

Jealousy

Jealousy is an insidious emotion in which the lover—for the scenario is typically romantic—feels that the beloved is cheating on him or her. The classic scenario—varied infinitely in the literatures of the world—can play many variations on the central theme; the jealous lover may be genuinely in the dark about the identity of one or both of the other lovers; or, conversely, may be all too familiar with the negative emotions jealousy can unleash among the individuals involved. It is evident that the fall out of this combustible kind of three person discovery process can be of many kinds: from bitter disappointment through relief all the way to self-destruction. Lovers tremble before this outcome, with the volcanic aftermaths it is capable of unleashing.

What accounts for the unique pain of the jealousy situation? The jealous person is driven to fantasize, between the two members of the new lover-pair, the kinds of intimate erotic pleasure he or she has in the past delighted in with his or her lover. This kind of erotic fantasy, however, has no cognitive content. It feeds itself on painful imaginings, which seem to have no purpose except to increase the pain of the lover. (What is, in fact, the reason for such self-torture? Why is it so gratifying that even a staunch common sense approach, from within the lover's mind, an approach that dismisses all self-inflicted pain, serves only as a respite, on which to release new and unexpected sources of torture.)