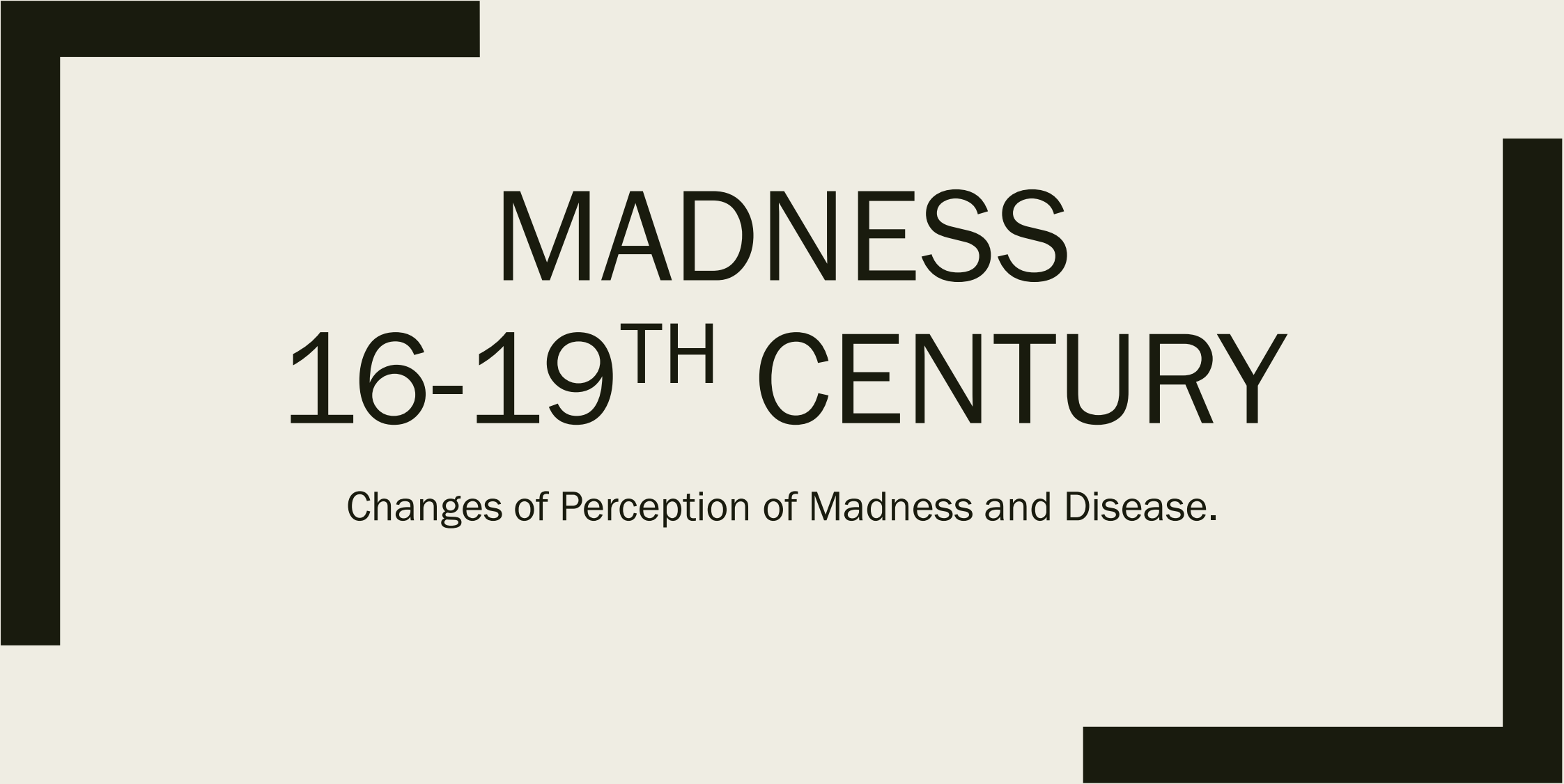


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# MADNESS

## 16-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Changes of Perception of Madness and Disease.

# Madness and Disease

- Historical construction of meaning.
- Is “madness a phenomenon of civilisation”? – Foucault
- There is a point in history when madness starts to be seen as a disease.
- Can disease be politicized?
- Foucault suggests that there are three periods in the separation between madness and reason: *Renaissance*, *The Classical Age* and the *Modern experience of Madness*

# A little context...

- Suffocation of the Mother
- Discussion

# Cultural Understanding

- For centuries there was very little change in the understanding of the source of disease.
- The Soma and the Psyche
- Women were different!
  - *Hippocrates states: “the womb is the origin of all diseases”*
- There were notions that the womb wanders about the abdomen, stirring up all kinds of trouble!



# Hysteria and Gender

- Tradition that linked hysteria to gender
- This tradition was used as inspiration in the court case of Mary Glover and Elizabeth Jackson.
- Edward Jorden

A BRIEF DIS-  
COVRSE OF A DIS-  
EASE CALLED THE  
Suffocation of the  
*Uterus.*

Written vppon occasion which  
hath beene of late taken thereby, to suspect pos-  
session of an euill spirit, or some such like  
supernaturall power.

*Wherein is declared that diuers strange  
actions and passions of the body of man, which in  
the common opinion, are ascribed to the Diuell,  
haue their true naturall causes, and do  
accompany this disease.*

By EDWARD JORDEN  
*Doctor in Physicke.*



LONDON.

Printed by Iohn Winder, dwelling at the Signe of  
the Crosse Keyes at Pauls Wharfe. 1603.

# Mary's case

- Mary displayed particular behaviours that we will observe again and again over the course of this disease, hysteria:
  - *Loss of speech and sight*
  - *Inability to swallow*
  - *Paralyses of hands, arms, legs*
  - *Strange swelling of abdomen*
- It is also interesting to note that many would wonder if she was faking her symptoms.

# Hysteria – the nervous complaint

- In the last third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Hysteria began to be viewed as a nervous complaint.
- Thomas Willis: Departure from the view of hysteria that had lasted millennia

A motion in the bottom of the belly, and an ascension of the same, as it were a certain round thing, then a belching, or a striving to vomit, a distention, and murmur of the hypochondria, with a breaking forth of blasts of winde, an unequall breathing and very much hindered, a choaking in the throat, a vertigo, an inversion, or rolling about of the eyes, oftentimes laughing, or weeping, absurd talking, sometimes want of speech, and motionless, with an obscure or no pulse, and deadish aspect, sometimes Convulsive motions, in the face and Limbs, and sometimes in the whole body, are excited: but universal Convulsions rarely happen, and not unless this disease be in the very worst state ... I have observed these Symptoms in maids before ripe age [puberty], also in old women after their flowers have left them; yea, sometimes the same kinde of Passions infest men ...4

The former opinion, although it plead antiquity, seems the less probable, for that the body of the womb is of so small a bulk, in virgins, and widdows, and is so strictly tyed by the neighbouring parts round about, that it cannot of it self be moved, or ascend from its place, nor could its motion be felt, if there were any: as to that vulgar opinion, or Reason taken from the vapours, we have often rejected it as wholly vain, and light ...6

# Hysteria and Nervousness

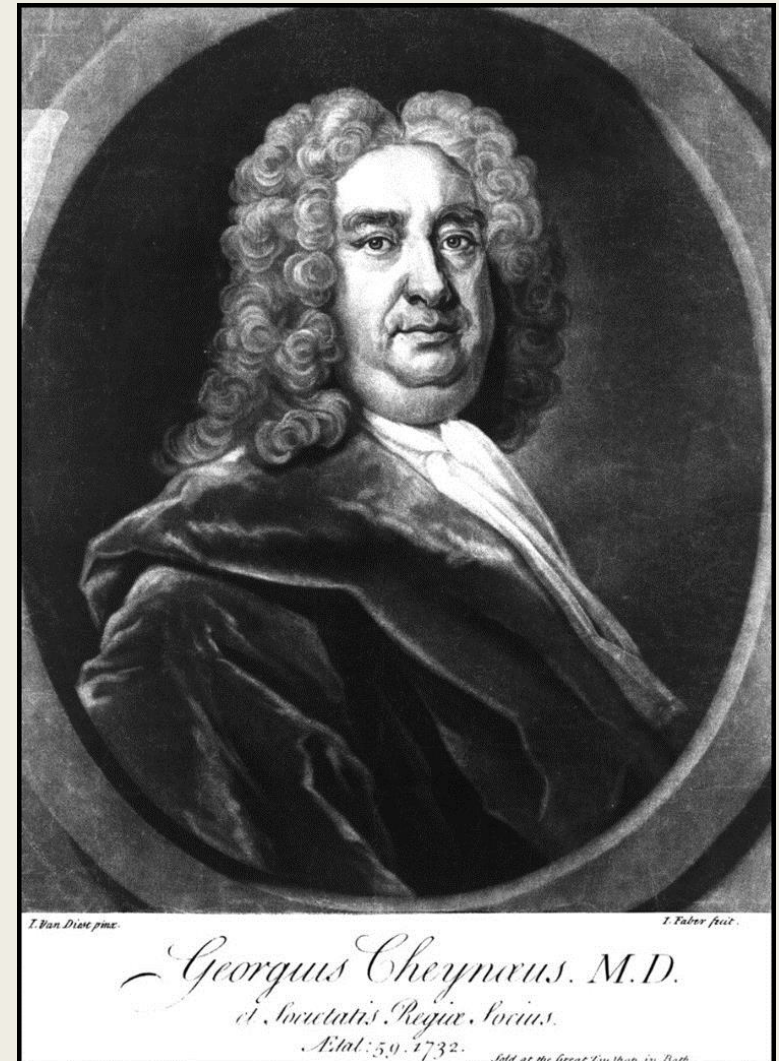
- Links between hysteria and hypochondria
- Two lines of development for hysteria and hypochondria
- Physicians of the classical period tried to discover the qualities peculiar to hysteria and hypochondria, but could never quite define them.

# Hysteria and Hypochondria

- Treatment ranged from:
  - *Nicholas Robinson's advocacy of "the most violent Vomits, the strongest purging Medicines, and large Bleeding...often repeated" (Governor of Bedlam)*
  - *Sir Richard Blackmore suggested that the patient should be composed and strengthened, and perhaps calmed with opium. He felt that violent medications and treatments will only serve to weaken and diminish the patient. (William III's and Queen Anne's personal physician)*
- Patients wanted to know that their illness was real and were keen for it to be seen as so. They were desperate for reassurance that their pain and suffering were real, like other forms of illness.

# An English Malady

- George Cheyne (Scottish Physician)
- Prone to bouts of depression and nervous temperament.
- Sympathetic to the needs of the hysteric and hypochondriac
- Catherine Walpole
- Became a successful physician and expanded his practice.



# The English Malady (nervous disorders)

- *The English Malady* (1733) proclaimed that “nervous disorders...A Class and Set of Distempers, with atrocious and frightful Symptoms, scarce known to our Ancestors” were responsible for “almost one third of the Complaints” of the age.
- They were a commonplace – or at least, he hastened to add, were a commonplace among “the People of Condition in England”
- The more refined an individual was, the more chance they would succumb to the hysterics or related nervous states.
- Hysteria and other nervous diseases were diseases of civilized people.

Why do you think the upper ranks of society were keen to embrace these nervous diseases?

# The Fashion of Hysteria

- Contemporary novels
- Drama
- Poetry
  
- David Hume
  
- Not all were for this fashion: Dr Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift

# Nervous Disease

- The new ideas that hysteria was a disorder of the nerves made it easier to extend the hysteria diagnosis to males.
- Both Willis and Sydenham had witnessed hysteria in men.
- Treatment for hysteria, the nervous disease.
- Mesmer...who claimed to have discovered a new active principle that works at controlling the body.

# Mesmer

- Seen as the “Father of Hypnosis”
- Controversy surrounds Mesmer, who was personally investigated by King Louis XVI of France, 1784
- Tumultuous career
- Animal Magnetism

# Historical Construction of Meaning

- Questions