

Madness and Creativity



Aims

- To understand the changing awareness of madness within the early modern era
- To become familiar with the more dominant themes within literature
- To become familiar with the more dominant themes within art.
- To discuss own awareness and understanding.

The changing awareness of insanity

- Middle ages moved into the Renaissance – insanity becomes more visible.
- French King Charles VI
- English King Henry VI
- Margery Kempe



Interpretations of Insanity

- Continued to be interpreted as religious within the fifteenth century and prayer continued to be an accepted form of treatment.
- During the 15th Century Bethlem Hospital emerged as an institution exclusively devoted to treating the insane.

Late 16th and Early 17th Century

- Public becoming more concerned about the prevalence of insanity, gloom and self-murder.
- More visibility of violent acts committed by insane persons
 - Peter Berchet 1573



Ballads of Madness

- Bedlamite Texts
- Mad Songs
- Those that had been released from Bedlam were allowed license to beg. The released patients were widely known as 'Toms o'Bedlam'

*From forth my sad and darksome
cell,*

And from the deep abyss of hell

*Poor Tom is come to view the world
again,*

*To see if he can ease distempered
brain.*

Fear and despair possess his soul,

Hark how the angry furies howl!

Shakespeare Plays

- William Shakespeare
- Madness presents itself in at least 20 of his 38 plays.
- King Lear
- As you like it



Hamlet and Ophelia

- Hamlet/Ophelia

"Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;

And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up....

Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,

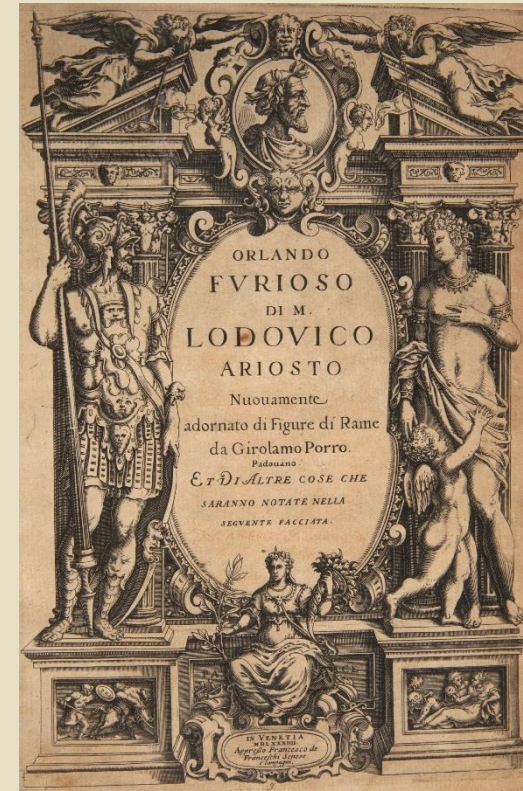
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay,

To muddy Death.



Ludovico Arioso – Orlando Furioso

- Epic Poem on the madness of Roland:
- Orlando Furioso:
- Draws from the chivalric romances of Roland, The Arthurian tales and classical tales of Heroism and furious madness
- The Madness of Orlando
- Heavily influenced later works, including
- Cervantes' *Don Quixote*



Cervantes: Don Quixote

- Don Quixote's madness is very different to that of Orlando's.
- It has fights and injuries, but they tend to be more humorous and funny, compared to the violent and frightening stories of Orlando Furioso.
- Don Quixote does show signs of madness, he does hallucinate, he does have obsessions and he does act as a man possessed.
- People he encounters mock and accuse him
- We are instructed to believe that the mad can not be reasoned with. He does recover his sanity...and promptly dies!



Quixote tilts at windmills that he mistakes for giants.

Madness and Art

- A variety of visual signs and symbols were used
- Some were from the Medieval depictions of Hell and the Last Judgement
- Bedlam figures
- Barely clothed maniacs
- Pieter Xavery: *Two Madmen*





A tale of a tub: Jonathon Swift/Bernard Lens

- Engraving of the interior of a Bedlam cell.
- Barred windows
- Near naked lunatic throwing the contents of a chamber pot at the viewer
- The more passive and melancholic are seen towards the back

