

# MANIAS

ALFRED LUBRAN

Christchurch, Dorset, England

*In 1985, Alfred Lubran completed a 228-page book entitled **Fears Phobias Philiis Loves Manias Hates and Hurts (Human Behaviour)**, a compilation of lists of words accompanied by the briefest of descriptions. The following article excerpts the odder terms from one such list; if **Word Ways** readers welcome this, other such lists will be published in later issues.*

From the time of Hippocrates (c460-377 BC) until that of Kraepelin (1856-1926), Mania and Melancholia (severe depression) were considered to be separate disorders. Currently, Mania is considered to be one aspect of manic-depressive psychosis, the hyperactive and depressive episodes alternating at varying intervals. Thus, a state of mind in which there are profuse and rapidly changing ideas, with exaggerated cheerfulness changing quickly to irritability or violence, would come under the heading of Mania.

Popularly, any violent abnormal behaviour is referred to as a mania. More informally, mania is used to describe a craze for something, enthusiasms in this sense being described in the second part of this article.

Inherent in the name of a mania is the subject of the insanity, such as pyromania (a morbid impulse to set things on fire). Even a severe anxiety can be called a mania if it results in sufficiently strange behaviour, for example **doubting mania** (obsessive-compulsive doubting whether certain acts have been carried out).

Different aspects of mania have different names. The list which follows names a strange few out of hundreds which exist.

- ASOTICAMANIA impulsive or reckless spending
- BIBLIOKLEPTOMANIA the impulsive stealing of books
- BRUXOMANIA compulsive and continual crushing the teeth together, with intermittent grinding
- CHREMATOMANIA preoccupation with creating wealth
- DRIFTOMANIA hoboing or vagrancy
- ECOMANIA (OIKIOMANIA) pathologic dislike of members of one's family: a feeling that one must get away from them
- FUROR UTERINUS nymphomania
- GRAPHOMANIA excessive impulse to write
- GRUMBLING MANIA a manic-depressive phenomenon where everything is at fault at all times
- HELLENOMANIA the tendency to use Greek or Latin terms instead of more understandable English ones

- ICONOMANIA morbid impulse to worship images, or to collect them  
 KLAZOMANIA compulsory shouting  
 LETHEOMANIA craving for narcotics  
 MANIA OF RECOMMENCEMENT a compulsion to repeat minor day-to-day actions frequently  
 NAUTOMANIA a sailor's morbid fear of a ship or the sea  
 NOSTOMANIA nostalgia: homesickness as an illness  
 ONIOMANIA a compulsion to buy things  
 OREXIMANIA increase in appetite for fear of becoming thin  
 POCOMANIA a Christian revivalist cult in the West Indies in which a trance is produced by autosuggestion  
 PORIOMANIA pathological compulsion to journey from one place to another, whether consciously or without recall of the event  
 QUESTION-ASKING MANIA (FOLIE DE POURQUOI) a morbid urge to ask questions  
 RUMINATION MANIA a compulsion to call to mind repeatedly past events and to ponder over them  
 SOPHOMANIA a passion for grandiose statements about one's own wisdom  
 TRICHOTILLOMANIA a morbid impulse to pull out one's own hair  
 UNPRODUCTIVE MANIA a state of manic stupor during which there is no talking  
 VASTNESS MANIA (DELIRE D'ENORMITE) the delusion occurring in certain depressions that the body has grown to gigantic size  
 WANDERING MANIA (DROMOMANIA) wanderlust

It was in the 17th century that the term mania was applied to any showing of great enthusiasm for something. Later, -mania was used as a suffix to Greek words, indicating 'a mad passion', for example **guanaikomania** (a mad passion for women) or **hippomania** (a passionate love of horses).

Medical Latin borrowed the suffix in words like **nymphomania** (excessive sexual desire in women). Concurrently, in France the suffix -manie appeared, for example **bibliomanie** (extreme fondness for books), corresponding to the English **bibliomania**.

The suffix has also been used by writers to express a particular enthusiasm, as did Coleridge (1772-1843) with **scribbleomania** (the urge to write).

The temptation to add a Greek or Latin prefix or suffix to mania has been resisted by some writers, as in "a mania for making bizarre cocktails" or Walt Whitman's "the mania of owning things". However, compound words such as **Beatlemania** have proliferated.

The following are examples of manias that have appeared in literature as enthusiasms, and not used in a psychiatric context.

- ANGLOMANIA excessive admiration for English customs  
 ANTHOMANIA an extravagant passion for flowers  
 BALLETOMANIA an ardent follower of ballet  
 BEATLEMANIA the mass hysteria in response to the rhythm-and-blues

- style of song of the Beatles group during the 1960s  
 CANAL MANIA building transport canals during the 19th century  
 DIATOMANIA the clamour by early microscopists for better optics  
 in their instruments  
 GIGANTOMANIA building colossal projects regardless of cost, with  
 no real concern for their usefulness  
 GRALOMANIA a passion for Greek things  
 HEART MANIA widespread use of the heart shape in designing and  
 ornamenting jewellery (c1869)  
 MEGALITHOMANIA the state of getting carried away by bizarre ideas  
 when confronted by stone circles and standing stones (for ex-  
 ample, believing that the Druids built Stonehenge)  
 SQUANDERMANIA wasted use of large sums of public money  
 XENOMANIA undue admiration for that which is foreign

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