MANIAS

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In 1985, Alfred Lubran completed a 228-page book entitled Fears Phobias Philias Loves Manias Hates and Hurts (Human Behaviour), a compilation of lists of words accompanied by the briefest of descriptions. The following article excerpts the odder terms from one such list; if Word Ways readers welcome this, other such lists will be published in later issues.

From the time of Hippocrates (c.460-377 BC) until that of Kraepelin (1856-1926), Mania and Melancholia (severe depression) were considered to be separate disorders. Currently, Mania is considered to be one aspect of manic-depressive psychosis, the hyperactive and depressive episodes alternating at varying intervals. Thus, a state of mind in which there are profuse and rapidly changing ideas, with exaggerated cheerfulness changing quickly to irritability or violence, would come under the heading of Mania.

Popularly, any violent abnormal behaviour is referred to as a mania. More informally, mania is used to describe a craze for something, enthusiasms in this sense being described in the second part of this article.

Inherent in the name of a mania is the subject of the insanity, such as pyromania (a morbid impulse to set things on fire). Even a severe anxiety can be called a mania if it results in sufficiently strange behaviour, for example doubting mania (obsessive-compulsive doubting whether certain acts have been carried out).

Different aspects of mania have different names. The list which follows names a strange few out of hundreds which exist.

ASOTICAMANIA impulsive or reckless spending
BIBLIOKLEPTOMANIA the impulsive stealing of books
BRUXOMANIA compulsive and continual crushing the teeth together, with intermittent grinding
CHREMATOMANIA preoccupation with creating wealth
DRIFTOMANIA hoboing or vagrancy
ECOMANIA (OIKIOMANIA) pathologic dislike of members of one's family; a feeling that one must get away from them
FUROR UTERINUS nymphomania
GRAPHOMANIA excessive impulse to write
GRUMBLING MANIA a manic-depressive phenomenon where everything is at fault at all times
HELIENOMANIA the tendency to use Greek or Latin terms instead of more understandable English ones
ICONOMANIA morbid impulse to worship images, or to collect them
KLAZOMANIA compulsory shouting
LETHEOMANIA craving for narcotics
MANIA OF RECOMMENCEMENT a compulsion to repeat minor day-to-day actions frequently
NAUTOOMANIA a sailor's morbid fear of a ship or the sea
NOSTOMANIA nostalgia: homesickness as an illness
ONIOOMANIA a compulsion to buy things
OREXIMANIA increase in appetite for fear of becoming thin
POCOMANIA a Christian revivalist cult in the West Indies in which a trance is produced by autosuggestion
PORIOOMANIA pathological compulsion to journey from one place to another, whether consciously or without recall of the event
QUESTION-ASKING MANIA (FOLIE DE POURQUOI) a morbid urge to ask questions
RUMINATION MANIA a compulsion to call to mind repeatedly past events and to ponder over them
SOPHOMANIA a passion for grandiose statements about one's own wisdom
TRICHTILLOOMANIA a morbid impulse to pull out one's own hair
UNPRODUCTIVE MANIA a state of manic stupor during which there is no talking
VASTNESS MANIA (DELIREE D'ENORMITE) the delusion occurring in certain depressions that the body has grown to gigantic size
WANDERING MANIA (DROMOMANIA) wanderlust

It was in the 17th century that the term mania was applied to any showing of great enthusiasm for something. Later, -mania was used as a suffix to Greek words, indicating 'a mad passion', for example guanaikomania (a mad passion for women) or hippomania (a passionate love of horses).

Medical Latin borrowed the suffix in words like nymphomania (excessive sexual desire in women). Concurrently, in France the suffix -manie appeared, for example bibliomanie (extreme fondness for books), corresponding to the English bibliomania.

The suffix has also been used by writers to express a particular enthusiasm, as did Coleridge (1772-1843) with scribbleomania (the urge to write).

The temptation to add a Greek or Latin prefix or suffix to mania has been resisted by some writers, as in "a mania for making bizarre cocktails" or Walt Whitman's "the mania of owning things". However, compound words such as Beatlemania have proliferated.

The following are examples of manias that have appeared in literature as enthusiasms, and not used in a psychiatric context.

ANGLOMANIA excessive admiration for English customs
ANTHOMANIA an extravagant passion for flowers
BALLETOMANIA an ardent follower of ballet
BEATLEMANIA the mass hysteria in response to the rhythm-and-blues
style of song of the Beatles group during the 1960s
CANAL MANIA building transport canals during the 19th century
DIATOMANIA the clamour by early microscopists for better optics in their instruments
GIGANTOMANIA building colossal projects regardless of cost, with no real concern for their usefulness
GRA1OMANIA a passion for Greek things
HEART MANIA widespread use of the heart shape in designing and ornamenting jewellery (c1869)
MEGALITHOMANIA the state of getting carried away by bizarre ideas when confronted by stone circles and standing stones (for example, believing that the Druids built Stonehenge)
SQUANDERMANIA wasted use of large sums of public money
XENOMANIA undue admiration for that which is foreign

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