

P01-260

MANIC-DEPRESSIVE ILLNESS AND THE ARTISTIC TEMPERAMENT

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Introduction: A notion exists of a special kind of relationship between poets and being “crazy”. A possible correlation between madness and genius is one of the oldest and most persistent and controversial of cultural concepts. We decided to investigate the relationship between manic-depressive illness and the artistic temperament .

Method: A review was conducted on Professor Kay Redfield Jamison's treatise *Touched with Fire, Manic-depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*.

Results: Research strongly suggests that, compared with the general population, writers and artists show a vastly disproportionate rate of the affective disorders manic-depressive and depressive illness. Research employing systematic biographical methodology has also given strong support to a much higher rate of mood disorders in artistic populations than could be expected from chance alone. A British study revealed many overlapping mood, cognitive, and behavioral changes between hypomania and intense creative states. Many of the changes in mood, thinking, and perception that characterize the mildly manic states are highly characteristic of creative thought as well. Although it seems counterintuitive at first, melancholy has also been reported to be associated with artistic inspiration and productivity.

Discussion: Not all (not even most) writers and artists suffer from major mood disorders. Likewise, most of those who have a major mood disorder are not writers or artists. However despite this, research does strongly suggest that there is a correlation between manic-depressive illness and the artistic temperament. The major resistance to an association between psychopathology, or mental illness, and creativity seems to revolve around a few central points.