



Time's Passing

Catastrophes, Trimalchio, and Melancholy

There are two possible ways of viewing the passage of time: that everything is in a state of constant and unrecognizable change. And everything remains unchanged. There it is, the supreme contradiction. Linear time and circular time. Linear time is envisaged as a huge, endless knife-blade scraping its way across the universe . . . Circular time sees the world as remaining more or less the same . . . I believe that virtually all of the existing books on time, deep down, are certain that it is linear. That it passes and is then, irrevocably, gone . . . The life of every person possesses a linear trait . . . And yet, life is full of repetition . . . Read books about the history of time and you will find all of them agree that linear time triumphed along with Christianity . . . Even though linear time has triumphed, it is as though cyclic time is what counts . . . In 1865 Rudolf Clausius suggested the word “entropy” as a scientific term for the fact that time was linear, irrevocable, irreversible . . . Up to that point, even in biology, no one had really been sure of anything other than that living creatures kept on reproducing themselves; that nature was cyclic.

—PETER HØEG, *Borderliners* (1994, 201–3)

I have used for the epigraph of this chapter a quotation from Peter Høeg’s novel *Borderliners* (1994, 201–3) because it so neatly embodies popular perceptions of linear and circular time. The primary focus of this chapter will be on time, linear and circular; its relation to the body and to the mind; and how individuals may register their experience particularly of linear time. This will mean that we must reconsider the concepts of circular and linear time. Unfortunately I have found that, among the sorts of readers this book is liable to find, circular time is viewed as, if not an aberration, at least a fiction of over-imaginative scholarly minds.¹ This should not be the case, as I hope the extract from Høeg’s frightening fiction may demonstrate. There are many devotees of circular time, not the least of whom are children.

Høeg’s narrative speculations are useful in another way. They provide a

striking example of the localization of the apparent triumph of linear time to within the period of the rise of Christianity and then to the century following the Enlightenment. Høeg's conceptualization mirrors many others. Time, yoked with insanity (so we might consider melancholia), owes its modern formulation to the Enlightenment. (For madness see Foucault 1973. For time see Elias 1992; Borst 1993; Foucault 1977, 149 ff.) Foucault argued that madness was incompatible with the new mercantile economy. It was therefore conceptualized and then banished to the new "clinics": "in the bourgeois world . . . the cardinal sin . . . had been defined . . . [as] . . . inability to participate in the production, circulation, or accumulation of wealth (whether or not through any fault of their own [i.e., of those who are mad]). The exclusion to which they [sc., the mad] were subjected goes hand in hand with that inability to work, and it indicates the appearance in the modern world of a caesura that had not previously existed" (Foucault 1987, 68; see also Foucault 1973; cf. Porter 1987, 6–10). It is easy to see how Foucault and others imagined that time had become reconceptualized under the same forces.²

Time and its articulation within a key period in the ancient world will be the focus of this chapter. I will attempt to demonstrate that time's passing (as we see it in the literature of the first century of our era) can best be understood as part of a dialogue that engrosses boredom, melancholia, and lovesickness. I hope to demonstrate not just that time exhibits a periodization that runs parallel to that of madness (as I have just indicated, I am using the term *madness* as an equivalent of melancholia) but that these particularized states also manifest patterns and relations that are shared and that are applicable not only to one another but also to the worldviews that this book has considered. I will also argue that, at least in one case, the experience of time's passing could be registered in a corporealized fashion. As melancholy could be linked with conditions such as quartan fever (chapter 1), love with fevers and wasting (chapter 2), or boredom with nausea (chapter 3), so could time be linked with intestinal disquietude. Time itself is no affective state. But the way we react to it most certainly is. Its passing can provoke mood or affective responses of lesser or greater strength; this experience of time can become, that is, the equivalent of a mild affective disorder, just as can the experience of love or boredom.³ This affective disorder, like most others, can become internalized or corporealized. The mode that this corporealization takes most commonly involves a physical ailment that mirrors the psychological affliction (depression, love, boredom). This, we will see, is markedly so in the instance of time. In Trimalchio's case, as will become evident, time's apparently uncontrolled linear thrust is ironically mimicked by his uncontrolled digestive tract. Trimalchio's remarkable attempts to control his digestion have their image in his extreme attempts to control time's passing.

So Trimalchio returns obsessively to the themes and motifs of time's passing and, as we will see, even acts it out by staging a mock version of his funeral. Through action such as this he aims to punctuate and control its course.



Trimalchio has been absent for some time from his famous banquet. He seems to feel that his guests deserve an explanation (Petronius *Satyricon* 47). Constipation was the excuse, and the cure was pomegranate, resin, and vinegar. Constipation makes Trimalchio think of dying.⁴ “The doctors,” he explains to his friends, “forbid you to hold back . . . Believe me if the gas goes to your head it produces feebleness throughout the whole body too. I’ve known many to die that way, because they were unwilling to be honest with themselves.”⁵

The passing of time and death provide persistent organizational motifs within the banquet scene of the *Satyricon* (Arrowsmith 1966; Slater 1990, 54–55; the novel is usually dated to the first century C.E.). Trimalchio’s anxiety over constipation exemplifies these themes.⁶ I believe that how Trimalchio describes his condition echoes the language and conceptual formulation used of some forms of madness in contemporary literature. In a previously published article (Toohey 1997c), I looked at how the themes of time’s passing and death are intertwined within the *Satyricon*. For the sake of clarity I will go through some of this material again. At the very beginning of Trimalchio’s banquet (*Satyricon* 26), we learn that Trimalchio has a “clock [*horologium*] in his dining room and a well-dressed trumpeter to tell him how much of his life he’s lost.” The trumpeter lets forth timely blasts that notify the millionaire how much remains of his thirty years, two months, and two days (we learn of Trimalchio’s residual life span in section 77; cf. Seneca’s near contemporary Manilius and his computation of life spans at *Astronomica* 3.560–617). Trimalchio’s “morbid, although whimsical, preoccupation with death,” as Smith (1975, 53) puts it, is made even more plain in the closing scenes of the banquet. In section 77 he gives this remarkable command: “Stichus, bring out the material in which I want to be laid out. Bring some unguent too, and a draught from that wine jar in which I want my bones to be washed.” Trimalchio experiments with the nard and urges his guests to try it too. He even opens the wine in which his bones will be washed and seems set to share it. Worse still, after showing the guests his shroud, he lies along the couch as if he had already passed away. “Imagine I’m dead,” he announces, “and say something nice.” He then has his cornet players blow a funeral march (section 78). Petronius therefore concludes his depiction of Trimalchio’s banquet with an evocation of death, time’s ultimate threat (cf. Arrowsmith 1966, 306–7).

The motifs of time's passing and death can be observed in other places within the banquet scene. Early on in the banquet (section 34), Trimalchio's slave brings in a miniature silver skeleton with flexible joints. This leads Trimalchio to muse, in poetry, on the universality of death. Later Trimalchio brags (section 48) that he has seen the Sibyl at Cumae and that she said, "I want to die." Trimalchio reads his will in section 71 and later, in section 74, quarrels with his wife, then denies her cohabitation with him in his tomb (to avoid post-mortem quarreling). Trimalchio seems to surround himself with the symbols of time and mortality or with associates who like to allude to them. In the colonnade to his home (section 29) is a golden casket containing Trimalchio's first beard; in section 73 we learn that one of Trimalchio's slaves has just had his first shave. There is also the zodiac dish, a bizarre, celestial timepiece (sections 35, 39). One of Trimalchio's guests (referred to in section 38) has been an undertaker. Habinnas and Scintilla arrive late at the banquet (section 65) because they have been at a ninth-day funeral feast for a slave called Scissa. Conversation at the banquet is often about death. Seleucus (in section 42), after recounting aspects of the funeral and of the life and death of his friend Chrysanthus, concludes lugubriously on human longevity that "we're nothing more than bubbles." When Ganymedes puts in his piece (section 44), he speaks on contemporary decline, while Echion, the sadistic rag merchant (section 45), talks of the death struggles at gladiatorial shows or of killing off a young boy's pet birds.

It is through this prism of time and mortality that we ought to interpret Trimalchio's constipation. Trimalchio's intestinal regularity seems to provide a bizarre means for calibrating the proper advance of time. Just as does the regularity of the clock and the trumpet, so, too, does bowel routine provide for Trimalchio's life a series of foreseeable punctuations and predictable events. Their regularity, their predictability, and the fact that they can be controlled does in some degree mitigate the depressing, unpredictable, and uncontrollable reality of death. I doubt that Trimalchio (or Petronius) was conscious of this, at least when all was normal. But irregularity of bowel movements, which Trimalchio has been suffering, threatens his attempt at controlling death. Irregularity may even hasten one's death. It is little wonder that Trimalchio and his friend Habinnas are so conscious of what they eat. Although Petronius's discourse represents humans as time's playthings, and although they register time's passing passively (for them its climax is death), Trimalchio's comic, but understandable, attempts to manage and to master time through incessant protestations and bizarre temporal calibrations aim to master a fear of an unrelenting, linear time that climaxes only in death.

We could say that Trimalchio registers time through illness and through the

body.⁷ The passing of time for Trimalchio produces an actual *debilitating* and *physical* manifestation.⁸ This is, as I have stressed in a number of contexts in the book (in chapter 1 with melancholia and quartan fever, in chapter 2 with love and wasting and fevers, in chapter 3 with boredom and nausea, in chapter 4 with “boning”), a common, predictable, and very modern way to mark affectivities and affective registers such as time. Trimalchio’s constipation therefore forms a part of a larger textual dialogue on the experience of time’s passing.⁹



Time’s passing was not always expressed in this strange and maudlin fashion. Trimalchio’s linear time is a long way from the conception of time broadcast by Alexandrian writers such as Virgil, Horace, and Ovid (in the *Metamorphoses*) and by earlier epic poets such as Naevius and Ennius.¹⁰

The sense of the immanence of the distant past is a constant theme of Roman literature. It is based on a feeling of the circularity or of the repetitious nature of past history and of time itself. We can observe this as early as the writing of Gnaeus Naevius (ca. 270–201 B.C.E.). Naevius wrote what is usually termed as the first Roman national epic. His poem concerns the First Punic War (264–241 B.C.E.). (For texts see Strzelecki 1964; Marmorale 1953; Morel 1975. For a translation see Warmington 1935. Cf. Toohey 1992, 92–95.) Beginning with the mythological origins of Rome in Troy, it produces a narrative climaxing in the victory of the Romans over the Carthaginians in the First Punic War. Sixty-odd lines of the poem are extant (see Rowell 1947). The poem, composed originally as an unbroken narrative, was apparently divided into seven books in the second century B.C.E. by C. Octavius Lampadio. Fraenkel (1935) suggested that the first book of Naevius’s *Punic War* provided an account of events of the war down to the capture of Agrigentum in 262 (Rowell 1947). At Agrigentum was a temple to Jupiter on whose pediment the foundation legends of Rome were depicted. The poem may have provided a description of this pediment, beginning in book 1 and extending at least until the conclusion of book 3.¹¹ Book 2 seems to have concentrated on Aeneas and his arrival in Carthage—and possibly on his love affair with Dido. Book 3 has Aeneas in Italy. The book may also have contained narratives of the Roman regal period. Books 4–7 then narrate the First Punic War and may have outlined the years 260–241, with each book embracing approximately a five-year period. If Naevius really did include Aeneas and his Trojans within his narrative (cf. Waszink 1972, 906 ff.; Strzelecki 1964; Marmorale 1953), then we could speculate (1) that his *Punic War* exhibits, through its vigorous juxtaposition of past and present, a belief in the vital continuity of Roman history and (2) that

Aeneas, the early kings, and their dilemmas provide prototypes for contemporary leaders and heroes. History thus repeats itself.

Naevius's epic successor Quintus Ennius (239–169 B.C.E.) wrote his *Annals* about the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.E.) and seems to have adopted the same strategy as Naevius. In his *Annals*, we witness this same sense of the circularity of time and history. This can best be illustrated by outlining briefly the contents of his fragmentary poem (the fragments amount to not much more than six hundred lines, less than a twentieth of the final scope of the eighteen books: for the text see Skutsch 1985; for a translation see Warmington 1935). Fifteen books spanning the thousand years from 1184/3 to 187/184 B.C.E. represented the original ambit of the poem. The fifteen books may have been grouped into triads (I am following Gratwick 1983, 60 ff.). The first triad (books 1–3) covers, in book 1, events from the sack of Troy, via Aeneas, to Romulus and Remus and the foundation of Rome. Books 2–3 seem to have narrated the events of the legendary period during which Rome was said to have been ruled by kings (the so-called regal period). The second triad (books 4–6) describes, in book 4, events from the foundation of the Republic (510 B.C.E.) to the Gallic invasions (390 or 387 B.C.E.). Book 5 narrates events down to the end of the Samnite wars (295 B.C.E.), book 6 the war against Pyrrhus (281–271 B.C.E.). The third triad (books 7–9) deals with, in book 7, events leading up to the invasion of Hannibal (218 B.C.E.). Books 8 and 9 describe the rest of the Second Punic War (218–201). The density of narrative detail increases considerably in the fourth and fifth triads (books 10–12, 13–15). Within the fourth triad, book 10 outlined the war against Philip of Macedon (201–196 B.C.E.), while books 11 and 12 carry the narrative down to the commencement of the war against Antiochus III of Syria (191/2 B.C.E.). The final triad of the original edition seems to outline events as follows: book 13, the war against Antiochus (191 B.C.E.); book 14, Scipio's victory at Magnesia and the naval war (190 B.C.E.); book 15, the actions of M. Fulvius Nobilior, Ennius's patron. The final, appended triad (books 16–18) described the events of the Istrian war and ran to 171 B.C.E.¹²

The concept for a poem that leapfrogs back from Hannibal to Numa to Troy belongs to Naevius. So, too, does its meaning. On the simplest of levels, the *Annals* represents a national encomium. Like Naevius, Ennius seems to admire the successful warrior. The position of Rome's power within history, however, is at the heart of the concerns of the *Annals*. Through the depiction of a series of Roman heroes (culminating in the present), Ennius demonstrates the immanence of the Roman past in the Roman present. Ennius's alleged Pythagoreanism may support this conclusion. Pythagoreanism, in which doctrine it is sometimes said Ennius was instructed, believes in the transmigration of souls

(metempsychosis). An instance is provided by Ennius's dream at the beginning of the *Annals*: Homer has transmigrated into the soul of Ennius. The progress of Roman history is ordained, Ennius may have believed, by the metempsychosis of a heroic soul from one generation to the next. If Ennius did believe in this historical circularity, he would not be alone. Compare Ovid's Pythagoras in *Metamorphoses* 15 and Anchises' lore in Virgil's *Aeneid* 6. There are also Valerius Flaccus's Argonauts (to cite another epic example, but this time from the end of the first century C.E.). If we follow Jupiter's prediction at *Argonautica* 1.531–60, Jason and the Argonauts are the first in a chain of individuals who will climax in Domitianic Rome. The speech occurs within the divine assembly of 1.498–573: Jupiter's speech implies that the Argonauts are harbingers of the Roman Empire; their voyage, Jupiter explains, will shift the balance away from the East to Greece and from Greece eventually to the West, presumably to Hesperia; Jason becomes, therefore, a proto-Roman, proto-Aeneas, and emperor.¹³

A comparable version of time is at the base of the ideological design of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In Virgil's *Aeneid* 6, Aeneas, through consultation with his father, Anchises, learns the theory of metempsychosis and of Rome's history to come (6.679–901). Anchises (6.679–702), when Aeneas meets him in Hades, reveals the future generations of Roman heroes. But before outlining these, Anchises details his famous theory of transmigration (6.713–51, 756–886). The purpose of this speech is to explain how the past lives on in the present, how a leader such as Augustus embodies Aeneas, how the progress of Roman history is made constant—or better, is made cyclical—by the metempsychosis of a heroic soul from one generation to the next. (So Anchises points out to Aeneas the souls of famous Romans [6.752–853]: the Alban kings, Romulus, Augustus, the Roman kings, and many heroes who lived during the Roman Republic. The roll of heroes concludes with a description of Marcellus, the son of Octavia, Augustus's sister.)¹⁴ While the implication of all of this is that Augustus and Augustan Rome are but another element that reenacts the past values and triumphs of Rome, the vision is essentially cyclic, for, although faces change, the essence keeps on coming back. Anchises, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, offers a real link between Aeneas and his followers and contemporary Romans, particularly between Aeneas and Augustus. He, too, does this through a theory of metempsychosis. So the Roman Empire is achieved by a cyclical reenactment of a past established by Aeneas.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, using the motifs of metamorphosis and metempsychosis, creates a narrative that, commencing with creation, traces history down to contemporary times: creation (beginning book 1) leads to the apotheosis of Julius Caesar and the prediction of the apotheosis of his nephew, Augustus (15.745–870). This is buttressed by the Pythagorean speech of 15.60–478. This

provides a rationale for the theme of metamorphosis: through the flux of history, the constant is the human soul changing from one form into another. Pythagoras's doctrines provide a unifying link for the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. They place the poem firmly within a tradition of time that we have just witnessed in the *Aeneid* (and will shortly see in the *Fasti*). Ovid uses metempsychosis, the doctrine of universal change (15.176–272), the section on the rise and fall of cities and the predictions of Rome's greatness (15.418–52), and the section on the transmigration of souls (15.453–78) to provide a clear link between such mythological or nearly mythological heroes as Hercules, Aeneas, Romulus, Julius Caesar, and Augustus.¹⁵ Time therefore moves in self-fulfilling circles.

This traditional Roman attitude to time is also evident in Ovid's poem on time and the calendar, the *Fasti*.¹⁶ The *Fasti*, perhaps the most striking Roman exemplar of the cyclicity of history, details the major events of the first six months of the Roman calendar. For the *Fasti*, time is social and cyclical.¹⁷ (For this type of "social" time see Elias 1992; Borst 1993, 1 ff. For time as a social construct see Bettini 1991.) It is not progressive (i.e., linear, as it is for Trimalchio), nor is it degenerative (despite Janus's halfhearted reference to a decline from the Golden Age at *Fasti* 1.247 ff.). Ovid's calendar reenacts and re-creates the past through religious ritual: Roman origins and the mythological and historical or quasi-historical events of Rome's past are annually re-created in the festivals of the calendar. Such events are persistently related to contemporary events (see Beard 1987; Newlands 1995). Thus is created a cyclical link, through ritual and the calendar, between mythological time and time now. We could exemplify this with the festival of the Megalesia, where Augustus's family is linked with the mythological past (*Fasti* 4.179–372). Transplanted from Greece to Rome, this festival early on gained particular connection with the imperial family of Augustus (4.293–348). It is still practiced (4.349–72) and is still relevant now. Thus, too, for example, the "Trojan" legend concerning Dido's sister, Anna (3.523–710), leads imperceptibly to Roman foundation legends and, significantly, is juxtaposed with a brief lament on the murder of Aeneas's descendant Julius Caesar (3.697–710). Anna and Caesar, both victims, become, eventually, divine beneficiaries.

A systematic appraisal of time's passing within Ovid's calendar would be impossible within the constraints of the space I have available here (cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1987 and Zanker 1988 on the politics of the calendar). But allow me to offer, through the Carmentalia, one further example of how this circularity is operant (and thus offer a hermeneutic template that may be applied throughout much of the rest of the poem). The Carmentalia was a festival begun on January 11 for Carmentis, the mother of the first inhabitant of the site of Rome,

Evander (*Fasti* 1.461–586). It begins with a straightforward description of Evander's birth and exile (for crimes not of his own making) from Arcadia in Greece (1.469–508). Then it shows us Carmentis, after arrival at Tarentum, enthusiastically greeting the new homeland (Rome itself—Carmentis and Evander have sailed up the Tiber) and predicting its future greatness (1.509–42). What does Carmentis tell of Rome's future? After greeting Rome and exclaiming in a generalized fashion on its future (1.509–18), she prophesies the arrival of the Trojans (1.519); subsequent war (1.520); Lavinia, Aeneas's bride-to-be (1.520); the death of Pallas, Evander's son (1.521–22); the belated triumph of Troy over Greece (1.523–26), and Aeneas (1.527–28). At this point Carmentis jumps one thousand years (*in annos nostros*) and forces, arbitrarily, a comparison between the family that includes Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, and Germanicus, on the one hand, and the founders of Rome, on the other (1.529–30; note the reference to Vesta in 1.528). Augustus's clan thus comes to be seen as another instance of the sorts of thing that were manifest in Rome even from its beginnings. Ovid drives home the point. He goes on to link in Augustus, Tiberius (1.530–34), and Augustus's eventually deified wife, Livia (1.535–36).¹⁸

Notwithstanding such evidence, it is difficult for many modern readers to accept that different cultures, different periods, and different individuals may conceive of time in different ways. To us, especially when we think of mortality, the linearity of time seems self-evident.¹⁹ Yet it is quite clear that for us to insist upon such a conception is to be purblind. Cyclical time, which may stress not just a recurrence of events but more particularly an immanence of the past in the present, is a common, alternative means for the registering of the movement of time.²⁰

Cyclical time is associated primarily with illiterate and with agricultural societies (Lévy-Bruhl 1923)—with the illiterate because linear time requires measurement for its reckoning and because measurement of any complexity requires writing; with the agricultural because farming, particularly crop farming, relies on the repetitive nature of the seasons for its success.²¹ Cyclical time, as has often been argued (Ong 1977, 1982; Goody 1987; cf. Lévy-Bruhl 1923), may be seen above all in myth (which in turn has its genesis in illiterate societies).²² Pindar's epinicians perhaps provide the earliest and most striking example of a conception of mythology that relies on a cyclical, nonlinear concept of time. For Pindar, as has often been noted, the significance of the competitor's victory resides to a very large degree in that it is envisaged as repeating or reenacting, in the present, past mythical victories such as those of Heracles or Perseus, among many others.²³ The past in this way becomes immanent in the present, through the recursive force of the triumph of the games victor. The

present thus repeats again and again seminal actions from the past (cf. Eliade 1954).

This conception of time is not just the preserve of preliterate agricultural or premodern cultures.²⁴ It also played a surprisingly prominent role in ancient, specifically Stoic, philosophical thought.²⁵ To illustrate this I will quote Long and Sedley (1987, 1:311 ff.) on what they term “circular or closed time” (as opposed to linear time), a concept that is built on an “everlasting cycle of world-order and conflagration” (on the notion of *ecpyrosis*, to which I will return).

What presses harder for clarification and philosophical assessment is everlasting recurrence itself. The doctrine which Chrysippus canvassed as a possibility, if not a firm thesis, was “our return to the shape we are now” in a future world after our death; and in the most detailed summary this hardens into the claim that there is an everlasting sequence of worlds and conflagrations in which the individuals and actions of any one world are exactly the same as those of every other world “down to the smallest details.” Such a cosmology is asserted rather than proved in our surviving evidence, but it appears to be an inevitable consequence . . .

This conception is not quite the same as the ideas of immanence that we have observed in the poets, but its popular basis may well be the same. Long and Sedley nicely sum up the philosophical ramifications of this idea as follows:

Just as Nietzsche probably regarded everlasting recurrence as a way of saying that any other life one had would always be just the same—for how else could it be *your* life?—so in Stoicism the doctrine may have served to underline the necessity of accepting one’s present situation. For that will be one’s situation time and again in the everlasting nature of things.



The contrast between Petronius and the tradition represented by the writers of epic so far discussed could not be greater. In Ovid (who lived from 43 B.C.E. to 17 C.E.) we noted the refraction of a way of looking at time’s passing that implies that one participates, collaborates, or plays a partner with time and its restoration of the Roman state. In Petronius (d. 65 C.E.) Trimalchio’s representation of the experience of time’s passing is utterly passive: time controls, it humiliates, humans attempt to escape its net, and time is named. Time, furthermore, is a linear, serial, and cumulative process (Slater 1990, 55). The contrast between a point of view that respects individual participation in a cyclical temporal movement and one that sees subjects as passive victims of an essentially

disinterested (but potentially malevolent and degenerative), linear, and serial temporal movement is marked.

Melancholia—or madness, as some might term it—seems to evince a periodization resembling that of the experience of time. Consider again the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problema* 30.1. It placed melancholics 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, reproduce this distinction. The literary depictions of melancholia, I have argued, indicate that these two forms predominate in two different periods. The more common literary depiction of melancholia is of the manic variety (Cicero states typically at *Tusculan Disputations* 3.5, “what we call *furor*, the Greeks call *melancholia*”). Manic melancholia, except for a brief efflorescence of the depressive form in the early Hellenistic era, dominates until the time of Seneca. The second form of melancholia, the depressive variety, does not assume any prominence in literary experience until the era when Celsus, Soranus of Ephesus, Aretaeus of Cappadocia, and Galen began their analysis. So we find Trimalchio’s contemporary M. Annaeus Seneca, the addressee of Seneca’s *De tranquillitate animi*, suffering from this condition. He has companions in the addressee of Persius’s *Satires* 3 and in the lead characters of Chariton’s novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*.

With melancholia, we witness what seems to be the periodization of an emotional state. This periodization may be localized: to speak approximately, acute frustration tends to provoke a manic melancholic reaction throughout the literary experience of antiquity. But, beginning with the third century B.C.E. and more pronouncedly within the literary experience of Rome in the early empire, acute frustration may produce a reaction best described in terms that match those we nowadays use of melancholia. It “becomes” a passive condition, an utterly depressive and fretting condition. What is notable, however, is that this invention displays no clear stratigraphic line of demarcation. It begins to become prominent in Alexandrian literature for the first time. It disappears. Then, displaying a pendulumlike motion, it reappears in the first century of our era. Of its own, this melancholic periodization is, I believe, a rather interesting thing—if, that is, my rough and schematic diagnosis is correct. Depression, something to which nearly all of us are prone, was, as it were, “invented” in a more systematic way twice, first in Alexandria and then again sometime in the first century of our era. I use the word *invented* with all due caution. What I mean by this term is merely that depression seems suddenly

and unexpectedly to have been judged a topic worthy of serious textual contemplation. Real life is another matter.

Earlier in this chapter I spoke of the need to demonstrate how a single set of rules defines the relations between madness and time. Trimalchio's temporal concerns have much in common with the depressive formulation of melancholia. Not unexpectedly it also has much in common with the literary experience of boredom. Greek literature to the Hellenistic period seems to lack reference to anything more than the simplest form of boredom. Serious or unequivocal consideration of boredom begins in the first century B.C.E. in Rome, but here it is limited by the absence of a clear-cut term or conception for the condition. A psychic or inner form of boredom is first referred to in the first and second centuries C.E. In Seneca, for example, boredom is depicted as an emotion that not only can affect a person's life sporadically but can spread to influence one's every waking action. In Seneca, Persius, and Plutarch, as I have argued in chapter 3, there is registered the "invention" of the modern concepts of the emotion. The incidence of boredom in ancient literature seems not unexpectedly to match the literary "invention" of melancholia. Do we witness the operation of a generalized affective formulation, one whose very hallmark is passivity, one that inscribes the world as something one merely registers, something that acts upon one, something over which one has no ready control? Can we link to this Trimalchio's constipation?



What intrigues in the instances of boredom and melancholia is that, like most psychological conditions in the ancient world, these emotional states could manifest themselves in somatic terms. We have seen this corporealization in, say, the instances of quartan fever or nausea, to name but two. Trimalchio's constipation represents, I have argued, a corporealization of the registering of time's passing. This is represented, remarkably, in terms that echo those used by medical writers for melancholia. Constipation, we learn from Petronius's near contemporary Celsus (*De medicina* 3.18.17), is to be associated with melancholia (*tristitia*) or an excess of black bile (*bilis atra*, the very substance that causes melancholia) (cf. Jackson 1986, 38):²⁶ "there is another sort of insanity . . . depression which seems caused by black bile. Bloodletting is here of service; but if anything prohibit this, then comes firstly abstinence, secondly, a clearance by a white hellebore and a vomit" (trans. Spencer [1935–38, vol. 1]). A few lines later Celsus points out that if health is to be maintained, then "the motions are to be kept very soft." Trimalchio, though alluding to constipation and to purges, does not use as an emetic hellebore (*veratrum*), the standard

treatment for insanity (Celsus 2.12; see also Spencer 1935–38, 2:lviii–lix) and melancholia (Starobinski 1962, 16–21; Toohey 1990b, 159–60). He uses pomegranate, pine resin, and vinegar. We know from Caelius Aurelianus (*On Chronic and Acute Diseases* 1.184) that pomegranates (in this case combined with vinegar- or wine-soaked Theban dates) were curatives for melancholia. We know too from the Hippocratic text *Regimen in Acute Diseases* (61) that the dissipation of black bile is assisted by vinegar. Then there is the constipation. Of itself it is no proof of melancholy (Celsus described its symptoms and cures at 1.3.23–27). But it was associated with melancholy (by such physicians as Aretaeus: see Starobinski 1962, 23), as was flatulence.²⁷ Aretaeus, for example, makes this clear when he states, “in certain of these cases, there is neither flatulence nor black bile, but mere anger and grief, and sad dejection of the mind; and these were called melancholics, because the term bile and anger are synonymous in import, and likewise black with much and furious” (trans. Jackson [1986, 40], following Adams [1856, 298]).²⁸ This link between melancholia and Trimalchio’s constipation is made more clear by Trimalchio’s suggestion that the stool may overheat and send up an exhalation that may damage the higher portions of the body. Although such damage is an expected concomitant of excessive constipation (according to Celsus 1.3.23–27), Trimalchio, by describing the dangerous vapor produced by the constipation as *anathymiasis*, must inevitably point to a humoral context. Galen uses that word of “an exhalation from the humors being drawn to the head” (Smith 1975, 128). (For Galen the combustion within the body of black bile and the resultant dangerous vapor cause insanity: see Starobinski 1962, 25–26.)²⁹ What other humor would an ancient physician associate with this condition than the black humor (melancholia) associated often with constipation?³⁰

Petronius, therefore, through the descriptors used of Trimalchio’s constipation, reflects the language and concepts used of melancholy. What are we to conclude? The concept of time, as it is embodied here, forms part of a larger textual dialogue engrossing boredom, melancholia, and the experience of time’s passing. Trimalchio’s condition does not just help us in the search for patterns. It also provides a suggestive match for the periodization I have attributed to madness as it is manifested in melancholia and boredom. Trimalchio’s fears manifest themselves precisely within the period during which Seneca’s Serenus and, possibly, Chariton’s doleful heroes make their melancholic, depressive, and passive laments.

I would like to take this intriguing link between time, the body, and melancholia a step further—this time into the more speculative realms of contemporary psychological description. The link between time and the body is perhaps more peculiar than we might have imagined.³¹ Let me explain.

Organizing time for cyclothymiacs or manic-depressives can be a fraught event. Their subjective temporal experience of time seems to involve a sense of the expansion or contraction of time, two perceptions that follow the cyclical movement of the phases of the illness. So time speeds in the hypomanic phase but slows in the corresponding, depressive phase.³² Thus sufferers appear to be unable to adjudicate the length or shortness of the time required to navigate what for nonsufferers are only mildly complex activities. The many complaints (especially in the case of victims of cyclothymia) of the slowness of their companions or the intolerable haste that they feel their speedier companions are forcing upon them points to the affective basis for the registering of time's passing. (Time, we could speculate, may be conceptualized of as an emotion even, rather than merely representing an emotional register). The precise measurement or demarcation of time for sufferers when they are in the acute phases of the illness can bring on the most anxiety-ridden, anxious, and even aggressive of reactions. This is notably so in the case of the quarrelsome cyclothymic.³³

As a means of controlling this anxiety brought on by the oppressive slowness or speed of time, some sufferers (again, especially cyclothymiacs) will sometimes involve themselves in the most painstaking of temporal measurements: lists, a variety of alarms, detailed calendars and almanacs, and a crazy collection of calibrations. The relevance of this for Trimalchio (and perhaps for Giorgio de Chirico, whom I discuss in the appendix) ought to be plain. Time and the body, through the dire influence of these melancholy phases, can enjoy a symbiotic relationship.



Entropy is a measure of the disorder among the atoms making up a system. We are told that any initially ordered state is certain to become more random over time. That is one formulation of the second law of thermodynamics. In everyday speech, entropy is taken to mean not the measure of the state of disorder in a system but the tendency for all things, as time progresses, to become more disordered, chaotic, and even prone to catastrophe. Peter Høeg's narrator is referring not just to atoms but to the very material of civilization and society. As he states: "In 1865 Rudolf Clausius suggested the word 'entropy' as a scientific term for the fact that time was linear, irrevocable, irreversible, and that nothing could ever be the same again. Up to that point, even in biology, no one had really been sure of anything other than that living creatures kept on reproducing themselves; that nature was cyclic" (Høeg 1994, 201). Such an entropic temporality has an alarming end point. It envisages that not just civilization and

society but also the universe consume themselves through a catastrophic state of total disorder.

We are not alone in this estimation of the course of time. It held considerable appeal for the ancient world, especially for Stoic thinkers such as Trimalchio's contemporary Seneca and for the poet Lucan.³⁴ It represents an extreme form of the registering of time to which Trimalchio was subject. Seneca believed that the earth and the universe itself would, in time, perish in a mighty catastrophe (sometimes termed *ecpyrosis* or conflagration).³⁵ The theme of the universal catastrophe seems to have held more than just philosophical appeal for Seneca and his nephew, Lucan. It becomes, in a series of variations, a leitmotiv of their writings, whether they are occasional, dramatic, epistolary, epic (in Lucan's case), on science, or on philosophy. It is another variant of the time corporealized in Trimalchio's constipation, and it offers further support for the discursive typicality of Petronius's time. It is, furthermore, a version of time shared by ancients and moderns.

Let us begin with Seneca. His most vivid description of the universal catastrophe follows (it comes from the *Consolation to Marcia* [26.6–7] and is uttered by Marcia's dead father, the historian A. Cremutius Cordus) (Loeb translation).

For, if the common fate can be a solace for your yearning, know that nothing will abide where it is now placed, that time will lay all things low and take all things with it. And not simply men will be its sport—for how small a part are they of Fortune's domain—but places, countries, and the great parts of the universe. It will level whole mountains and in another place will pile new rocks on high; it will drink up seas, turn rivers from their courses, and, sundering the communication of nations, break up the association and intercourse of the human race; in other places it will swallow up cities in yawning chasms, will shatter them with earthquakes, and from deep below send forth a pestilential vapor; it will cover with floods the face of the inhabited world, and, deluging the earth, will kill every living creature, and in huge conflagration it will scorch and burn all mortal things. And when the time shall come for the world to be blotted out in order that it may begin life anew, these things will destroy themselves by their own power, and stars will clash with stars, and all the fiery matter of the world that now shines in orderly array will blaze up in a common conflagration. Then also the souls of the blest, who have partaken of immortality, when it shall seem best to God to create the universe anew—we too, amid the falling universe, shall be added as a tiny fraction to this mighty destruction, and shall be changed again into our former elements.

The description is clear enough for it not to require significant paraphrase. Like any organism, Seneca's universe will die in time. The earth will “die” by

suffering vast inundations. The firmament in turn will “die” by burning up (and with it will be destroyed creation itself). For the Stoics this was not the complete end of things. From the destroyed universe will grow eventually a new version, perhaps, in the infinity of time, repeating precisely the conditions under which Seneca’s contemporaries lived. Stoic time, therefore, was both linear and cyclical. But there are local constraints. Cyclical as Seneca’s adopted philosophy of time may have been, there is to his depiction of catastrophe a persistent sense that we are dealing with something that is final. Seneca speaks as if the *ecpyrosis* really were the end of all things. His stress is not so much on regeneration as it is on destruction. It follows that, throughout Seneca’s prose and poetry, there is to be derived from knowledge of the final conflagration a bleak romanticism.³⁶

Seneca’s Stoic catastrophism strikes a curiously modern chord. For those of us, like Høeg, who came to maturity during the cold war, universal catastrophe seems the only possible way for the world and our time to end. To underline that curious congruity between this ancient formulation and modern prejudice is one goal of my brief.³⁷ But, for the present context, there is a more important point to be made. The vision of time that Seneca repeatedly offers matches, at root, that which we have observed in Trimalchio and will see in Lucan.

But this is to assert too much too soon. First I need to demonstrate some of the contexts in which Seneca makes appeal to this vision of the destruction of the earth and how these may relate to his view of time. Descriptions of the end of the earth (the so-called *ecpyrosis*)³⁸ occur in several places within Seneca’s writing. We have just read one. Others occur in his plays (*Octavia* 391–96; *Hercules Oetaeus* 1100–27; *Troades* 382 ff.; *Thyestes* 830 ff.), in his occasional writing (*Consolation to Polybius* 1.2), in his philosophical writing (*De beneficiis* 6.22), and in his scientific writing (*Natural Questions* 3.13.1–2, 3.27–30). The most extensive of these is presented at *Natural Questions* 3.27–30. In this long sequence, Seneca speculates in detail on how the universal catastrophe will come about (“will it be by the force of the ocean and the rising of the outer sea against us or will heavy rains fall without ceasing and persistent winter eliminate summer and hurl the full force of water down from burst clouds?” 3.27.1), on the stages by which this will happen (3.27.4 ff.: rain, famine, floods, storms), on the true extent of the damage to be caused by the deluge (3.28.1 ff.), on the ability of astrologers to predict the length of the life of the earth and the universe (3.29.1–2), and on the cause of this *ecpyrosis*. It seems, furthermore, that Seneca believes that this universal destruction is imminent (3.30.5 ff.). There is, in one of his summaries within this long sequence, a malevolent, yet elegiac, tone that is typical of his catastrophic imagery. Seneca laments the loss of all

things human, yet, strangely, he seems to exult in its passing. Here is his description of the end (3.29.8) (Loeb translation).

As if this were not enough, winter will hold strange months, summer will be prohibited, and all the stars that dry up the earth will have their heat repressed and will cease. All these names will pass away: the Caspian and the Red Sea, the Ambracian and Cretan Gulf, the Propontis and the Pontus; all distinctions will disappear; all that nature has separated into individual parts will be jumbled together. Neither walls nor towers will protect anyone. Temples will not help worshippers, nor will the heights of cities help refugees, since the wave will anticipate the fugitives and sweep them down from the very citadels. The destructive forces will rush together, some from the west, some from the east. A single day will bury the human race; all that the long indulgence of fortune has cultivated, all that it has lifted to eminence above the rest, all that is noble and beautiful, even the kingdoms of great nations—fortune will send all down to ruin at the same time.

Tarrant (1985, 209) acutely notes the un-Stoic slant that, in passages like this, Seneca places on *ecpyrosis*: “In orthodox Stoic thought *ecpyrosis* brought about purification and renewal . . . but even in his philosophical writing Seneca can focus exclusively on the prospect of annihilation.” Passages such as this one tempt us to go further: it is almost as if Seneca rejoiced in this imminent destruction.

Seneca’s fascination with this theme of catastrophe spills over into other contexts. He is very fond of depicting cities in calamitous ruin. So the *Troades* begins in the very ruins of Troy (vv. 6–21; cf. vv. 739 ff., 885 ff.).

Overthrown and fallen is the prop	6
Of mighty Asia, famous work of the gods	
.....	
Pergamum has fallen upon herself.	
See! The towering glories of her high-piled wall lie low,	15
Her dwellings consumed by fire; flames lick around her palaces	
.....	
The very sky is hidden	
Because of the billowing smoke; as if smothered by a thick cloud,	20
The black day is foul with the ash of Ilium.	

The *Oedipus*, too, commences in a gloomy, smoky, plague-ridden city. Fire, whether in the firmament or in a city, seems also to have fascinated Seneca. In *Epistle* 91 Seneca draws lessons from the disastrous conflagration that has leveled Lyons. Catastrophe can happen through other means: in *Natural Questions*

6.1.1 Seneca dwells on the ruinous effects of an earthquake at Pompeii (cf. 6.27.1). The imagery of catastrophe (if not outright references to catastrophe or to the calamities of cities) permeates Seneca's prose writing and poetry. Among those passages one could single out are Oedipus's description of the plague at Thebes (*Oedipus* 110 ff.), Hercules' references (*Hercules Oetaeus* 1150) to the *mundi ruina* (in which he will be buried), the stress of the narrator of the *Natural Questions* on the ominous nature of comets (*Natural Questions* 7.15.1, 7.13.3; they are often associated with periods of great disaster), or the focus generally in book 6 of the *Natural Questions* on the terrifying nature of earthquakes. One should also link with this catastrophic imagery the peculiar Stoic notion of *sympatheia*: evil deeds will produce their echo in the very physical constitution of the universe (thus great evil deeds may produce catastrophic natural reactions). So at *Troades* 168 ff. the earth itself revolts against human wrongdoing. In the *Hercules Oetaeus* (v. 1017) poor Deianira thinks that the universe itself is reaction against her complicity in Hercules' destruction (that is precisely the wish made of Hercules at *Hercules Furens* 1054 ff. and 1202). Elsewhere in this same play, we learn that the earth now roars in reaction to Hercules' death (*mundus sonat*, v. 1595).

Seneca's fascination with catastrophe is something that seems to go beyond mere Stoicism and a literary interest in universal destruction. It is as if this reflects his own inner drives and his narcissist horror at the prospect of personal extinction (the very worst aspect of linear time). This is very close to the emotion that drove Trimalchio to insist that his friends participate in his mock funeral.³⁹ To substantiate this point I will cite three passages, the first spoken by Medea (*Medea* 426–28), the second spoken by Hercules (*Hercules Oetaeus* 1131–37), and the third uttered by Seneca himself (*Natural Questions* 6.2.9). The sentiments embodied in these passages, despite their various speakers and contexts, all seem ominously to match one another. Here are Medea's words.

My one solace is this:

To see everything destroyed and in ruins with me.

Let everything perish with me! Destroying all is pleasure if you must perish.

Medea is referring to her plan to kill her children. This, in Seneca's play, is motivated by Jason's having abandoned her for a new marriage. Medea's startling lack of empathy with creatures other than herself, her desire for universal destruction if she must suffer, and her pessimism and narcissism match the elegiac pessimism we noted earlier. Her selfishness also has a curious analogue in Trimalchio's own bizarre funeral rehearsal and his insistence on the participa-

tion of all those around him. It also has a further parallel in the mock funeral of Sextus Turannius reported at the conclusion of the *De brevitae vitae*.

Hercules also echoes Medea's dire selfishness. So great is his own estimation of his terrestrial import that he hopes that the world will suffer destruction on his death. In a passage that reeks of images of *ecpyrosis* (Lapidge 1979), Hercules tells us:

Turn back, gleaming Titan, the panting horses;
Send forth night. For let the world let this day perish
On which I die. Let the pole shudder, wreathed in black cloud.
Foil my stepmother. Now, father, black chaos
Should return. On all sides, its framework
Shattered, the pole should be sundered.
Why spare the stars? You're losing Hercules, father.

Once again we witness a total lack of empathy with fellow humans, a thoroughgoing narcissism, a remarkable selfishness and self-absorption, and a childish desire for universal destruction—if Hercules himself must suffer: “for the world let this day perish on which I die.”

Here is the companion passage from Seneca's *Natural Questions* (Loeb translation).

The earth is split and burst by the great power of I know not what calamity and carries me off into the immense depths. So what? Is death easier on a level surface? What do I have to complain about if nature does not want me to lie in an ordinary death, if she places upon me a part of herself? My friend Vagellius expresses it well in that famous poem of his:

“If I must fall (*si cadendum est*),”

he says,

“From heaven I'd wish to fall (*e caelo cecidisse velim*).”

I might say the same thing: if I must fall, let me fall with the world shattered [*si cadendum est, cadam orbe concusso*], not because it is right to hope for a public disaster but because it is a great solace in dying to see that the earth, too, is mortal.

Seneca's adaptation of Vagellius's words (on which see Courtney 1993, 347) is bizarre to say the least. Vagellius seems to be saying that if he must fail, it is better to have failed attempting great deeds (rather like Phaethon). Seneca, ostensibly echoing the sentiments he used for Marcia (*Consolation for Marcia* 26.6), turns the wish solipsistically upon himself: “if I must fall, let me fall with the world shattered.” Does he not realize that others would perish in this

conflagration? Seneca exhibits the same selfishness, narcissism, and total lack of human empathy as do Medea and Hercules.⁴⁰ Seneca's disclaimer ("not because it is right to hope for public disaster") rings false. His sentiment matches utterly those of his alter egos Medea and Hercules. In its peculiar way, it also matches—on a much larger scale—the emotions of Trimalchio. This is a worldview, we should now be able to see, that is based on linear time (at *Natural Questions* 6.32.10–11 Seneca magnificently states that he "hangs on an instant of fleeing time" [*in puncto fugientis temporis pendeo*]).⁴¹ In fact, so linear is this time that Seneca mentions that astrologers are capable of computing the time when the *ecpyrosis* will take place (*Natural Questions* 3.29; cf. *On Providence* 5.7).⁴² These computations represent variants of the calculations of which Trimalchio was a devotee. Above all, however, Seneca's desire for a universal cosmic dissolution, apparently designed to assuage his own doleful recognition of personal extinction, represents a revolt, albeit a hopeless one, against the all-powerful linearity of time. This was Trimalchio's strategy in his mock funeral.

This theme of catastrophe can have peculiar referents in real life—nondiscursive referents, we might say. It is hard not to think of the woeful emperor Caligula at this point. Suetonius (*Caligula* 31) tells us:

He used to complain[ing] how bad times were and that there had been no public. The Varus massacre under Augustus or the collapse of the amphitheatre at Fidenae under Tiberius made their reigns memorable. The prosperity of his own reign, he said, would lead to its being forgotten, and he prayed again and again for a great military catastrophe or some famine, plague, fire, or earthquake.

The same feeling, to follow Suetonius, seems to have impelled Nero to stage his own mini-*ecpyrosis* when he purportedly set fire to Rome.⁴³ So we read (*Nero* 38) (Penguin translation):⁴⁴

Once someone quoted the line

When I am dead, may fire consume the earth

but Nero said that the first part of the line should read "While I yet live," and soon converted fancy into fact . . . he brazenly set fire to the city . . . He also coveted the sites of several granaries, solidly built in stone, near the Golden House; having knocked down their wall, he set the interiors ablaze . . . Nero's men destroyed not only a vast number of apartment blocks but mansions which had belonged to famous generals . . . temples too, vowed and dedicated by the kings . . . Nero watched the conflagration from the Tower of Maecenas, enraptured by what he called "the beauty of the flames"; then put on his tragedian's costume and sang *The Sack of Ilium* from beginning to end.

Seen from the perspective of Seneca's writing, the line "When I am dead, may fire consume the earth" takes on an especial urgency. Read within the context of this chapter, it is as if Nero were in revolt not so much against Rome as against the very destructive linearity of time itself.



I would like to pursue the theme of temporal degeneration and of the revolt against the linearity of time one stage further. It is something that was vividly exploited by Lucan (39–65 C.E.), Seneca's contemporary and nephew. His *Civil War* (sometimes called the *Pharsalia*), a historical epic, likens the fall of the Roman Republic and the destruction of its forces under Pompey to the end of the world, to *ecpyrosis*. Do we not have in this a variant of those emotions with which we began this chapter, those to which Trimalchio gave rein in his funeral scene within the *Satyricon*?

The Albertan Michael Lapidge, in a splendid article published in 1979, takes us through the key information on the topic of Lucan and *ecpyrosis*.⁴⁵ Lapidge (1979, 359–60) explains that the key themes of the *Civil War*, fratricide and martial blood lust turned on blood relatives, are to be seen from both a human and a cosmic perspective.

The dissolution of the universe is viewed as parallel to (and, in poetic terms, a result of) the destruction of the state. Lucan is able to keep this parallelism present in the minds of his audience through the use of a vocabulary inherited from Stoic cosmology which . . . had both political and cosmological connotations by the first century A.D.

This remarkable parallelism is best seen in *Civil War* 1.72–80.

Thus, when, with its framework shattered,
 So many areas of the world the final hour will draw together,
 Seeking again its primeval chaos, and all
 The stars will run in upon all the others, and the sea
 Will the fiery stars seek, and earth will be unwilling to extend its
 shoreline,
 And it will shake off the strand, and contrariwise to her brother
 Phoebe
 Will go to drive the chariot across the far horizon,
 Will she demand, disdaining day, and the whole discordant
 Mechanism will disorder the laws of the disrupted world.

This passage, occurring shortly after Lucan's eulogy of Nero, aims to provide some cosmic rationale for the war. It was, it seems, designed to hasten the

eventual process of cosmic dissolution. This is a description of *ecpyrosis*. Although it is not a doctrinaire description of cosmic dissolution, Lapidge (1979, 362) can argue from this passage:

Lucan was conversant with all of the intricacies of Stoic cosmological theory . . . he was conversant with and stimulated by the vocabulary which the Stoics had employed to illustrate that theory. Lucan clearly employed the Stoic imagery of dissolution because it was germane to the central theme of his poem: that the destruction of the state through civil war is a disaster on a scale commensurable with the dissolution of the universe at *ecpyrosis*.

There are a number of passages that Lapidge highlights in order to demonstrate his case. I will select here just a few to illustrate his claims. *Civil War* 4.98–101 describes floods in Spain.

Now hills and mountains disappear; now one mere
 Draws all rivers together and submerges them in a huge whirlpool.
 It engulfs completely mountain crags and the homes of beasts.
 It carries these away. It swallows the animals down.

As Lapidge notes, the imagery of the whirlpool, engulfing and swallowing, echoes Seneca's picture of the *ecpyrosis* in the *De beneficiis*. This is no mere flood that we witness; its cosmic overtones color the battles in the books to follow (the real beginnings of the civil war). These battles, then, are initiated by a vision of cosmic dissolution.

Later in the poem, Caesar attempts to cross the Adriatic in a skiff during a storm. The depiction here of the violence of the seas uses the same Stoic terminology of the *ecpyrosis*. It is as if Caesar's voyage presages the imminence of cosmic dissolution (5.632–36).

Then on high the vault of the sky trembles and the steep poles
 Thunder and labor at the shaking of the framework of the celestial
 axis.
 Nature fears chaos. The elements themselves seem
 To have broken their harmonious unity. And again
 Night seems to return to mingle spirits with gods.

Later, just as the climactic battle of Pharsalia is about to begin, the images of universal dissolution again crowd in (7.134–37).

Who, having seen the seashores
 Destroyed, who, having seen the ocean on mountaintops
 And the sky sinking onto the earth and the sun vanished,
 An end of so many things, would not fear for himself.

Again after the battle, the enormity of the conflict and its outcome is made clear in Lucan's persistent use of comparable imagery (7.812–15).

These people, Caesar, if fire won't burn them now,
It will with the earth and with the ocean depths.
A shared pyre remains for the earth, one that will mix
Stars with human bones.

Lapidge (1979, 370) sums his striking study up with the following words:

During the first seven books . . . the imagery of dissolution occurs in an amazing variety of forms, and it is not misleading to describe it as central to the meaning of the poem. Its use in the *Pharsalia* does not demonstrate that Lucan was a doctrinaire Stoic, but it suggests at least that he was the inheritor of a rich tradition of Stoic cosmological vocabulary stretching back to Chrysippus, and that in the application of this Stoic vocabulary, he displayed striking originality.

Lucan's imagery of cosmic dissolution may seem to be a long way from Trimalchio's constipation. Yet when we view both from the perspective of time, the distance is not so great as at first sight. Trimalchio (through his funerary reenactment), Seneca (through his desire for a universal conflagration to assuage his own mortality), and Nero (through the salve of his *ecpyrosis*) all seem to wish to revolt against time and its destructive linearity. Does Lucan revolt too? For him the linearity of time is above all associated with Julius Caesar and the cataclysmic defeat of the republican forces at the battle of Pharsalia. Lucan's poem, above all else, is a perfervid protest against these events and their outcome for Rome. In this sense his poem is the very embodiment of a revolt against the constraints of a linear time that produced Julius Caesar. It is through this revolt that all these men attempt what I have termed a reformulation of the social personality.



My comparison of examples concerning the representation of time, of madness (or affective disorder at any rate), and of the end of the world is designed to illustrate what is best understood as a textual dialogue between three affective registers. The discursive link between Trimalchio's conception of time and that of Seneca and Lucan should be apparent. This link, however, does go deeper. I have suggested that the corporealization of time in Trimalchio's case provides evidence that for him the experience of time's passing could be understood as equating almost to a mood or affective disorder (a mild form of

madness, we might say). I would like to suggest that Seneca's attitude toward time is so intense and so morbid that it, too, points toward affective disorder. Can Seneca's desire for a universal destruction designed to assuage his own personal death be understood in any other way? We would not doubt this of Nero. Why, then, should we doubt it of Seneca?

For the sake of clarity, it may be valuable to reprise the argument of this chapter. My initial point was that the two most generally registered forms of time, the cyclical and the linear, have their representation in ancient experience as surely as they do in modern or early modern experience. There was no need for an Enlightenment or an early capitalist form of economy for the "invention" of linear time. I ought to emphasize, in regard to these two modes of registering time, that I am not necessarily speaking of real-life conditions. Rather, I am referring to the way time could be or predominantly was registered in a number of popular or at least widely read texts. The cyclical time to which I am referring might also be termed "mythological time." Throughout antiquity, it persisted alongside the more prosaic "straight-line" forms of time (which are discussed by philosophers). It was significantly displaced (and this is what I am really arguing) as part of a larger and changed affective and somatic discourse in the first century of our era.

Trimalchio, in Petronius's *Satyricon*, provides one striking embodiment of this concept of linear time, both in his obsession with the measurement of time and, in a somatic fashion, in his attempt to remedy his disordered digestive process. Trimalchio's concern with the linear, serial nature of time also entails a view of temporality as a degenerative agent. Put simply, this means that time leads to personal extinction. Trimalchio's revolt against this (his attempted reformulation of the self) consists in his obsessive measurement of time and in the staging of his own funeral. A parallel to Trimalchio's degenerative time seems to exist in the works of Petronius's contemporaries Seneca and Lucan. Their reactions to the concept of a universe that ends in cosmic catastrophe, or, as the Stoics termed it, *ecpyrosis*, may be contrasted. In Seneca's case there is a willful desire to see his personal extinction accompanied by a universal conflagration. Rather than revolting and pursuing a reformulation of the personality thence, Seneca and his mouthpieces acquiesce and despair. In Lucan's case degeneration is rejected. His poem itself represents the protest and the reformulation. Its passionate preference for republican values represents a rejection of the cosmic dissolution unleashed by Julius Caesar. This protest, then, which is evident in Petronius, Seneca, and Lucan, represents one means by which the boundaries of the self are established firm and upright.⁴⁶

It is striking that this theme of the destructive linearity of time becomes so evident in three authors and in this very period. This, as we have seen in ear-

lier chapters, is the period in which melancholia, lovesickness, boredom, and a theatrical form of suicide became prominent. I have suggested that the somatization of time, in Trimalchio's case, offers a set of symptoms, some of which may be applied as readily to melancholia as to constipation and to time. We witness, therefore, a large affective "domain" (to use rather shopworn jargon) taking in time, passive affectivities such as melancholia and boredom, and, curiously, the body itself. This textual dialogue, as may now be clear, engrosses a number of characterizing polarities, such as the contrast between activity and passivity, between assertion and yielding, between participation and withdrawal, between complicity and estrangement, between the cyclical and the linear, between the mark (the visible) and the sign (the hidden), between body and mind. The list could be continued. We will encounter this again.