Madness
A Very Short Introduction
By Andrew Scull

Questions for thought and discussion

- Isn't the very word “madness”: an insult, and thus a word best abandoned?
- How have religion and madness been connected in history?
- What can we learn from literary and pictorial representations of madness?
- How did seventeenth and eighteenth century medical theorists connect nerves and mental distress? Why did patients who exhibited milder forms of mental distress find these notions attractive?
- Were the private madhouses of the eighteenth century a wholly negative phenomenon?
- What are we to make of "moral treatment"?
- Why do some people refer to nineteenth century lunatic asylums as "museums of madness"?
- In what ways are gender and madness linked? Is it a mistake or entirely appropriate to speak of madness as "the female malady"?
- How did the mad come to be thought of as biological degenerates?
- What are we to make of the connections between war and mental illness, and the epidemics of "shell shock", "combat exhaustion", "post traumatic stress disorder", "Gulf War syndrome" and the like?
- Did the Nazi attempt to exterminate the mentally ill amount to anything more than taking ideas that were equally widespread in Britain, France, and the United States to their logical conclusion?
- Why are the mad so vulnerable to therapeutic enthusiasms?
- Were lobotomies ever justifiable?
- How did psychoanalysis come to be so dominant in the United States after the Second World War, and what explains its rapid demise?
- What is meant by the term "refrigerator mother", and why might the spread of theories associated with this term have encouraged patients' families to re-embrace biological accounts of mental illness?
- Why do you think Hollywood has exhibited such a persistent fascination with madness as a subject?
- Why do some people proclaim that mental illness is a myth? Should we believe them?
- What accounts for the crises of legitimacy that periodically confront psychiatry?
- How can we account for the abandonment of mental hospitals, and what has replaced them for the gravely mentally ill? Is it legitimate to call this development "a reform"?
- What are we to make of the drugs revolution in psychiatry? How has it influenced the psychiatric profession, the experience of being mentally ill, and the views of the general public about madness?

Other books by Andrew Scull:

Andrew Scull Hysteria: The Disturbing History  (London and New York: Oxford University Press)
Andrew Scull The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900  (London and New Haven: Yale University Press)
Andrew Scull The Insanity of Place/The Place of Insanity  (London and New York: Routledge)


Andrew Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press)

Andrew Scull, *Decarceration: Community Treatment and the Deviant* (Cambridge: Polity Press)

Suggested further reading:


