

The Dynamic Impact of madness in Literature (From Shakespearean to Modern Era)

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Abstract

The main emphasis is formed on the thought of "madness" in literature. The plan to define "literature" presents parallel uncertainties while trying to define "madness". Madness is not initially a fact, but a judgment. It is historically and culturally predetermined. The study explores the process of meaning-making by people experiencing mental ' disorders as it is influenced by the context of their environment, available cultural explanations, and the nature of their mental states at that time. It is proposed that folks experiencing psychological trauma plan to regain a way of order by imposing a narrative structure on these disconcerting experiences. Madness has been a continuous theme in Western literature from its beginnings to the present time. Evidence indicates, moreover, that human beings were preoccupied with extreme forms of mental and psychic experiences long before they recorded them in literature. Myths and legends appearing in homer, the bible, and ancient Greek drama contain primordial symbolization of delusion, mania, and another bizarre form of thought and behavior. The mad protagonist generally inhabits the familiar world of civilized people, although in his madness he may get back the savage environment and

condition of the normal ferial man. This work doesn't provide a quick overview of madness and literature in a chronologically ordered fashion. The work doesn't question the writer's psychological state and its reflection in their works. Neither does an inquiry for a scientific definition of social reality appear to be of major concern.

Keywords: *Madness, Irrationality, Sanity, Sobriety*

1. Introduction

As many studies demonstrate, synchronically and diachronically, our society has always been concerned with the topic of madness. The concept of madness and its literary depictions have been thoroughly revised according to the re-evaluation of the sanity vs. abnormality relationship as the history of political resistance and social criticism manifest.

The writers' fascination with the theme of madness has resulted in a germinating investigation of the irrational. The idea of the insanity as an intruder reigned for an extended time, almost entirely unchallenged. Madness is associated with intensity. Therefore, due to

its condensed structure, the short story format appears to be the most interesting for the analysis. Near the end of the nineteenth century, the experimentation and experience in the treatment of madness in society and literature became fascinating. Jimenez (2019) examined how the concept of "madness" was perceived in the 19th century based on Edgar Allan Poe's "*Tell-Tale Heart*" and Charlotte Perkins' "*The Yellow Wallpaper*". (1)

The treatment of madness in literature reflects human ambivalence towards the mind itself; madness compromising its strange manifestation, is also familiar, a fascinating and repellent exposure of dream and fantasy. The madman like other people doesn't exist alone. He both reflects and influences those involved him.

The most obvious and natural question that arises now is what exactly is supposed by "Madness in Literature"? How can this thematic phrase within the understanding of literature? Does it refer to the writing of madmen or the actions of the mad protagonist? How can terminology from psychology be useful in understanding literary character? Have the concepts of literary madness changed from ancient to today? "How is one to define an idea charged with political, social, religious and private assumptions?" (Feder, p. 5). (2)

I define madness as a state in which unconscious processes predominate over conscious ones to the extent that they control them and determine perception and responses to experience. "Madness can

only occur within a world of conflict, within a conflict of thoughts", notes Shoshana Felman (p. 206). (3) The varieties of madness created in literature are in most respects no different from those to be discovered throughout human society.

Madness is common to the human experience.

- 1) The "mad" writer theory is advocated by Plato and other classical writers. There is no denying that a lot of writers experience mental problems or true insanity. Insanity affected Nathaniel lee, Charles Lamb, Jonathan Swift, and Sylvia Path. The conflict between a woman's desire to restrict her to traditional female gender roles and expectations seemingly contributed to the madness and depression of such writers as Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Path, and Anne Sexton.
- 2) "Mad" character or mad behavior of characters. Some characters like Hamlet, Antigone, and the Underground Man. There are at least three ways in which a "mad" character can operate. First, a character can become mad like Ophelia, Lady Macbeth, and King Lear. Second, apostate characters can rebel against a restrictive society by either appearing to be Mad or going mad, like Edgar faked madness in King Lear. Third, characters can also experience a kind of anomie in which society seems intent on crushing their

personalities which results in the separation from the human community like Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Paper".

- 3) The critical method by which psychological terms from the sector of medical madness are applied to literary madness. Psychological terminology can be borrowed from Freud, Jung, or another modern theorist. Literature and psychology are complementary disciplines.

The social and cultural milieu of the medieval poet Thomas Hoccleve's confession of madness would seem to offer a little inducement for his effort to apprehend this condition through observation and reason. To present in several references are available in part of its supportive assets line. I would like to quote few writers who have dealt with the concept of madness in their works.

Shakespeare's play is a paramount expression of one major field of Renaissance exploration: the psychological bases of human nature and conduct. Shakespeare's remarkable ability to discern and apprehend psychological illness especially in an age when there was limited knowledge regarding mental health and doesn't fail to amaze his readers. From Lady Macbeth's OCD to King Lear's Paranoia and From Hamlet's mania to Ophelia's Psychosis, the bard's diligent eye managed to capture clinical conditions perhaps just as accurately as the physicians of his time would have been capable of.

It is certainly astounding how a writer and poet could pay close attention to such minute details in describing mental disorders. It is for this reason that Shakespeare has been extensively quoted by famous psychiatrists of the 19th century and to this day his accuracy in understanding mental illness does not fail to impress clinicians and therapists.

Shakespeare's famous mad characters: Hamlet, King Lear, and Macbeth of the eponymous plays are some of the earliest examples from English Literature. Rejected or unsatisfied lovers were thought to be at risk of mental collapse and melancholy in particular was an ailment to which writers and intellectuals were prone.

*"Lovers and madmen have
such seething brains,*

*Such shaping fantasies, that
apprehend*

*More than cool reason ever
comprehends.*

*The lunatic, the lover, and
the poet*

Are of imagination all compact." (5.1.4-8)

Rosalind in "As You Like It", runs on the same line with a rather less poetic sentiment: "Love is merely a madness and... deserve as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do" (3.2.359-60). Lady Macbeth's condition emerges as a Psychotic disorder marked by hallucinations induced by extreme guilt. Lady Macbeth appears to have developed psychotic symptoms following the murder

of King Duncan committed by her husband and herself in cold blood.

In Hamlet, the advisor Polonius misreading the causes of the prince's apparent lunacy as romantic rejection offers a neat analysis of his illness that makes the relationship between love and madness very clear. After being refused by Ophelia, Polonius explains that Hamlet:

*“Fell into sadness, then
into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence
into a weakness,
Thence to lightness and by
this declension,
Into the madness wherein
he now raves.” (2.2.146-
50)*

However, has Shakespeare's accuracy in describing mental illness made so evident in the timeless tragedy of Hamlet in the character of Hamlet himself.

*“To be or not to be,
That is the question.” (Act-
3 scene-1) (4)*

Driven out of his mind with the grief shock of his father's untimely death followed by his mother's hast marriage, Hamlet from the beginning manifests signs of psychosis. Hamlet experiences auditory and visual hallucinations, repeatedly hearing his father's voice in his head and again encountering his father's ghost in the bedroom scene.

In King Lear, Shakespeare explored one of the most frequently occurring forms of mental deterioration, age-related dementia. Shakespeare's Lear

suffers both from the 'unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them. This is the disguise adopted by Edgar, the banished son of the Earl of Gloucester who begrimes his face and tears his clothes to pass as 'poor Tom',

*“The basest and poorest shape
That ever penury in contempt of man
Brought near to beast” (2.2.164-66)*

Edgar is only pretending to be mad when he impersonates 'Tom O'Bedlam' but his characterization draws on established early modern tropes about disorderly mad people whose destitute lives attracted ridicule and mistrust.

The fictional world of Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" (1865) can be read as a Modernist experiment that explores levels of consciousness. Madness for literature, therefore, is not simply a character-related concern: Alice in Wonderland depicts a mad dream world where logic, sense, and order are notably absent and an imaginary world of madness. The experiment presents a shift in familiar perspective and disrupts conventions of literary form, so it is as much structural madness as it is a story about the mad characters of Alice's mad dream world.

Thomas Kyd's "The Spanish Tragedy", Hieronimo and his wife Isabella are both sent mad by horror of their son's murder. Madness has preoccupied thinkers and artists in all cultures at all times. The theme of madness has been integrated into the arts for varied ends principally to express the unspoken and the unspeakable

in a given culture. "Thus, madness has been used to articulate that is repressed and what goes beyond. Writers who deal with madness as a general theme reflects a deep awareness of human personality." (5)

It appears safe to assume that different dictionaries from the different periods would not contain the same range of definitions. It makes the same idea itself very distinct. The approaches to the treatment of madness varied tremendously through the history of mankind, including a total reverse in the perception. For example, madness is not initially a fact but a judgment. It is historically and culturally predetermined.

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