

WITCHES

MELANCHOLIE

Subtitle



Aim

- To understand the early modern era's ideas of madness and witches
- To become familiar with the schism within the European Christian church
- To become aware of the notion of melancholia

Early Modern Era (Late 15th to the dawn of 18th century)

- This was a time of great change
- Feudal system was falling apart
- The rise of the nation state – extension of trade and markets in Europe
- Circumnavigation of the globe



-
- Manifestations of protestant reformation and the Catholic Church losing power in places across Europe.
 - Renaissance
 - Classical learning
 - Print Culture (pamphlets etc)
 - Creativity within architecture, music, art, drama
 - Birth of the scientific revolution



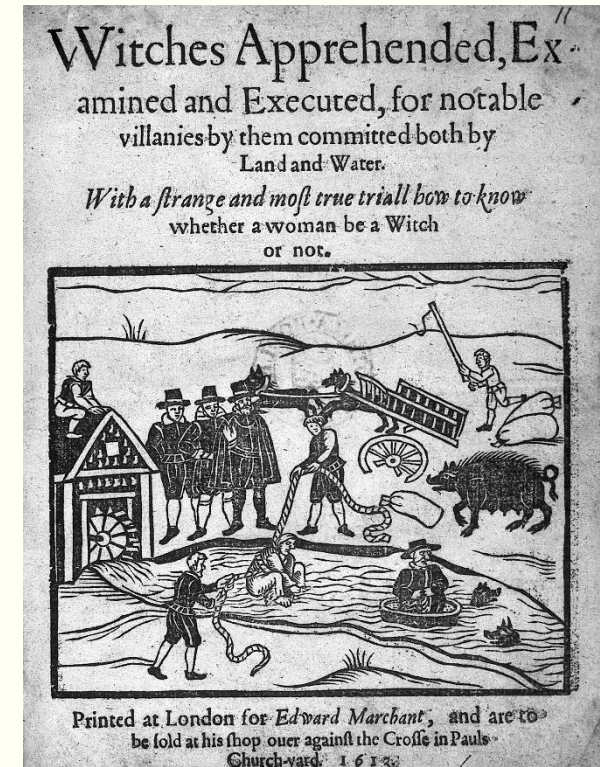
Witch-hunts

- Witch-hunts across Europe
- Trials, tortures, executions
- Agonizing deaths



Witch Hunts across Europe

- Intense and in some places long-lasting
- Both Catholics and Protestants were engaged in the seeking, finding and torturing of witches. Both were engaged in shocking and gruesome brutality.



Witches and torture

- Witches were said to be in league with the devil
- Under torture they admitted to this, often stating that they were possessed by devils, even agreeing that they had copulated with the Devil.
- These confessions led to the witches receiving further torment and cruelty – the aim being to kill them.
- Witches were blamed for all manner of misfortunes
- Somewhere in the region of 50,000 – 100,000 witches were said to have been killed during the witch-hunts, until the craze dissipated.

Possession and Madness

- The idea that mad people were possessed by evil spirits and demons had been around for a while
- Satan, the devil, was seen as being around us all the time. Looking out for unwary souls to trap and seduce.
- Death was always around people at this time, but so was Satan.

Women, madness and witchcraft

- Question:
 - So many of the people who were persecuted for being for witches were older women who were perhaps traditional healers or midwives. Why do you think society chose to torment these women in particular?

Catholic and Protestant Viewpoints

- Schism within the Christian Church
- Martin Luther – The Ninety Five Theses
- Luther criticised the Catholic Church, was the Pope in league with the Devil? Were the rituals and rites merely a ruse?



Who could list all the knavery done in the name of Christ or Mary to drive out devilish spirits...Such spirits arise now and confirm purgatory, Masses for the dead, the service of all the saints, pilgrimage, monasteries, churches and chapels..But all of this comes from the devil in order to maintain his abomination and lies and to hold people charmed and caught in error....It is a small matter for the devil that he allows himself to be expelled, if he wants, by an evil villain; and yet he remains really unexpelled for he thereby possesses people all the more firmly, trapped in his shameful deceit.

-
-
- Few among the educated natural philosophers doubted that witches and devils were real
 - Even the practitioners of physic believed in evil spirits, however they had to decide where an illness might be caused by an evil spirit and where it might be explained in humoral terms. Which were effects of God and the divine and which were acts of Satan and therefore diabolical.
 - Some Doctors and Divines (both Catholic and Protestant) believed that some forms of madness were caused by a spiritual affliction, they were the product of an evil spirit possession, or the divine punishment for a sin. However they also agreed that some of those affected by illness were illness and therefore could be treated medically.

Melancholia

- This idea of Melancholie or madness really took root in the 16th-17th century and was probably influenced by the works of Avicenna and Galen.
- “evyl melancholy humour” – Andrew Boorde
- The darkness and heaviness of soul and mind were said to be caused by black bile, or roasted, burned and acrid yellow bile, whose residues were corrupting the body,



Melancholie

- Andreas Laurentius (1560?-1609) suggest melancholy was caused by:

'Cometh of the onely and sole fault of the brain'

But also...

'When..the whole temperature and constitution of the bodie is melancholic'

'or the flatuous or windie melancholie....arisseth from amongst the bowels but especially from the spleene, liver and the membraine called mesenterium'

Laurentius suggested

'All melancholike persons have their imagination troubled' and in many cases also *'their reason corrupted'*

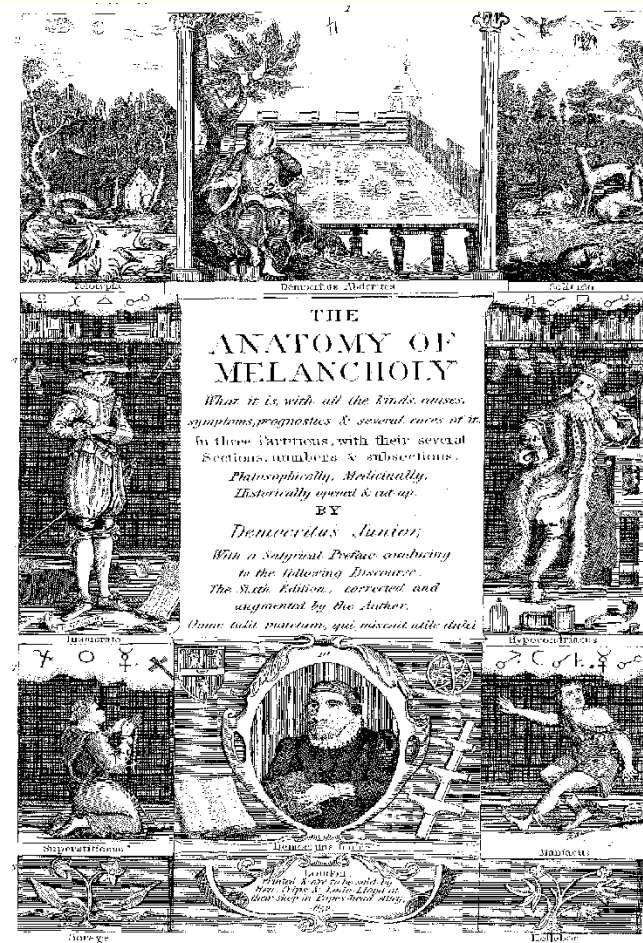
Timothie Bright

- *A Treatise of Melancholie, Containing the causes thereof, & reasons of the strange effects it worketh in our minds and bodies: with the phisicke cure, and spirituall consolation for such as haue thereto adioyned an afflicted conscience.*
- He writes:
- Melancholics displayed “feare, sadness, desperation, teares, weeping, sobbing, sighing..’and without cause..they can neither recelive consolation nor hope assurance, notwithstanding ther be neither matter of feare, or discontentment, nor yet cause of danger’.

Cures and treatments

- Melancholics were deemed hard to cure, it was a long illness and resisted treatment.
- Suggestions were to pay attention to diet, exercise, fresh air and a healthy environment.
- Traditional treatments could include: bleeding, cupping, vomits and purges
- In the same period however, melancholia also became a fashionable illness. Those who were scholars or men of genius were particularly prone to the melancholic disease.

Robert Burton: The Anatomy of Melancholia

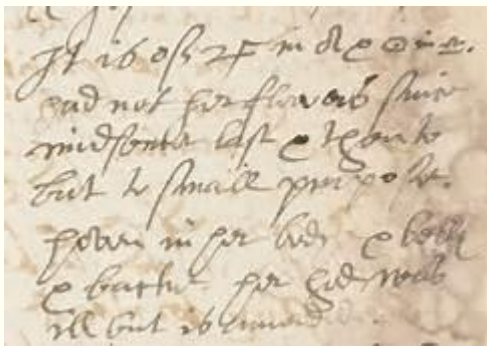


Anatomy of Melancholia

- Like his contemporaries, Burton viewed melancholie as an imbalance of the humours, particularly black bile. He recommended treatment by the physicians who were offering purging, leeching and blood letting. And also the environmental sources of treatment, such as exercise in the fresh air etc.
- However he also recommended prayer, prayer should always come first, and then the treatments of the physicians.
- Again, like his contemporaries he had a strong belief that Satan was ever-present in the world and would appear to people to torment and torture them.

Richard Napier, astrologer and physician

- Napier's casebooks survive from 1597- until his death in 1634
- He studied astrology, alchemy, magic and theology and despite the contested status of such arcane arts at the time, his combination of astrology and medicine helped Napier to build up a very popular practice.
- Those wishing to be treated came from all walks of life and social ranks,, although the majority were from artisan, farming and labouring classes, probably because of his low fees.



Richard Napier

- Most attention has been given to the patients that were mentally or psychically affected. This actually comprises of less than 5% of his patients.
- However his notes allow us to see how the English world viewed the mentally troubled, the sick individuals and their families.
- Napier was affected by melancholy himself, which may perhaps be why he had a particular interest when working with these patients.
- He dispensed a mixture of contemporary medicinal remedies, religious and moral counsel and astrological intervention.
- More of his patients were women: 1286 female patients compared with 748 men, and this is despite his documented contempt of women and their intellectual abilities!

Richard Napier cont..

- Approximately 1 in 20 of the mentally ill that came to see him he would describe as 'mad' or 'lunatic'. These were the worst cases and the most difficult.

Questions

- What differences are you noticing within this new world that we are studying?
- Work for next week:
- I want you to take a look at contemporary literature texts and images and see what references you can find to madness and mental health, e.g. Shakespeare
- Bring to class next week.