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# **Storia, identità e canoni letterari**

*a cura di*

Ioana Both, Ayşe Saraçgil e Angela Tarantino

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## Marginality in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century English Poetry: Three 'Mad' Writers

Human fascination with the idea of madness has crossed many cultural boundaries, finding its expression in art and literature since earliest times. Indeed, the motif of madness in literature, in its broad sense, is capable of reminding us of a wide corpus of texts from different backgrounds. These include most of the works that were considered models for the Western tradition, and authors like Sophocles, Shakespeare, Tasso, Goethe, Cervantes, Kafka, or Gogol.

However, the apparent richness of the canon is revealed as being merely illusionary when we consider that literary madness can be employed as a critical device in different ways. In terms of works that represent insane characters, or authors who adopt 'deviant' voices as a fictional expedient, un-reason is a major protagonist of the literary tradition. In these cases, the text creates the impression of madness, which can be regarded as a rhetorical figure, as Shoshana Felman has convincingly demonstrated<sup>1</sup>.

When we take the insanity of the writer as the starting point of the analysis, the available corpus appears considerably reduced; while social marginality was often represented in literature, it is more questionable whether actual members of social minorities could make their way into literary memory.

It might be worth emphasizing that there is a common denominator between studying the work of 'insane' artists and that of 'sane' artists depicting insanity: in both cases, we are looking at 'representations' of madness<sup>2</sup>. Yet, the question of «the mad writer», as Allan Ingram puts it<sup>3</sup>, presents us with a set of different theoretical and methodological issues. For one thing, it touches a traditional association between 'folly and genius', or a view that madness is somehow generally connected to artistic creativity<sup>4</sup>. The purely speculative nature of the idea that «the lunatic, the lover, and the poet / Are of imagination all compact» is often addressed in recent stud-

ies<sup>5</sup>; scholars are trying to draw a thin line between some sort of 'factual' or 'concrete' madness and a wider aesthetic-philosophical discourse. This attempt is evident, for instance, in Branimir Rieger's statement: «there is no denying that many writers experienced mental problems of true insanity»<sup>6</sup>. The expression «true insanity» can be puzzling, since its meaning is not provided: the issue of what standards can be adopted to identify deviance as a 'matter-of fact' property of the mind cannot be easily resolved.

The critical debate on «true insanity» appears to merely demonstrate our inability to find a definition for the varying meanings and ranges of madness as a concept<sup>7</sup>. From Michel Foucault's *History of Madness* onwards (*Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique*, 1961), critical focus has been on the risks of falling into what Ingram defines as «the insanity trap»<sup>8</sup>: scholars must tackle not only a spontaneous tendency towards considering their cultural, historical or even individual conception of deviance as reliable and valid, but also the implications of adopting the standpoint of 'sane' individuals who are reading 'mad' writing.

Recent approaches have tried to evade at least the semantic problems of madness by viewing it as a phenomenon which consists of interrelated scientific, cultural and social processes, while also solidly grounding the discourse in a specific historical context. Scholars like Porter, Ingram, MacDonald and Richardson do not attempt to identify possible 'symptoms' or 'signs' of authorial deviance in the literary text, but to investigate its imagery and language in an intertextual and interdisciplinary way<sup>9</sup>.

In line with this critical orientation, I intend to analyze the work of three English poets who were officially acknowledged or imputed as being insane, and who suffered isolation, internment and removal. The category of authors considered here might be thought to bring us closer to what Rieger called «true insanity», or, in Foucault's terms, «madness itself»<sup>10</sup>. James Carkesse, Anne Finch and Christopher Smart were well aware of being considered deviant, whatever their own opinion about their mental state, and offer a precious testimony of how the 'stigma' of mental illness could variously influence writing in the 17th and 18th centuries. Their voices represent a specific and often neglected sub-canon in the history of literary madness: the following remarks are intended to be a small contribution to this history.

### **1. James Carkesse (1634?-1711?)**

James Carkesse is today a largely unknown writer, who has received little critical attention. Yet, he represents a key-figure for the study of 'mad writer's' literature, since his collection, *Lucida Interoalla*, is the first documented testimony of poetry written during internment. In 1678, while confined in the Finsbury and Bedlam madhouses, Carkesse composed fifty-three poems characterized by a «Satyr brisk»<sup>11</sup>. In 1679, the texts were

published in London under the title *Lucida Intervalla: Containing divers Miscellaneous Poems Written at Finsbury and Bethlem by the Doctors Patient. Extraordinary*; the only subsequent edition of this collection is a 1979 facsimile reprint of the original text<sup>12</sup>.

*Lucida Intervalla* is especially revealing of the effects that social marginalization of deviance had on individuals, because the madhouse experience itself, Carkesse says, «makes me poet» and urges him to write «where his Pen and Ink, it was Chalk; / Boards, Paper»<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, there is no documentation attesting Carkesse might have been active as a writer during the rest of his life.

Not much is known, though, about Carkesse's life and person as a whole; most of the extant information is derived from Samuel Pepys's *Diary*, where the «distracted» Navy Office clerk «James Carcasse» is said to have undergone a trial for corruption<sup>14</sup>. Various textual correspondences connect the texts of *Lucida Intervalla* to Pepys's diary; the latter, for example, is mentioned by Carkesse as his «Rival [...] / For the Dukes favour, more than years thirteen»<sup>15</sup>.

If Pepys had been his «Rival» for about thirteen years, we might suppose that Carkesse started working at the Navy Office around 1665. My search for new sources has revealed a possible reference to the poet's life before that date; a «James Carkesse» appears in the *Registers of the Saint Mary Magdalene College* as a Master in 1663 and an Usher in 1665. Seemingly, he held both positions very briefly: it is suggested that he had instilled 'inappropriate' religious opinions in the young people<sup>16</sup>. This behaviour would fit in with an important tendency of the author in *Lucida Intervalla*, who repeatedly claims he is a «Parson», «Seized for a madman, only for having endeavoured to reduce dissenters unto the [Protestant] CHURCH»<sup>17</sup>. Although the evidence is far from being conclusive, several coincidences suggest that Carkesse might have been a teacher at Magdalene College.

Actually, the «Parson», or defender of the Protestant Church is only one of Carkesse's various identities in his poems: he also professes to be a «Poet», «Jack Straw», an «Arch-lunatick», a «sound» person and, above all, an actor playing «Madness in Mascarade»<sup>18</sup>, a role that would account for all the others. As I have suggested elsewhere<sup>19</sup>, role-playing is a central feature of the collection, since it apparently questions the human ability to distinguish reality from appearance, and reason from insanity. Ingram has linked Carkesse's drawing «upon an established range of [...] stereotypes for insanity» to the satirical and exuberant playfulness of his language, which deconstructs most standards and conventions, in «a textbook case of what his readers might expect mad poetry to be like»<sup>20</sup>. Yet, Carkesse's 'non-conformism' does not merely consist of a generalized parody of common assumptions; in some poems, the «Patient» discusses and attacks specific aspects of the confinement system.

*Lucida Intervalla* is full of scorn and derision for Thomas Allen, the «Patient's Doctor» of the title, who is otherwise mentioned as «Doctor Mad-Quack», «Hellish Physick Quack», or «Fool»<sup>21</sup>. Carkesse goes in detail

through the «Purges, Vomits and Bleeding» which «Are his methods of Cure»<sup>22</sup>. Since «To observe, was the Patient's sport / How little the Doctor had»<sup>23</sup>, criticism of Doctor Allen's methods is thorough and informed: in particular, when commenting on the therapy, Carkesse shows he is familiar with contemporary medical discourse, and repeatedly reminds his physician of «*Religio Medici* (do you mind?)»<sup>24</sup>.

Doctor Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642) essentially suggests the primacy of a higher principle of understanding over the 'materialism' of scientific knowledge<sup>25</sup>. Dr. Allen, for whom, according to Carkesse, Browne's ideas are foreign, believes in the Paracelsian notion that mental affections proceed from the body, and acts accordingly<sup>26</sup>. The doctor, says Carkesse, cannot understand that his patient is not a «Lunatick», but «one of the Small Prophets» gifted with divine revelation, with Apollo «on [his] side» to «inspire/ [his] breast with breath of a diviner fire»<sup>27</sup>.

In order to illustrate why Allen's cure «works with me the clean contrary way»<sup>28</sup>, Carkesse offers an additional explanation. The doctor believes that his patient should «defie the Moon»<sup>29</sup>, while Carkesse claims that «My Brains not rul'd by the pale Moon / Nor keeps the Sphears my Soul in Tune»<sup>30</sup>. The poet thinks that the moon can only cause morbid temperament, and his raging disposition should rather be ascribed to the «influence of Apollo»<sup>31</sup>. Allen makes no distinction between the aetiology of 'melancholy' and 'mania', and treats both afflictions in the same way; thus, the poet tells him, «You that should Fury cure, and Poet save, / are sending Post your Patient to the Grave»<sup>32</sup>.

Misunderstood at different levels, Carkesse reacts by assuming a new role, which is never overtly mentioned in the poems: in addition to being «Parson», «Poet» and «Actor», he also becomes a medical doctor. When claiming that his «Brains well fixt condition / Apollo better knows, than this Physitian»<sup>33</sup>, Apollo's mythological station as god of medicine is also tacitly exploited. The «Self-curing poet», who grows «Sober» venting «his rage by words in open air»<sup>34</sup>, elaborates his own medical and philosophical theory; he apparently draws inspiration from different sources simultaneously, as his ideas have no specific relation to any available scientific text of the time.

Carkesse's opposition to Doctor Allen and the whole madhouse system is often conveyed through war imagery. When addressing his lines «To the DUKE», he asks:

Summon me to Your Tent; I'm Sober, Sound;  
Call me from Finnes-burrough to th' Artillery Ground; [...]  
Better be Kill'd, than Slavery endure.<sup>35</sup>

For the inmate, warfare is the ultimate means of freedom. Portraying himself as strong and indomitable, Carkesse simultaneously embodies both a mythical hero and the seventeenth-century cliché of the 'rag-

ing fool', characterized by uncontrollable strength; «Physick is lost in [his] veins», chains become «But straw / To the sinews of his Armes», and to «let his same Gown-man blood / A Sword was more fit than a Lance»<sup>36</sup>.

## 2. Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea (1661–1720)

It has been suggested that some of Anne Finch's poetry was written in order to «prevent claims of 'hysteria' against her»<sup>37</sup> and thus the consequent internment: indeed, Finch suffered from frequent episodes of what nowadays we might loosely term depression and, though she never experienced the madhouse, she spent some periods in Tunbridge Wells and Astrop in order to be treated<sup>38</sup>. Her social position might also have helped her avoid internment: a member of the highest social class, Finch was also on friendly terms with some of the most renowned writers of her age.

Although her literary activity started as early as the 1680s, it was only in 1713 that Finch published her first collection, *Miscellany Poems*. She dealt with her experience of interior suffering in various poems, including *Ardelia to Melancholy*, *The Spleen*, *An Invocation to Sleep*, *To Death*, *The Loss*, *On Affliction* and *The Song of Griefe*. Finch has always enjoyed some fame as a poet, but her work has only recently obtained renewed critical attention; she was subject to the pattern of appearance and disappearance that Greer describes as distinctive of women's writing since the mid-seventeenth century<sup>39</sup>. In his exhaustive book on her work, Charles Hinnant insists on the precariousness of Finch's «place in the canon», as she is «often seen as a typical minor poet»<sup>40</sup>.

The year 1688 was pivotal to Anne Finch's life. Until then, she had been at court with her husband, Heneage Finch; after James II's abdication, they refused to take the oath to the new king and were forced to retire in poverty. Finch's marginality consists, therefore, of different and inseparable layers which touch various aspects of her public and private figure; she was secluded as a melancholic person, as a Jacobite who lived during the Glorious Revolution, and as a woman writer, who «may already be considered to be [an exile] from the mainstream of late seventeenth-century culture»<sup>41</sup>. Several scholars have emphasized how her works challenge male-constructed patterns, but less attention has been paid to her attitude towards the specific standards of mental (in)sanity.

The poems devoted to melancholy and spleen usually conjure up the idea of defeat and resignation in the face of mood disorders. In *Ardelia to Melancholy*, Finch's poetic persona addresses these lines to her affliction:

All, that cou'd ere thy ill gott rule, invade,  
Their uselesse arms, before thy feet have laid;  
The Fort is thine, now ruin'd, all within,  
Whilst by decays without, thy Conquest too, is seen.<sup>42</sup>

An imaginary battlefield is the typical space of Finch's poetry, the theatre of the fight where unreason is in combat with reason; the speaker heroically opposes her grief's «fantastic Harms»<sup>43</sup>, but eventually must «resign of the contested Field»<sup>44</sup>. In this meeting of interior forces, the destructive power of melancholy deprives her of the strength to react, so that, «At last, my old inveterate foe, / No opposition shalt thou know»<sup>45</sup>.

Finch mentions only one victorious fight, in the *Introduction to Miscellany Poems*, where both literary ambition and retired life are exalted<sup>46</sup>. Similar themes recur in *On Affliction*, even though, in this case, the speaker emphasizes the negative aspects of social isolation:

Welcome, what e're my tender flesh may say,  
Welcome Affliction [...]  
Welcome the rod that does adoption shew [...]  
The cup whose wholesome dregs are giv'n me here;<sup>47</sup>

Commentators have shown that the symbolic elements in these lines are open to various readings<sup>48</sup>. In my opinion, the «rod» might suggest a need to be accepted in the community through redemption, which would also imply that «affliction» and social fault are interconnected<sup>49</sup>. The cup's «dregs» could hint at the speaker's perceived role in society as an outcast; the modifier «wholesome» evokes medicines or drugs, common features in Finch's poetry. In addition, it might be noted that, at the time, the 'evaporating' human spirits were believed to leave behind «dregs of melancholy», or, in David Irish's words, «muddy dregs»<sup>50</sup>.

Finch often discusses possible causes of and remedies for interior sufferings in her poems: they are therefore scattered with a stream of references to contemporary scientific discourse on behavioural alterations. Especially in *The Spleen* and *Ardelia to Melancholy*, Finch shows a detailed medical knowledge of her state; for example, she lists a number of treatments that also appear in Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), where «many pleasant sports, objects, sweet smells, delightful tastes, music, meats, herbs, flowers» are advised to «recreate [the] senses»<sup>51</sup>. Besides this, Finch also includes intertextual references to what is nowadays a largely unknown text by Irish, who suggests using «the Ellebores of Anticera, [...] Colycinty of Spain, together with the Rhubarb of Alexandria»<sup>52</sup>. Yet, her poetic persona *Ardelia* objects,

[...] I by struggling, can obtain  
Nothing, but encrease of pain, [...]  
Tho' I confesse, I have apply'd  
Sweet mirth, and musick, and have try'd  
A thousand other arts beside, [...]  
Unable they, and far too weak, to save;<sup>53</sup>

Neither Burton's nor Irish's treatises seem to provide patients with helpful cures; the speakers of Finch's poems claim they have derived no relief or betterment from the doctors' advice, and «In vain all Remedies apply, / In vain the Indian Leaf infuse, / Or the parch'd Eastern Berry bruise»<sup>54</sup>. Finch's discrediting of medical science is further supported through mention of «skilful [Richard] Lower», who not only failed to identify the origins of melancholy, but was himself a victim of this condition, «And sunk beneath [its] Chain to a lamented Grave»<sup>55</sup>. According to Finch, the doctors' main error was probably to ascribe melancholy to bodily issues, blaming «the mortal part [...] / Of our depressed and pond'rous frame»<sup>56</sup>.

*The Spleen*, which is perhaps Finch's most exhaustive treatment of interior suffering, is constructed around the dichotomy between appearance and reality, in all its manifold implications. Indeed, spleen's «delusions» can «cheat the eyes» and «airy phantoms rise»<sup>57</sup>; not only does this condition deceive the senses, but it also brings about personality changes, depriving its victims of their own ego. «The Coquette», for instance, «changing hastily the Scene / From Light, Impertinent, and Vain, / Assumes a soft, a melancholy Air»<sup>58</sup>. At a different level, Finch also condemns the idea that melancholy can be mere posturing, or a sort of 'fashionable acting' in which «The Fool, to imitate the Wits, / Complains of [its] pretended Fits»<sup>59</sup>.

The gulf between appearance and reality that underlies Finch's 'melancholic' poems can be considered a structural element of the whole collection, since, as Hinnant says, it establishes «a network of relation with other abstractions»<sup>60</sup>, and characterizes most of the representations of states of mind in *Miscellany Poems*.

### 3. Christopher Smart (1722-1771)

Christopher Smart was a high church Anglican who underwent the experience of both the madhouse and prison. Apparently, he was first suspected of being insane in 1756 and, in the following year, was interned in St Luke Hospital. Regarded as an incurable patient, he was later re-institutionalized in Bethnal Green, where he wrote most of his poem *Jubilate Agno*<sup>61</sup>.

Smart's *Jubilate Agno* is a highly experimental text, which consists of a formulaic collection of lines without rhyme, and all beginning with the words «Let» and «For»<sup>62</sup>. Its thirty-two manuscript pages remained unpublished during Smart's lifetime and only appeared in print in 1939, when William Stead discovered the documents in a private library. Thus, scholarly interest in *Jubilate Agno* is quite recent, and most critical studies on this work date back to the late 1970s.

Critical speculation on *Jubilate Agno* has primarily focused on the question of its form; Knight and Mason define this text as a sort of alternative liturgy, and Fitzgerald puts forward a connection with Smart's translations

on the *Psalms*<sup>63</sup>. Yet, what seems to have particularly attracted scholars is the fact that *Jubilate Agno* appears a meeting point of various branches of scientific thought. The poem treats different subjects in an almost encyclopaedic way and, among others, tackles questions of astronomy, gravity, magnetism, electricity and light. Smart also lists almost all existing sea creatures, from the «Whale» to the «Holothuria»<sup>64</sup>, as well as most other animals, while humans are listed by nationality or geographical area.

These 'catalogues' remind us of two kinds of Eighteenth century texts: firstly, the scales of creatures, such as William Petty's, in which living beings were listed from the highest to the lowest forms of life<sup>65</sup>. Secondly, Smart's text makes us think of the scientific *historiae*, or encyclopaedic dictionaries, that are comprised of information on all known plants, animals and minerals<sup>66</sup>.

Critical debate has focused on whether Smart's attitude can be considered «truly scientific», with a «deep regard for logic and a minute knowledge of facts», or whether his «habit of mind, in fact, was *fundamentally* unscientific»<sup>67</sup>. Actually, both lines of thought find support in *Jubilate Agno*, since the author's attitude noticeably changes in the different sections.

The «Let» lines, which are especially devoted to listing God's creation, organize species according to morphological and physiological similarities, in what might be considered a «truly scientific» perspective. In particular, a mention of an animal is often followed by explanatory descriptions about its nature or features<sup>68</sup>. Significantly, most of these descriptions focus on the animals' defence mechanisms:

Let Ithiel bless with the Baboon, [...] who defendeth himself with a staff  
against the assailant.  
Let James rejoice with the Skuttle-Fish, who foils his foe by the effusion of  
his ink.<sup>69</sup>

Throughout the «Let» sections, reference to wild, destructive and venomous creatures seems to express Smart's «bitterness toward the world for its ill will against him»<sup>70</sup>. In some cases, the poet apparently exploits animal images in order to allude to aspects of his own predicament:

Let Lud bless with the Elk, the strenuous asserter of his liberty, and the  
maintainer of his ground.  
Let Bedan rejoice with Ossifrage – the bird of prey and the man of prayer.<sup>71</sup>

More detailed information about the speaker's view of himself is provided in the «For» sections of *Jubilate Agno* and, in particular, in Fragment B1:

For I am not without authority in my jeopardy [...].  
For I am ready for the trumpet and alarm to fight, to die and to rise again.  
For CHRISTOPHER must slay the Dragon with a PHEON's head.<sup>72</sup>



The overall image of the self that emerges from *Jubilate Agno* is that of a hero at arms, or a warrior martyr, equipped with «God's sword» and his «whole armour», «intitled to the great mess» by Heaven, and «willing to be called a fool for the sake of Christ»<sup>73</sup>.

The «For» lines deal with scientific subjects in a different way from the «Let» lines, putting them in a particularly «unscientific» religious frame. In the «For» sections, Smart also includes extensive criticism of, among others, Newton and Locke. For reasons of space, here Smart's complex and multifaceted discourse about the «philosophy of the times» can only be generally outlined:

Let Silas rejoice with the Cabot – the philosophy of the times ev'n now is  
vain deceit.  
For I am inquisitive in the Lord, and defend the philosophy of the scripture  
against vain deceit.  
For Newton nevertheless is more of error than of the truth, but I am of the  
WORD of GOD.  
[...] Newton is ignorant for if a man consult not the WORD how should he  
understand the WORK? –<sup>74</sup>

Smart reinterprets contemporary scientific discourse through a new perspective: he does not merely discuss its metaphysical assumptions, but also its understanding of how the constitutive elements of creation («WORD») join together in the whole architecture of forms («WORK»). In addition, empirical studies are «of error» because they create false images of animated and natural entities, thus implying the same sort of treachery that Smart finds in the 'copies' proposed by mimetic arts<sup>75</sup>. The idea of both «philosophy» and mimesis as «vain deceit[s]» is part of a wider discourse about appearance and substance that pervades all the sections of *Jubilate Agno*, and which finds a compendium in the ontological principle of «sincerity», «a jewel which is pure and transparent, eternal and inestimable»<sup>76</sup>.

#### 4. Threading through 'Madness'

What is first noticed on reading *Lucida Intervalla*, *Miscellany Poems* and *Jubilate Agno* is their difference in terms of poetical form and style, as well as in the attitudes of the speakers. Yet, an analysis of Carkesse, Finch and Smart's works has shed new light on at least three common threads, or shared textual features, which could be related to their experience as 'imputed-mad' subjects.

The first of these features concerns imagery, and consists of recurring references to fighting, or war scenarios. One inevitably thinks that the consistent use of battle imagery in 'mad' poetry might be an expression of the multiple contrasts these writers were experiencing both in their interior lives and in their relationship with the society which had 'rejected'

them. On the one hand, marginalization seems to have roused impulses of self-assertion and, sometimes, aggressive modes of response; on the other hand, Carkesse, Finch and Smart seem to be struggling to control what they identify as 'extreme' passions. More or less overtly, war imagery also insinuates that the speaker is a sort of hero, battling for his or her life and ideas, and standing out against manifold antagonists.

The theme of appearance and reality is the second feature that connects the 'mad' poems considered here. As is well known, madness has traditionally been connected to the clash between appearance and reality, a question that was treated, among others, by Hegel and Foucault: the insane subject is commonly thought of being unable to find any reconciliation between substance and show, because of his or her de-centred and convoluted view of reality<sup>77</sup>. Perhaps, Carkesse, Finch and Smart also bore this discourse in mind; it is certain that the account of their speakers' subjectivity includes alternative selves, selves constructed, reflected and distorted. The ideas of acting, pretending, or imitating, although variously welcomed or condemned by the authors, pervade their body of works. It might be assumed that *Lucida Intervalla*, *Miscellany Poems* and *Jubilate Agno* question the human ability to distinguish unreason from the 'appearance' of it; after all, Ingram notes, «being mad is subject only to the eye of the spectator», and «appearance is at the heart of the therapy, the heart of being or not being mad»<sup>78</sup>.

The third and most remarkable feature connecting these authors is their common familiarity with essays concerning both specific issues on mental alterations and general notions of natural science. Scientific and medical discourse is criticized through mention of canonical texts of the time, or their reception in the institutions: Carkesse ridicules Doctor Allen's theories by mentioning Browne's *Religio Medici*, Finch discredits the works of Burton, Irish and Lower on melancholy, and Smart does not only rewrite natural histories through a new perspective, but also deconstructs the views of the most renowned scientists of his time.

Carkesse, Finch and Smart attack the contemporary understanding of the mind's mechanisms, in particular the belief that mental «Distemper» has its origin in «some Disorder in the Body»<sup>79</sup>. They present new sources of authority, shift disciplinary boundaries, and illustrate different concerns taken variously to be superior to science, such as religion, or equivalent to it, such as other branches of philosophy. When questioning the epistemic value of scientific knowledge, Carkesse, Finch and Smart also discuss the assumptions of that field in the official culture that was primarily responsible for their social exclusion. By proving institutional behaviour erroneous, medical speculation incomplete and scientific categorization unstable, these writers show the unreliability of a mainstream or canonical discourse that can stall, falter or even collapse.

Our discussion has so far suggested that 'mad', or 'imputed-mad' writers have found little space in the literary tradition. As a conclusive remark, I would

like to add that works like those of Carkesse, Finch and Smart can help re-examine the 17th-18th century canons of medical-scientific thought, as well as fill a long-standing gap between the aesthetics that often surrounds 'mad' literature and the 'real' consequences of being considered deviant, which is traditionally considered the domain of social sciences and the history of medicine.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> S. Felman, *Writing and Madness*, Stanford UP, Palo Alto (CA) 2003.

<sup>2</sup> As Allan Ingram notes, «as soon as the mad writer enters literary language then madness becomes transformed into 'madness', a reality, of sorts, into a representation and with it all those social and cultural norms and transgressions which are the burden and glory of working within a tradition» (A. Ingram, *Cultural Constructions of Madness*, Palgrave, New York, NY 2003, p. 4).

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> The authority of this long-standing belief proceeds from Plato's writings and found renewed support with Lombroso, in the 19th century. Cfr. Plato, *Republic*, ed. by C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett, Indianapolis (IN)-Cambridge 1992; C. Lombroso, *Genio e follia*, Tipografia Chiusi, Milano 1864 and *L'uomo di genio*, Bocca, Torino 1894.

<sup>5</sup> The quotation is from W. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, RCS Macmillan, Basingstoke 2008, p. 69 (Act I, Scene I, 7-8). In agreement with many others, Martin S. Lindauer claims that «if there is a link between writers and pathology, it has not been proven. And even if there were a link, it might reflect a bias that leads people (including writers) to hold a stereotyped view of their mental health» (M.S. Lindauer, *Are Creative Writers Mad? An Empirical Perspective*, in B.M. Rieger, ed., *Dionysus in Literature: Essays on Literary Madness*, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, Bowling Green, OH 1994, p. 42).

<sup>6</sup> B.M. Rieger, *Introduction*, in Id., *Dionysus in Literature*, cit., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> As Andrew Scull notes, «what constitutes madness strikes me as fluctuating and ambiguous, indeed theoretically indeterminate, making its boundaries the subject of endless dispute and anxiety» (A.T. Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective*, Routledge, London 1989, p. 8).

<sup>8</sup> M. Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. by J. Khalfa, Routledge, London 2006 (*Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique*, Gallimard, Paris 1961); A. Ingram, *Cultural Constructions*, cit., pp. 4, 10, 208.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. R. Porter, *Mind Forged Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency*, Athlone, London 1987; A. Ingram, *Cultural Constructions*, cit., and *The Madhouse of Language*, Routledge, London 1991; M. MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1981; A. Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 2001.

<sup>10</sup> B.M. Rieger, *Introduction*, cit., p. 6; M. Foucault, *History of Madness*, cit., p. 180.

<sup>11</sup> J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla, Containing divers Miscellaneous Poems, Written at Finsbury and Bethlem by the Doctors Patient Extraordinary*, London 1679, p. 28 (*The New Distinction*, line 12). All quotations from *Lucida Intervalla* are from the original 1679 edition, available on the *Early English Books Online Database (EEBO)*, <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>> (02/2013).

<sup>12</sup> J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla*, with an Introduction by M.V. Deporte, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California Press, Los Angeles (CA) 1979.

<sup>13</sup> J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla*, cit., pp. 32 and 8 (*The Riddle*, line 4; *Presented to the DUKE ON NEW-YEARS-DAY*, lines 31-32).

<sup>14</sup> On August 17, 1667, Samuel Pepys records that during the trial «Carcasse» had chosen his witnesses «without distinction», collecting both friends and opponents; later entries also describe «Carcasse's» threats to Pepys and other officers (S. Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys. Transcribed from the Shorthand Manuscript in the Pepysian Library Magdalene College Cambridge*, ed. by H.B. Wheatley, George Bell & Sons, London 1893, vol. XIII, pp. 65, 69).

<sup>15</sup> J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla*, cit., p. 5 (*To His Royal Highness*, lines 14-15).

- <sup>16</sup> J.R. Bloxam, *A Register of the Presidents, Fellows, Demies, Instructors in Grammar [...] of Saint Mary Magdalen College*, John Henry, Oxford 1863, vol. III, p. 176.
- <sup>17</sup> J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla*, cit., p. 17.
- <sup>18</sup> Ivi, pp. 4, 5, 10, 21 and *passim*.
- <sup>19</sup> I. Natali, *James Carkesse and the Lucidity of Madness: A 'Minor Poet' in Seventeenth-century Bedlam*, «The International Journal of the Humanities», 5, 2012, pp. 285-298.
- <sup>20</sup> A. Ingram, *Cultural Constructions*, cit., pp. 4, 206.
- <sup>21</sup> J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla*, cit., pp. 42, 23, 31 and *passim*. Carkesse also specifies: «A Chirurgeon's Son he is, pray, understand» (*The Cross Match*, line 29, p. 20).
- <sup>22</sup> Ivi, p. 9 (*The Poetical History of Finnesbury Mad-House*, lines 7-8).
- <sup>23</sup> Ivi, p. 10 (lines 31-32).
- <sup>24</sup> Ivi, p. 39 (*The Patient's Advice to the Doctor*, line 5).
- <sup>25</sup> Cfr. T. Browne, *Religio Medici*, Printed for Andrew Crooke, London 1642.
- <sup>26</sup> However, Allen is deemed incapable of diagnosing even the body: Carkesse assumes the doctor's voice to emphasize, «To feel his Pulse, I never thought; / in a Month, I see him but once» (J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla*, cit., p. 14 (*The Poetical History of Finnesbury Mad-House*, lines 105-106)). Pulse had been regarded as an essential part of any diagnosis since Galen; on this topic Cfr. R. French, *Medicine before Science: The Business of Medicine from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 2003.
- <sup>27</sup> J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla*, cit., pp. 45, 30, 35 (*Pronounc'd at the taking of a Vomit*, line 3; *Poet No Lunatick*, lines 1-2).
- <sup>28</sup> Ivi, p. 32 (*The Riddle*, line 3).
- <sup>29</sup> Ivi, p. 27 (*The Doctors Advice*, line 2).
- <sup>30</sup> Ivi, p. 34 (*His Rule of Behaviour*, lines 7-8).
- <sup>31</sup> Ivi, p. 28 (*The New Distinction*, line 10). On Apollo's function in *Lucida Intervalla* see also G. MacLennan, *Lucid Interval: Subjective Writing and Madness in History*, Leicester UP, Leicester-London 1992, pp. 40-41.
- <sup>32</sup> J. Carkesse, *Lucida Intervalla*, cit., p. 28 (*The New Distinction*, lines 13-14).
- <sup>33</sup> Ivi, p. 32 (*The Riddle*, lines 5-6).
- <sup>34</sup> Ivi, p. 36 (*Poet no Lunatick*, line 11).
- <sup>35</sup> Ivi, pp. 3-4 (*To the Duke General of the Artillery Ground*, lines 9-13).
- <sup>36</sup> Ivi, pp. 12, 15 (*The Poetical History of Finnesbury Mad-House*, lines 60, 65-66, 115-116).
- <sup>37</sup> V. Brackett, *The Facts On File Companion to British Poetry: 17th and 18th Centuries*, Facts on File, New York (NY) 2008, p. 379.
- <sup>38</sup> All information about Anne Finch's life is based on: B. McGovern, *Anne Finch and her Poetry: A Critical Biography*, University of Georgia Press, Athens (GA) 1992; C.H. Hinnant, *The Poetry of Anne Finch*, University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, Newark (DW)-London-Toronto 1994; A. Ingram (ed.), *Patterns of Madness in Eighteenth Century. A Reader*, Liverpool UP, Liverpool 1998, p. 54.
- <sup>39</sup> G. Greer, «Times Literary Supplement», 26, 1974, quoted in C.H. Hinnant, *The Poetry of Anne Finch*, cit., p. 15.
- <sup>40</sup> Ivi, p. 17.
- <sup>41</sup> Ivi, p. 33.
- <sup>42</sup> A. Finch, *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea*. From the Original Edition of 1713 and from Unpublished MS. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Myra Reynolds, University of Chicago Press, Chicago (IL) 1903, p. 15 (*Ardelia to Melancholy*, lines 39-42).
- <sup>43</sup> Ivi, p. 94 (*The Spleen*, line 112).
- <sup>44</sup> Ivi, p. 91 (*The Spleen*, line 60).
- <sup>45</sup> Ivi, p. 15 (*Ardelia to Melancholy*, lines 1-2).
- <sup>46</sup> «A Woman here, leads fainting Israel on, / She fights, she wins, she tryumphs with a song, / Devout, Majestick, for the subject fitt. / And far above her arms, exalts her witt», lines 1-4 (Ivi, p. 6).

<sup>47</sup> Ivi, p. 19 (*On Affliction*, lines 1-8).

<sup>48</sup> See C.H. Hinnant, *The Poetry of Anne Finch*, cit., p. 213; P.R. Backsheider, *Eighteenth-century Women Poets and their Poetry*, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore (MD) 2005, pp. 145-146.

<sup>49</sup> Transgression was considered one of the major causes of melancholy. Richard Baxter (1615-91), for example, says: «ANOTHER great Cause [of Melancholy] is the Guilt of some great and wilful Sin, when Conscience is convinced, and yet the soul is not converted» (R. Baxter, *The Signs and Causes of Melancholy. With Directions Suited to the Case of Those who are Afflicted with it. Collected out of the Works of Richard Baxter, For the Sake of Those, who are Wounded in the Spirit* (1716), in A. Ingram (ed.), *Patterns of Madness*, cit., p. 45).

<sup>50</sup> D. Irish, *Levamen Infirmi or, Cordial Counsel to the Sick and Diseased*, Printed for the Author, London 1700, pp. 42-43. «Vapours» were believed to arise from overheated passions and cloud the brain.

<sup>51</sup> R. Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Digireads, Stilwell 2010, vol. II, p. 126.

<sup>52</sup> D. Irish, *Levamen Infirmi*, cit., p. 42.

<sup>53</sup> A. Finch, *The Poems of Anne*, cit., p. 15 (*Ardelia to Melancholy*, lines 6-12).

<sup>54</sup> Ivi, p. 95 (*The Spleen*, lines 128-131).

<sup>55</sup> The physician Richard Lower (1631-1691) was renowned in the 17th century. Ivi, p. 96 (*The Spleen*, lines 142, 150).

<sup>56</sup> Ivi, p. 89 (*The Spleen*, lines 26-27).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem.* (*The Spleen*, lines 16, 19).

<sup>58</sup> Ivi, p. 93 (*The Spleen*, lines 99-103).

<sup>59</sup> Ivi, p. 91 (*The Spleen*, lines 64-65).

<sup>60</sup> C.H. Hinnant, *The Poetry of Anne Finch*, cit., p. 43.

<sup>61</sup> See C. Mounsey, *Christopher Smart: Clown of God*, Bucknell UP, Lewisburg (PA) 2001, pp. 203-205.

<sup>62</sup> The manuscript of *Jubilate Agno* consists of seven fragments (A, B1, B2, B3, B4, C and D); fragments A and D include only «Let» lines, fragments B3 and B4 only «For» lines; B1, B2 and C comprise both a «Let» and a «For» set of lines. When talking about the different «sections» of the manuscript, I am referring to the groups of «Let» and «For» lines throughout the fragments.

<sup>63</sup> See M. Knight and E. Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature*, Oxford UP, Oxford-New York (NY) 2006, p. 28; R.P. Fitzgerald, *The Form of Christopher Smart's Jubilate Agno*, «Studies in English Literature 1500-1900», 8, 3, 1968, p. 487.

<sup>64</sup> C. Smart, *Jubilate Agno*, Fragment B2, lines 2 and 127. The transcription of Smart's manuscripts has been made public on the Internet, in *Jubilate Agno by Christopher Smart*, <<http://www.pseudopodium.org/repress/jubilate/index.html>> (02/2013), since, as the editor Ray Davis explains, most printed editions of the poem are out of print, and no paperback has ever been available. Smart's text can also be consulted in C. Smart, *Poetical Works of Christopher Smart: Jubilate Agno*, ed. by K. Williamson, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1980, vol. I. All subsequent references to *Jubilate Agno* will include indication of the fragment followed by the line number, as in R. David's electronic edition.

<sup>65</sup> See Marquis of Lansdowne (ed.), *The Petty Papers: Some Unpublished Papers of Sir William Petty*, Constable and Company Ltd., London 1927, vol. II. The 'scales of creatures' had also overt racial implications, as Smart's *Jubilate Agno*, where «the Blacks are the children of Cain» (B3.72).

<sup>66</sup> Among the possible sources for the lists of animals and plants, Greene mentions «Albin's History of Birds and Miller's Gardener's Dictionary» (D.J. Greene, *Smart, Berkeley, the Scientists and the Poets: A Note on Eighteenth-Century Anti-Newtonianism*, «Journal of the History of Ideas», 14, 3, 1953, p. 333). Although Smart repeatedly suggests he is relying on classical texts, such as Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, it seems that his main source might have been more recent. In fact, he mentions the «Rackoon» (A.87): this term was introduced in the seventeenth century, during the early colonization of North America, and the animal was first classified by Linnaeus in the second edition of his *Systema Naturae*, dated 1740. The latter text, in my opinion, might thus be considered one of Smart's key sources. For the history of the term «Rackoon», see S. Romaine, *Contact with Other Languages*, in J. Algeo (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language, English in North America*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 2001, vol. VI, p. 164.

<sup>67</sup> D.J. Greene, *Smart, Berkeley, the Scientists and the Poets*, cit., p. 332; K. Williamson, *Smart's Principia: Science and Anti-Science in Jubilate Agno*, «The Review of English Studies», 30, 120, 1979, p. 411.

<sup>68</sup> Mentions of animals are also followed by free associations, and connections established in a train of thought, or through plays on words, as in: «Let Jorim rejoice with the Roach – God bless my throat and keep me from things stranggled» (B2.57); «Let Sergius Paulus rejoice with Dentex – Blessed be the name Jesus for my teeth» (B2.96).

<sup>69</sup> C. Smart, *Jubilate Agno*, cit., A.74, B2.3.

<sup>70</sup> A.J. Kuhn, *Christopher Smart: The Poet as Patriot of the Lord*, «ELH», 2, 1963, p. 130.

<sup>71</sup> C. Smart, *Jubilate Agno*, cit., A.71, B1.54.

<sup>72</sup> Ivi, cit., B1.123, 160, 180; See also B1.125, 141, 161, 171, 190, 202, 217. Direct references to life in the madhouse are only two: «FOR I pray the Lord JESUS that cured the LUNATICK to be merciful to all my brethren and sisters in these houses»; «For they work me with their harping-irons, which is a barbarous instrument, because I am more unguarded than others» (B2.174-175).

<sup>73</sup> Ivi, B1.142, 217, 167, 173. David Kuhn maintains that Smart «sees himself as a new Dav- idic patriot of the Lord, descended from great warriors and martyrs» (A.J. Kuhn, *Christopher Smart*, cit., p. 122).

<sup>74</sup> C. Smart, *Jubilate Agno*, cit., B2.97, 181, 246, 98. The last quotation seems to be 'completed' in B3.68: «For ignorance is a sin because illumination is to be obtained by prayer». For what concerns Locke, see: «For Lock supposes that an [sic] human creature, at a given time may be an atheist i.e. without God, by the folly of his doctrine concerning innate ideas» (B3.43).

<sup>75</sup> Ivi, B2.359, C.255. On this topic, see F. Easton, *Mary's Key and the Poet's Conception: the Orphic versus the Mimetic Artist in Jubilate Agno*, in C. Hawes (ed.), *Christopher Smart and the Enlightenment*, St Martin's, New York (NY) 1999, pp. 161-163.

<sup>76</sup> C. Smart, *Jubilate Agno*, cit., B1.162.

<sup>77</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. by J.N. Findlay, Oxford UP, Oxford, 1977, pp. 225-227; M. Foucault, *History of Madness*, cit., pp. 30, 41-42 and *passim*.

<sup>78</sup> A. Ingram, *Cultural Constructions*, cit., pp. 88, 185.

<sup>79</sup> P. Shaw, *The Juice of the Grape: or, Wine Preferable to Water* (1724), in A. Ingram (ed.), *Patterns of Madness*, cit., pp. 69-70.

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