Madness and Sanity: Wisdom of Madmen and the Wise Men
Madness in the 19th century

Norah Roudhan
gust0016862@gust.edu.kw

Follow this and additional works at: https://irl.umsl.edu/urs

Part of the Arabic Language and Literature Commons, Arabic Studies Commons, Literature in English, British Isles Commons, and the Philosophy of Mind Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://irl.umsl.edu/urs/65

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the UMSL Undergraduate Works at IRL @ UMSL. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of IRL @ UMSL. For more information, please contact marvinh@umsl.edu.
Madness and Sanity: Wisdom of Madmen and the Wise Men Madness in the 19th century

Norah Hadi Roudhan
16862
Independent dissertation
15th of January 202

Abstract:

This research is based on a careful examination of the concept of insanity and reason. In addition to mentioning some examples from the nineteenth century in the literature to illustrate how each of them used the concept of insanity. Despite the different reason for describing each of the above names and personalities as insane, through analyzes and questions posed it becomes clear that insanity in the end may have a different meaning from what today’s concept represent. The research concludes with the main reason behind the presentation of literature to some famous figures of insanity in a manner that reflects their
rationality, despite the approval of many writers of her madness despite their intelligence, cleverness.love ego? Or the punishment of the mighty?

*Keywords:* madness, insanity, ego, wisdom, psychology

Madness and Sanity: Wisdom of Madmen and the Wise Men Madness in the 19th century
The wisdom of the madmen and Wisemen madness is a literal paradox where the character identified as a fool comes to be regarded as the beholder of wisdom. An identifiable trope established in the literature from antiquity to the 19th century, the Fool’s wisdom typically highlights the reason that fails to illuminate something’s significance. The Arabic saying posits that “madness is of various forms” (Aljunun funun). The madness of particular wise madmen seemingly has a significant fascination for different notable figures in the classic literal traditions. Paradoxically, the literature of the 19th century has used wise characters depicting insanity and madmen expressing wisdom. Concisely, this paper references Al-Naysaburi’s Wise Madmen and Ahab’s insanity and others figures or novels that depict madness and wisdom at the same time in the period of 1830-1914 to explain the wisdom of Madmen and the Wise Men madness in the 19th century.
Firstly, Ahab is the most insane character in the Moby Dick story. However, despite all the assertions and conclusions regarding Ahab’s insanity, it is imperative to note that his early reactions to the sea was well-timed and executed appropriately. It was not uncommon in the 19th century for an able person to rise to stardom and rapidly attain a ship captain’s status. The determination and brilliance of Ahab were the major factors contributing to his rise. Whenever Ahab took over the captain’s roles, his capabilities were second to none. He was a quick learner, and his adaptation to duties was on point. All these factors showed how the perceived madman was wise. However, it was until the year of whaling difficulties and routines that frustrated and hardened the character. His senses were subject to suffering. He started being lonely and isolated. The initial symptoms of moral insanity would have surfaced previously in what Ahab later called the "the forty years of privation and peril" (p. 443). The early years were the first stage of this character’s madness when privacy and loneliness were the realities of life. Ahab often shared his ideas and thoughts with few people close to him in his wisdom, but now he was not close to anyone. In his more than three years of the voyage, there was little more than whaling maps, daily routines, precise chit-a-chat with mates, extended periods of no whale sights, moments of introspection, and homesick. At this moment, Ahab had low enjoying power, and he was not in a better position to think independently, thus increasing the gap between others and his conscience. Unfortunately, a person who has been forced to the extreme like in this case is now being considered a mad person. Isolation, difficulties, moments of frustrations and the
change in every task would change every human at any point. Ahab was now a
crotchety, aloof, and he had a vague understanding of anger and discontents
when reaching forty. At forty, the obscure incidents were testified by Elijah who
affirmed that he would strengthen the hatreds and determination
simultaneously, lying like a dead person for three nights and days.
At past fifty, Ahab gets married, and at this point, the start of the second stage of illness confronts him. At this moment, an important leader and a whaling captain, and as Peleg describes him, ’a swearing good man’ wanted affection and companionship through marriage. However, all these seem to have disappeared the next day after the wedding as Ahab goes back to the whaling journey. In later stages, Ahab’s son and his wife miss him because of the great father and wisdom. They would be frustrated and disturbed by the thoughts of Ahab. After informing Starbuck that by marrying a girl and widowing her, he immediately asserts that "'And then, the madness, the frenzy, the boiling blood and the smoking brow, with which, for a thousand lowerings old Ahab has furiously, foamingly chased his prey-more a demon than a man' " (pp. 443-44). In this case, the lowerings could be hyperbolically used to refer to the dramatic impact or by pointing out the forty-year career to the period after he was the 'old Ahab,' to the times of his marriage. There is a high likelihood that the thousand lowerings would go beyond the ten to twenty years or probably more than that. Consequently, these lowerings cannot mean the time of monomania, a relatively recent activity, but to the points of being detached from the moods to the periods of robust anger and hatred, all which are controlled by the wide mentality and strong intelligence. Generally, and normally, the resulting condition would be that of moral insanity.
The third and the last stage of madness starts with the Ahab's traumatic loss of the leg. The documented and the involved stage entails the initial monomania anger and hatreds that comes along with the huge "corporal animosity" (p. 160) originating from the loss. This is the loss the physically contributes to the insanity as pointed out in the whole story. This stage further entails the different months of suffering at the period when the "final monomania" attacks Ahab as the Pequod and "torn body and gashed soul bled into one another, and so interfusing made him mad" (p. 160). Additionally, the stage further incorporates a deceptive calmness that makes the crew believe that the Cape Horn winds have left behind Ahab's delirium. The calmness is a resemblance of the wisdom showcased by Ahab. In summary, the three stages of madness show the level of normalcy and wisdom of Ahab. By indicating that Ahab was a committed captain before these troubles show that there is something more to his wisdom than madness.
The Al-Nays Aburi’s Wise Madmen talks about the people who think are wise, but they are not in the eyes of Allah. In this case, the author claims that Allah has intermixed individuals with a trait and the opposite. Precisely, He intermixes sanity and madness, meaning that every sane man has an element of madness. As a result, the prophet (PBUH) had talked about that person who has wasted his youth while sinning and called him a madman. According to Salih al-Mursi, Ja'far ibn Zayd al-'Abdi, God tells humans to be pleased with such a person. Some of the prophet’s companions claimed that 'This is a madman!', however, the prophet was calm, and the man was only stricken and that a madman is one who supposedly wants to sin against Allah. This is a theological interpretation of a madman. A wise man can have madness if he does not obey Allah and his prophets.
People have referred to him as a madman, the person who rants and rails, or the one who disobeys their customs and wakes up with things that people are not in agreement with. Similarly, all the prophets were referred to as madmen by their people when they sowed dissension amongst them, disagreed with them and came up with ideas opposed to their customs. According to Allah, "The people of Noah cried lies before them; they cried lies to Our servant and said, 'A man possessed!' And he was rejected. And so he called unto his Lord, saying, 'I am vanquished; do Thou succour me!'" (p., 197). Besides, Allah asserts that "And also in Moses, when we sent him unto Pharaoh, with a clear authority, but he turned his back with his court, saying, 'A sorcerer or a man possessed!'" (p., 197). Indeed, these assertions show that Wisemen have madness in their work. Allah only determines sanity.
In his article about "The Wisdom of The Fool", Walter Kaiser highlights the different names and implications individuals have on real fools in society, and when these are combined, they reveal the overall features of the wise Fool in the form of a construct. For instance, there are empty-headed fools, dull-witted ones, the feeble-minded and the ones who have no comprehension of anything (Walter 85-94). Madness can also be described based on constructs such as acting like a child, not acting like other men, either incoherent or inarticulate, and one with the natural simplicity and innocence. As much as the society confronts the violent maniacs, who are supposed to lock away in asylums, a harmless fool typically gets kindness and is a subject of benefit from the social elite. The instincts seemingly guide a fool and he or she is expected to hold the social conventions; hence he is given a chance to enjoy freedom, mainly in his or her freedom of speech. This dynamic can be noted in the work of Shakespeare known as the Fool. In this case, King Lear works in the royal court and is the only person who is not subject to Lear’s punishment for speaking up his mind on the king and his conditions. Indeed, this individual can freely express himself in a reckless, and honest terms has significantly contributed to the wise Fool’s fame in different literal imaginations. Referring to a man as a fool is not an insult per se, because the real-life has often been regarded under a fool’s metaphor. For example, in figures like the Socrates, Christ, we can understand that wisdom and foolishness are not what seems to be.
Similarly, the phrase that Wisemen have madness is greatly explored by Shakespeare. In particular, Shakespeare in the English theatre incorporates this idea by using the trope in different characters in a lot of his plays. Even though Shakespeare’s early plays greatly portray the wise Fool comically as a buffoon, the following plays often term as a fool in a melancholic and contemplative approach (Snyder 19). For instance, in one Shakespeare’s work known as King Lear, it is the Fool who capably could speak the pristine truth to the king and ends up taking up the role of informing the life’s tragic aspects to the people around him. For Shakespeare’s case, the trope was widely accepted and knew all over that during the twelfth Night Viola affirms that "This fellow is wise enough to play the fool" (III.i.60), making the whole group understand that it is a famous convention. A lot of authors also render their understanding of wise Fool in the 19th century in different ways. Previously, different Renaissance artworks used the concept of madness in a Wiseman. It seems wisdom and madness are two relative terms that depend on a situation (Snyder 19). The theologian understanding of a Wiseman is quite different from contemporary assertions. For the former’s understanding, a Wiseman is who heeds to Allah’s instructions throughout. However, in the former’s case, actions determine the intelligence and wisdom of a human being.
There are two primary examples, each on how madmen in literature have pearls of wisdom and the other one on how Wisemen have madness in the literature work. An example of how madmen in literature have wisdom is the case of literary work called the Song of Ice and Fire by George R. Martin. In this case, King Stannis Baratheon, who managed to be a lone survivor from the shipwreck that killed many people, including Stannis’s parents, makes a critical point. He was consequently driven and made a nonsensical statement (Snyder 19). However, his statements are prophetic, and they come to pass in various events, including the Red Wedding.

In another example, the 1959 novel known as the Wonderful Fool by a Japanese writer Shusaku Endo, Gaston Bonaparte is portrayed as Napoleon Bonaparte’s relative visit’s Japan. He faces a lot of troubles in his way and naively ignores or does not comprehend the existing issues and attacks, but his actions enlighten his Japanese friend.

In summary, the 19th-century literature portrays how madmen in literature have pearls of wisdom and how Wisemen have madness in the literature work. These concepts are paradoxically explained, but they describe madness and sanity at the same time. This article explained the wisdom of Madmen and the Wise Men madness in the 19th century. Primarily, this paper showed that by indicating that Ahab was a committed captain before these troubles show that there is something more to his wisdom than madness.
Work Cited


