of lovesickness. Medical discussions of lovesickness are all relatively late and describe the condition as depressive and as not unlike melancholia—also treated as a depressive illness. Of the literary descriptions of lovesickness provided here, the examples of manic lovesickness are distributed throughout most periods. The descriptions of depressive lovesickness appear in the early Hellenistic period, then, after a period of quiescence, reappear in earnest with Valerius Maximus—who wrote under the Roman emperor Tiberius (ruled 14–39 C.E.)—and continue sporadically over subsequent centuries. Descriptions of melancholia as a depressive disease seem to begin seriously at approximately the same times as do descriptions of depressive lovesickness. The parallel between melancholia and lovesickness, therefore, allows us to be more precise in categorizing and dating the phases of the ancient perceptions of lovesickness and perhaps of love itself.

There is another important point to be made of the condition, especially as it is suffered by Charicleia, but also as it is suffered by all of those who were subject to the “pulse test.” The state in which Charicleia finds herself has its parallel in that suffered by the Eumenides Painter’s Orestes and, subsequently, by Persius’s addressee in *Satires* 3. In their cases the melancholia represented a mixed state. Externally the victim appeared depressed, stuporous, retarded in a psychomotor sense, but internally there was agitation (hence the descriptor “agitated depression”) and flight of ideas. The flight of ideas in Charicleia’s instance is evidenced by the racing pulse that is registered by mention of the name of the beloved.

One final line of speculation needs at least to be toyed with at this point. This relates to the curious congruence of a shift in the perception of sexuality (in the sense of the gender of a preferred partner) and the affective mode by which frustration is registered. It has frequently been remarked that in the post-Senecan literary world there is often registered a stronger, more readily marked demarcation of the distinction between heterosexually and homosexually orientated behavior. This is particularly the case in the Greek novel. We have also noted in this chapter a stronger emphasis on affective passivity as the defining reaction to amatory frustration. Can this new literary emphasis on affective passivity be linked with this new stress on a demarcation between heterosexual and homosexual orientations? It is my belief that they can be linked. This is not the place to argue in detail for such a connection. Here perhaps I can remark only two things. First, the apparently amorphous nature of the early classical response, a response based primarily on the exercise of power, rather than on gender preference, matches rather neatly an apparent predisposition to react to frustration with anger. The amorphous matches the uncontrolled. The exercise of power matches a display of anger. From this simple, but striking, equation, a corollary, as it relates to passivity, may follow. This is my second point: emotional withdrawal—that is, passivity—seems to pair with a greater sense of sexual self-definition. There is, at this point in my argumentative narrative, no strong reason why this should be so. But it will become more apparent as things progress. I will argue, repeatedly, that a greater sense of self is the concomitant of the prominence of a variety of passive affectivities. For now, however, let us observe simply that a greater sense of sexual self-definition may well be linked with a heightened experience of emotional passivity.

One final, related point on this matter of passivity deserves to be made. The representation in literature of depressive lovesickness seems to be linked with the “thickening” or “deepening” of the manner by which the self and self-consciousness are portrayed. The representation of passive lovesickness im-



plies in an individual the partitioning off of the self from the world about. The reverse holds true. The active, manic form of lovesickness, no less painful than the depressive or passive form, is predicated on a blurring of the sense of separateness from the world, a blurring of the boundaries of the self.



I have cited the following passage from the great Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez elsewhere. It is such a powerful one and is so indicative of the sameness through time of the emotions I am discussing that it deserves quoting again.

After Florentino Ariza saw her for the first time, his mother knew before he told her because he lost his voice and his appetite and spent the entire night tossing and turning in his bed. But when he began to wait for the answer to his first letter, his anguish was complicated by diarrhoea and green vomit, he became disorientated and suffered from sudden fainting spells, and his mother was terrified because his condition did not resemble the turmoil of love so much as the devastation of cholera. Florentino Ariza's godfather, an old homeopathic practitioner who had been Tránsito Ariza's confidant ever since her days as a secret mistress, was also alarmed at first by the patient's condition, because he had a weak pulse, the hoarse breathing, and the pale perspiration of a dying man. But his examination revealed that he had no fever, no pain anywhere, and that his only concrete feeling was an urgent desire to die.

This passage comes from Gabriel García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*.<sup>89</sup> I have reproduced it to illustrate a simple point. This description of a depressed, fretting, passive, apparently fevered,<sup>90</sup> physically ill lover—almost a cliché of modern literature<sup>91</sup>—might as easily be of an ancient depressive melancholic as of a victim of cholera or lovesickness.<sup>92</sup> The dominant ancient concept, as I hope to have shown, was a violent one. Do we, therefore, see the origins or the “discovery” of Florentino Ariza's hackneyed condition in the literature of the early Hellenistic period and, above all, in the literature of the early empire (with its best parallels in the Greek novel)?<sup>93</sup>

It is remarkable that love melancholy begins to gain real currency at the same time, approximately, as descriptions of depressive melancholy become current. Do such congruences tell us something about the prehistory and even archaeology of affective states? (Certainly they show how closely allied were the emotions of anger, depression, and love.) Do they suggest that there took place in the literature of the first or second century of our era a shift in the

perception of the symptoms of such affective states as love, lovesickness, and melancholia?

The answer, I believe, is yes. But we must be particularly careful in three regards: discovery, proximate, and ultimate causes. Paul Veyne was very helpful on these matters. In a controversial article, he argued that such an affective shift, at least as far as love is concerned, is evident in the early empire. He believed that, with the weakening of the extended, aristocratic Roman family system, romantic love, rather than family compulsion, became the means for securing marital obeisance in marriage from women.<sup>94</sup> It would be easy to interpret love melancholy as another aspect of the new stress on romantic love (which seems above all a passive condition: as love itself became romantic, so did lovesickness become depressive).<sup>95</sup> The active, frequently violent emotions of the lovesick are slowly, but never wholly, replaced by the passivity of Antiochus, or of Habrocomes, or of Florentino Ariza.<sup>96</sup>

Veyne's explanation for the affective shift has been—no doubt rightly—rejected.<sup>97</sup> It does little to explain the passivity of males such as Dionysius. Most, however, accept the existence of an affective shift—of a proximate cause. What was its ultimate cause? The interrelation of lovesickness with melancholia and depression seems sufficiently strong as to demand an explanation that provides a cause not just for the affective shift in the perception of frustrated love but also for depression itself. Veyne's exhilarating thesis may tell us something about the emergence of romantic love and even of lovesickness, but it tells us nothing of the interrelated emergence of its congener, depressive melancholy.<sup>98</sup>

The concept of "discovery" is even more problematic. The passage cited from Gabriel García Márquez suggests a continuity between the Greek novel and the contemporary estimation of love. Yet comparative evidence most certainly sets a lie to this.<sup>99</sup> As a conclusion to this chapter, and as a check against heedlessly Eurocentric notions of "discovery," I would like to append some comparative data, drawn from Egyptian and Sanskrit literature. The lesson this comparative data offers, I suppose, relates to the latency of these changes. They occur in a number of societies. They seem dependent on urbanization and, with this, the centralization of societal power.



Depressive lovesickness is one of the hallmarks of a culture that has come to privilege the self. That lovesickness points to a passivity implying the potential for a reciprocity in amatory matters that demands the considerable resources of the self; it fits ill with the traditional, violent, and self-directed exercise of

power within erotic matters or, for that matter, in social affairs generally. One might assume—from the many examples provided in this chapter—that depressive lovesickness and the attendant problematization of the self is a particularly Western affair. It is not: such a condition may receive prominence in different sequences in any number of different cultures.<sup>100</sup> Depressive lovesickness is not the property of all of those dead white European males concerning whom I frequently teach. Nor is the privileging of self, that concomitant of depressive lovesickness, the prerogative of ancient Western society. Nor is it the preserve of the world of the Enlightenment. Nor does it come into being as the inexorable product of the alienation of labor and commodification of the individual that purportedly emerges from the Industrial Revolution.<sup>101</sup>

My purpose here is to provide a check on (my own) tendencies toward cultural naïveté and cultural parochialism. The check will be drawn from Egyptian and Sanskrit literatures.<sup>102</sup> I have stressed a sameness between the ancient and the modern worlds in my desire to dethrone, as it were, an easy periodization based on the European Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. But to envisage this psychotic sameness between the ancient and modern worlds as the product of a form of continuity is mistaken. That the ancient and the modern worlds can exhibit now similar, now dissimilar responses to emotional trauma is the result not so much of historical connection but of the limited ways humans may respond to psychic frustration and of the limited forms this frustration can take.<sup>103</sup> These simple comparisons should put paid to oversimple notions of “discovery.”

To follow are some remarkable examples, in the first instance from ancient Egyptian literature, of individuals suffering from lovesickness. The Egyptian poems I cite all date to the New Kingdom (the Eighteenth through the Twentieth Dynasties, ca. 1550–1080 B.C.E.), a relatively rich, stable, urbanized, and literate period,<sup>104</sup> at least until well into the Twentieth Dynasty. These poems should provide pause for the most hardened of Eurocentricists.<sup>105</sup> Here is the first of the love poems, taken from the *Papyrus Chester Beatty I* (I:1a, a cycle of seven stanzas), as indicated by Lichtheim.<sup>106</sup>

SEVENTH STANZA

Seven days since I saw my sister,  
And sickness has invaded me;  
I am heavy in all my limbs,  
My body has forsaken me.  
When the physicians come to me,  
My heart rejects their remedies;  
The magicians are quite helpless,

My sickness is not discerned.  
 To tell me "She is here" would revive me!  
 Her name would make me rise; 10  
 Her messenger's coming and going,  
 That would revive my heart!  
 My sister is better than all prescriptions,  
 She does more for me than all medicines;  
 Her coming and going to me is my amulet, 15  
 The sight of her makes me well!  
 When she opens her eyes my body is young,  
 Her speaking makes me strong;  
 Embracing her expels my malady—  
*Seven* days since she went from me! 20

The speaker of this poem identifies his complaint as a sickness, one that is the result of an amatory frustration caused by the absence of his "sister" ("sister" or "brother" is the usual designation of the beloved in these poems). The physiological symptoms of the illness are a heaviness (v. 3) and a weakness of the body (vv. 5 and 10 indicate that our victim is bedridden).<sup>107</sup> These symptoms may be intended to evoke a condition of senescence, which in its turn may be an indication of the proximity of death (cf. v. 4: "My body has forsaken me"). Such a condition no doubt involves corporeal wasting. Moreover, the proper diagnosis for the illness defies the powers of medical doctors (vv. 5–6, 13–14), just as did the malady of Heliodorus's lovesick Charicleia. That magicians are also needed for a diagnosis (they are quite "helpless" in v. 7) and that a proreptic device (an amulet) may have been part of their prescription (cf. v. 15: "Her coming and going to me is my amulet") may indicate, as was the case for Charicleia, that his condition was variously attributed to the effects of the evil eye. The only possible cure for the illness is that which we have repeatedly observed in Greek and Roman contexts, union with the beloved (cf. vv. 13–14: "My sister is better than all prescriptions, / She does more for me than all medicines"; 18: "Embracing her expels my malady").

The similarity between the situation described in this Egyptian love poem and the many Greek and Roman contexts just surveyed is marked. This is love melancholy, and the condition is depressive. The similarity exists not just in terms of situation and desired outcomes but also in terms of the amatory illness's etiology, physical symptoms, modes of treatment, and ultimate cure. The poem is, furthermore, suggestive of the constraints and self-actualization evident in Greco-Roman conundrums. It certainly casts doubt on the uniqueness of the Greco-Roman and Western experience.

The next piece of evidence is a poem taken from the collection designated *Papyrus Harris 500*.

IIA THE FIRST COLLECTION

6

I shall lie down at home  
And pretend to be ill;  
Then enter the neighbours to see me,  
Then comes my sister with them.  
She will make the physicians unneeded, 5  
She understands my illness!

What are we to make of the mendacity of this writer? He understands the condition of lovesickness so well that he is able to fake it. He knows, furthermore, that his condition will be understood not as lovesickness (except, perhaps, by his “sister”—“she understands my illness”) but as a malady that will require medical intervention (v. 5). No doubt the symptoms and their concomitants that his bogus malady presents will be identical to those outlined in the previous poem: a debilitating, wasting sickness, requiring medical and magical treatment, which will apparently threaten the sufferer’s life if left unchecked. One of the most interesting aspects of this poem is that it exhibits such an intimate—even self-conscious—understanding of the condition (“I shall . . . pretend to be ill”). It is almost as if the writer of this piece were playing with the traditions associated with this kind of experience and its poetry and mocking them. The poet certainly mocks his “sister.” The mockery could as easily be directed against the Greco-Roman traditions.

My third poem comes, like the first, from the *Papyrus Chester Beatty I*. The first of the cycle of seven “stanzas,” it is less ironic than the previous poem. While it avows the author’s being subject to lovesickness, it provides no detail as to the nature of the lovesickness (designated as “sickness”) with which the young woman is afflicted. It runs as follows:

FIRST STANZA

My *brother* torments my heart with his voice,  
He makes sickness take hold of me;  
He is neighbour to my mother’s house,  
And I cannot go to him!  
Mother is right in charging him thus: 5  
“Give up seeing her!”  
It pains my heart to think of him,  
I am possessed by love of him.  
Truly, he is a foolish one,

But I resemble him; 10  
 He knows not my wish to embrace him,  
 Or he would write to my mother.  
 Rather I am promised to you  
 By the Gold of women!  
 Come to me that I see your beauty, 15  
 Father, Mother will rejoice!  
 My people will hail you all together,  
 They will hail you, O my *brother!*

What can we say of this poem? The young woman designates her condition of frustrated love as a “sickness.” In light of all that has gone before, we can easily understand this sickness as the love melancholy at which we have been looking. Doubtless it is a debilitating, life-threatening illness, and doubtless it will be as resistant to medical or magical treatment as were the conditions exhibited by other victims. The only remedy is union with the beloved. This poem may not necessarily highlight the individual subject, the self, but it does highlight, however obliquely, a condition related to the discourse of the self, a condition this book has been at pains to illustrate.

It is useful, when contemplating these poems, to look ahead to the startling reference (quoted in more detail in chapter 3) given by Lévi-Strauss (1963) to the emotional situation of a young Zuni woman, a twelve year old, who “was stricken with a nervous seizure directly after an adolescent boy had seized her hands.”<sup>108</sup> The young boy was accused of sorcery and was made subject to a number of ultimately successful tests at the hands of his community. What fascinated Lévi-Strauss was the treatment accorded to the young man. More relevant here are the hints of the symptoms that the young woman experienced. These match those suffered by the Egyptians. The Zuni attributed them not to love but to the effects of sorcery or something akin to the function of the evil eye. That the effects of the evil eye may match those of lovers is something that we have already observed. The corporeal wasting and rapid degeneration is something that lover and ensorcelled suffer alike. So it is that the young woman’s condition may match those of the lovers in the Egyptian poems and those of the lovers in the Greek and Roman texts that I have already discussed. Zunis, ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and García Márquez’s Colombians all suffer in the same manner.<sup>109</sup>

My point should be obvious without needing detailed exemplification. The basis for the bizarre alienation and the dramatic confrontation with the self that lovesickness entails (leading either to a destruction of the self or to a reinte-

gration) is not something nurtured by culture (by some Western or post-Enlightenment experience) but is generated, it seems, by the very physiology of the human body, its psyche, and the social conditions it encounters. This reactive form of depression, therefore, is, given the right social conditions, a universal. As for these conditions, what is needed, on the social plane, for such a confrontation is a reasonably complex social organization (or a near-urban society) that allows a reasonable degree of individual privacy, but within what is—at least for the better-off—an authoritarian social setting. The suffering individual, furthermore, must both perceive and represent him or herself as isolated from the community.<sup>110</sup> (Such communities, furthermore, must be subject also to the varying constraints of literacy.)<sup>111</sup> Finally, for others to recognize it, the amatory experience must be something that requires interpretation: its evidentiary basis must be made manifest through signs. That this Egyptian society exhibited these conditions is apparent.

These conclusions can be reemphasized by looking (briefly in this instance) at a series of Sanskrit love poems, provided for us particularly in the collection *Subhasitaratnakosa* (Treasury of well-turned verse).<sup>112</sup> This anthology, put together shortly before 1100 C.E. by the Buddhist scholar identified as Vidyakara, is the product of a historical period that seems to reproduce the preconditions for the type of presentation of self that is highlighted in the present book (for a historical overview see Basham 1967): a complex social structure (evincing that peculiar, but fecund, mix of state authoritarianism and individual freedom) matched by high literacy and, for its beneficiaries, personal wealth.

The *Subhasitaratnakosa* anthology contains verse by over two hundred poets “who lived for the most part from the eighth to the eleventh centuries A.D.” (Ingalls 1965, v). Those poems of particular relevance to my theme are found in the “books” entitled “The Lady Parted from Her Lover” and “The Lover Parted from His Mistress.” The stylized portrait of the lovesick in these poems exhibits many of the characteristics with which we have become familiar. Some of the characteristics of the lovesick woman are sighing, sleeplessness, a burning fever, carelessness of personal presentation, and a feeling of emptiness. Ingalls notes (1965, 230):

The sole exertion of which she is capable is an attempt to paint her lover's portrait. For the rest, she leans her cheek on her hand, while the tears stream forth, black with the collyrium of her eyes, destroying the cosmetic designs on her cheeks and falling in heavy showers on her breast.

A few illustrative examples of this remarkable Indian tradition follow. The young woman in the first is in love with King Bhoja.

749. Is she attacked by dropsy? No;  
 nor by the major elements.  
 She is not mad, nor is she suffering  
 from a syndrome of ailments.  
 Why, then, this weeping, swooning, sighing                   5  
 and then this smiling face?  
 How shall I say it, the foe whom she has seen,  
 who really is no foe, is none other than  
 His Sacred Majesty, King Bhoja.

(Chittapa)

We may assume either that the young woman is separated from King Bhoja or that her love has so far met with little response.<sup>113</sup> Her reaction to this frustration is a perplexing sickness that is apparently no sickness at all (neither “syndrome of ailments” nor “dropsy”).<sup>114</sup> We have observed precisely this form of “sickness” in the case of, for example, Heliodorus’s Charicleia.<sup>115</sup> Her symptoms of weeping, swooning, and sighing are things we have met in a number of previous amatory contexts. These, however, were associated with the historically later form of lovesickness, the passive form. It is also noteworthy that the woman’s illness, according to Chittapa, could at first sight be confused with madness (v. 3). The form of madness must be depressive, and in Greco-Roman contexts it would be so understood, because of its confusion with depression. What we witness in poems like this one is the poetic presentation of a powerful *inner* experience. It is one that sets the individual apart from the human world about them. The self, thus, is rendered problematic. The reaction in this and in the following instances is a passive one. This highlighting of the self, because of the dangers of madness, runs the risk of the disintegration of the personality.

The theme in the next poem, “sickness without a cure,” picks up that of the previous one and also that of many classical contexts.

744. You may as well burn up my couch  
 though strewn with lotus leaves.  
 What use these shaken palm fronds  
 which take the form of heated coals?  
 Enough; the cream of sandalwood                                   5  
 no less than moonlight burns my eyes.  
 Dear friends, my sickness is without a cure  
 like fire that feeds on water.

(Abhinanda)

This poem also echoes the ancient Egyptian poems surveyed in the previous section of this chapter. What is new, however, is the stress on burning. Fire, a



cliché of most love literatures, is introduced with some power. That even moonbeams burn the victim of love is a very striking topos. Sappho felt fire running beneath her skin. So, too, did Medea. While Sappho was being ironic, in Medea's case the fire acted as a spur to action. Here, as other poems show, the fire consumes the passive victim and reinforces the sufferer's helplessness. It is a fire, however, that vividly attempts to reflect the inner experience of the speaker and so marks her off from the world about.

The next short poem emphasizes even more than the others the isolating nature of this erotic illness, the depressingly passive mode by which it is registered, and the apparent dangers it poses for survival.

751. You leave not your couch nor care about your health,  
nor tend your hair bound in a disheveled knot.  
At least take care, dear friend, to stay alive.  
I've seen a hundred women separated from their loves  
but never such as you. 5

This poem is also the first reference (within my citations) to what becomes canonical in the passive experience, wasting (it is reemphasized by the references to health and to the lack of interest in personal care).<sup>116</sup> If the frustrated lover received no help, then he or she eventually perished,<sup>117</sup> either from the wasting illness or by their own hand. It is a theme that seemingly echoes a repeated topos of the Greek novel.<sup>118</sup>

In the following poem, we have the now common motifs of loss of sense, of swooning, and of fire.

755. Grief cuts my heart and cuts it deep  
but cuts it not in two;  
my body, though it stumbles dazed,  
refuses to lose consciousness.  
An inner fire burns my limbs 5  
without consuming them;  
the hand of fate which strikes so deep,  
alas, strikes not the life.

[Bhavabhuti]

The motif of an illness that is not a real illness is also present. This is indicated by the author's claim that "the hand of fate which strikes so deep, alas, strikes not the life." The poet is playing with the topos here, however. The usual cliché is that lovesickness can kill. Playfully the poet indicates that this is not the case. In so doing he demonstrates that this is a case not of dejection or of melancholy but of love. (This is a type of play that I have already noted in the

Egyptian material.) Once again the powerful presentation of an inner experience, a presentation that highlights the difficulties related to the boundaries of the self, is paramount. It is difficult to resist emphasizing the words “to lose consciousness.” The meaning refers to wakefulness. The implication of “consciousness” in English, at any rate, is “self-consciousness.” Love melancholy cannot diminish one’s sense of self, it could say. The condition bespeaks a heightened awareness of the boundaries of the self.

It appears that the sufferer in the next poem may eventually expire from the lovesickness she is suffering.

७१०. The passion of my heart is sharp  
and stealing ever on, brings pain;  
burns like a stirred-up fire, smokeless;  
wastes like a mortal fever in every limb.  
My father cannot save me nor my mother 5  
nor even you, my friend.

[Bhavabhuti]

We know that the remedy is sexual congress with the beloved. The stress on pain, smokeless fire (again an illness that is not an illness), and fever are common to this genre, in whichever of the cultures we have looked at.

One last example of this type follows (there are, however, others that could have been included).<sup>119</sup> This small poem vividly captures the passivity, the debility, and the withdrawal of the sufferer. Thus are highlighted the boundaries of the self. Thus, too, is highlighted the need for reciprocity.

७१५. This debility of body and lack of all desire,  
this fixing of your eye in trance,<sup>120</sup> and perfect silence:  
this state bespeaks a heart fixed on one single object,  
What is that one, fair lady; brahma or your lover?  
(Laksmidhara)

From these poems it is possible to create a composite picture of this Sanskrit lovesickness. We are dealing with an amatory condition fueled by absence and frustration. It may present itself as a sickness of a feverlike variety that requires for its cure medical intervention and interpretation. Its most common symptoms, apart from fever, are paleness, wasting, an obsessive single-mindedness, sleeplessness, sighing, tears, and sorrow. The cure is intimacy with the separated beloved.



Five points have been made in this chapter. I repeat these here for the sake of clarity. First, the depressed, fretting, passive, and physically ill lover (sometimes termed the love melancholic), though present in ancient literature, is more a cliché of medieval and modern literary experience. The dominant reaction to frustrated love in ancient literature was manic and frequently violent. Second, lovesickness, in its literary depictions, mirrors the distinctions that the ancient medical writers posited for melancholia itself: there was a depressive type and there was a manic type. Third, the depressive variety of lovesickness, though always on the cards (just like depressive melancholia) becomes more frequent late in antiquity, above all during the first century of our era. Fourth, these dominant traditions of amatory mania and depression find exact parallels in those associated with melancholia proper and depression. Fifth, these manic and depressive reactions to the trauma of erotic infatuation are means by which individuals attempt to restore the integrity of the self. I would like to expand briefly on this fifth point. It is of particular importance, if not in this local context, at least for the themes of this book as a whole.

In these poems of erotic trauma, it is the written presentation of self and of self-consciousness that is so striking. The poems seem to exemplify a thickening or deepening, in the nonjudgmental sense, of the manner by which the self and self-consciousness are presented. They are, furthermore, built upon an opposition of “inside-outside,” a partitioning off of the self from the world about us. Reading from those ancient texts so far surveyed, we may take this speculative vein concerning the self a step further. The sense of self that is evident in these poems demonstrates a standing outside oneself, a concern almost to watch, to weigh up, and to react to one’s emotional and physical state almost as if it were other.<sup>121</sup> Such a sense of self involves the extended highlighting of a person’s inner mental processes. It involves a partitioning not just between the inner self and the outer world but also between the body (approximating the “outer” world) and the self (approximating the “inner” world). It is as if the subject stands at a remove from his or her emotional reactions. It is as if the subject were alienated from these. The subject watches its reactions and feels powerless in their face. There comes into being a disjunction between the body and a person’s (and other persons’) consciousness of it.

This developed sense of the self, as we see it through Egyptian and Indian lovesickness, comes at considerable personal risk. Above all, there is associated with it passivity, yielding, withdrawal, isolation, and estrangement. These can lead to the disintegration of the personality. A chain of other qualities may also be present. These conditions are particularly also to be linked with the private; with interiority, the mind, and “depth”; and even, in some cases, with viscera.

Lovesickness must be able to be interpreted (or read) through the *signs* of this illness—it is as if this were a *literate* illness (read as one would a book). Other characteristics follow: the condition is associated primarily with present time (we guess that earlier eras did not suffer it) and with an urban and individualist lifestyle. It is something to be associated with humans, not with animals. The risk of this highlighted sense of self is, through its associated estrangement, the total disintegration of the personality.

We cannot posit sociological causes for the appearance of this type of poetry that privileges the self. But certain aspects seem to be common between the Egyptian, the Sanskrit, and the Greek and Roman poetry. For example, it is undoubtedly true that the widespread social emergence of these conditions is predicated upon a comparably widespread frustration. It is also true to say that the evidential texts discussed in this book are the product of the more privileged members of their particular communities. A heightened form of emotional conflict, brought on by sociological forces, must be the causative agent in this process. It is much easier to posit this than it is to demonstrate it. I have already suggested of Egyptian poetry that the basis for the bizarre alienation and the dramatic confrontation of the self that lovesickness entails is not something nurtured by culture—it is not discovered—but is generated by the very physiology of the human body and psyche. This mode of reactive depression will reappear as social circumstances allow.<sup>122</sup> This may also hold for Sanskrit poetry and for the Greek and Roman experience. What is needed for such a confrontation is the conflict that is generated within a society exhibiting a reasonably complex social organization (or a near-urban society, one with sufficient leisure for the experience of the emotion and for the composition of complex texts meditating upon this—literacy becomes important at this juncture).<sup>123</sup> Such a social organization must allow a reasonable degree of individual privacy, but within what is—at least for the better-off—an authoritarian social setting. Such a situation seems to have existed for the elites in the courtly worlds that produced the Sanskrit poetry that I have just examined and the Greek and Roman literature on which this book has been focused. Such communities, furthermore, must be subject also to the varying constraints of literacy and to the forms of subjective, interpretative experience brought in its train (see Goody 1998). Thus it is that the amatory experience must be something that, for others to recognize it, requires interpretation: its evidentiary basis must be made manifest through signs, through writing.

That we are dealing with a social organization that juxtaposes individual privacy with, at least in the cases of the better-off, a moderately authoritarian social setting goes some distance toward explaining why all of the literatures discussed here seem to cast into such relief problems related to the issue of

control. This becomes apparent again and again as we witness the tensions within this form of poetry. Such tension exists between the passivity of the poet and the activity of, say, the absent lover or, in broader contexts, the community; between the yielding nature of the individual and the obdurate carelessness of his or her associates or the community; between the withdrawal, isolation, and even estrangement of individuals and the quotidian competencies by which the beloved, for example, or the larger community surrounded them. Thus, it seems to follow, this literature offers a focus not on the public, the outer life, or even the body but on the private, the inner life, and the mind (interiority). No better example of this last point may be offered than the philosophical writings of Seneca.

That is as far as I think we should attempt to pursue the isolating of social determinants for the conditions that I have singled out. That aspects of such conditions existed in Alexandria of the third century B.C.E., in Rome in Seneca's era (and, as we shall see, within early monastic communities), and within the Indian and Egyptian communities to which I have alluded in this chapter suggests two things. The etiology of the problem goes deeper than, first, a mere isolation of "crisis cultures" (I doubt there was anything crisis-ridden about, e.g., Ptolemaic Alexandria) or, second, overurbanized and overpopulated centers or cultures subject to a particularly rapid rate of change. While these factors are important and may act as contributory agents, there is also the need for the admixture of the other qualities suggested in the previous paragraphs. It may seem to be frustrating to deny the possibility of isolating a cause for such conditions. But I suggest that the first problem is to describe the conditions and to isolate periods in which they seem to have become paramount. There is too little acquiescence in either of these matters for us to allow ourselves *yet* the indulgence of looking for causes—as Veyne (1978) and many others have done. To this point it is description that really matters.<sup>124</sup>