IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Madness, Authority, and Narrative Control in novels Wide Sargasso Sea and The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

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Abstract

This article examines how the idea of "madness" operates not only as a psychological condition but as a social label used to control individuals who challenge dominant norms. Focusing on Wide Sargasso Sea and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the study argues that madness in these texts is often constructed through power, gender, race, and social authority rather than through medical diagnosis. Antoinette's confinement and renaming in Wide Sargasso Sea illustrate how female distress is labelled as insanity in order to justify control, while Jekyll's instability is concealed due to his male privilege and social position.

The article also extends this discussion to contemporary contexts, showing how similar patterns of labelling and silencing continue to operate today, particularly in discussions surrounding identity, gender norms, and social conformity. By shifting the focus from whether characters are truly "mad" to how society responds to them, this study highlights madness as a tool of authority and exclusion. The article concludes that literary representations of madness reveal ongoing structures of control that remain relevant in the present day.

Keywords: Madness, Feminist Criticism, social control, gender and power, relevance in contemporary world.

Madness in literature is often treated as a psychological or medical condition. However, a closer reading of nineteenth-century and postcolonial texts suggests that madness frequently operates less as a clinical diagnosis and more as a social label imposed upon individuals who resist dominant structures of power. Rather than emerging solely from internal instability, madness becomes a narrative tool that allows authority figures to justify control, confinement, and silencing. This study examines how such constructions of madness operate in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea and Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, while also exploring how similar mechanisms continue to function in contemporary social discourse.

In Wide Sargasso Sea, Antoinette's psychological condition is repeatedly defined by others rather than by any medical authority. She is described as unstable, irrational, or mad, yet the text offers no clear evidence of formal diagnosis or treatment. Instead, the label of madness is applied through Rochester's perspective, whose social and colonial authority allows him to interpret her behavior without challenge. Once Antoinette is declared mad, her confinement becomes socially acceptable. The narrative thus shifts attention away from the ethics of her treatment and toward the supposed inevitability of her condition. Madness here functions as a justification rather than an explanation. The absence of medical evaluation is significant: the decision to isolate her emerges not from therapeutic concern but from the convenience of control.

This pattern reveals how power shapes definitions of sanity. Rochester's authority as a white, male, colonial figure enables him to construct Antoinette's identity in ways that serve his interests. His renaming of her as "Bertha" represents a symbolic erasure of her previous self. The act of renaming is not merely personal but structural: it replaces her Creole identity with one that fits English expectations. Once renamed, she becomes easier to categorize, control, and ultimately confine. The imposition of a new name functions as the first step in redefining her reality. By altering how she is addressed and perceived, Rochester also alters how her actions are interpreted. Behaviors that might otherwise be read as emotional responses to displacement and neglect are reframed as symptoms of madness.

A comparable dynamic appears in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, though it operates differently due to gender and class privilege. Dr. Jekyll occupies a respected position within Victorian society, allowing him to conceal his instability for a considerable period. His transformation into Hyde is initially treated as a mystery rather than a sign of moral or psychological failure. Society hesitates to question him directly because his social standing protects him. Where Antoinette is quickly labeled and confined, Jekyll's instability is rationalized and hidden.

His dual existence is tolerated until it becomes impossible to ignore. This contrast highlights how definitions of madness are shaped by social hierarchy. Those who hold power can delay or avoid such labels, while those without it may be defined by them prematurely.

The difference between these two cases illustrates that madness is not applied consistently across characters. Instead, it emerges through interpretation shaped by authority. Antoinette's emotional distress is treated as inherent instability, while Jekyll's dangerous actions are initially framed as scientific experimentation. In both cases, attention is diverted away from ethical responsibility. Rochester's confinement of Antoinette and Jekyll's creation of Hyde raise questions about accountability, yet the narratives often focus more on diagnosing abnormality than on evaluating behavior. This shift allows authority figures to maintain control while avoiding scrutiny.

The act of renaming further demonstrates how identity can be restructured through language. When Antoinette becomes "Bertha," she is no longer recognized on her own terms. Her past, cultural background, and personal history are overshadowed by a name imposed upon her. This change simplifies her identity into something more manageable for those in power. The process reflects a broader pattern in which individuals who challenge social norms are redefined through labels that diminish their credibility. Once labeled, their experiences are more easily dismissed. Their resistance becomes evidence of instability rather than a response to oppression.

Such mechanisms extend beyond literary texts. Contemporary discourse often employs similar strategies to delegitimize marginalized groups. Individuals or communities that resist dominant norms may be described using language that frames them as irrational, unstable, or extreme. This language does not necessarily reflect clinical reality but rather functions to discredit dissent. By framing resistance as madness, authority shifts the conversation away from structural inequality and toward individual pathology. The label becomes a tool for managing difference rather than understanding it.

The comparison between these texts therefore reveals a recurring pattern: madness is frequently constructed through power relations rather than medical evidence. In Wide Sargasso Sea, Antoinette's confinement follows her labeling, not a diagnosis. In Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Jekyll's privilege delays such labeling

despite clear signs of instability. Both narratives demonstrate how authority determines whose behavior is excused and whose is condemned. Madness becomes a category shaped by context, not a fixed condition.

This study approaches madness as a relational concept. It asks not only whether characters are mentally unstable but also who has the authority to define them as such. By examining the relationship between labeling and treatment, the analysis shifts focus from diagnosis to response. The central concern becomes ethical rather than purely psychological: even if instability is assumed, how is it addressed, and by whom? The absence of care in favor of confinement suggests that the declaration of madness often serves institutional convenience.

Understanding madness as a social construct does not deny the existence of mental illness. Instead, it highlights how narratives and institutions may use the language of illness to maintain control. When authority defines reality, the boundary between diagnosis and accusation becomes blurred. Literary texts reveal how this boundary can be manipulated. They show that the label of madness may function less as a reflection of internal disorder and more as a response to perceived disobedience.

By tracing these patterns across different texts and contexts, this study positions madness as a category deeply connected to power. The comparison between Antoinette and Jekyll demonstrates how gender, class, and colonial hierarchy influence whose instability is acknowledged, hidden, or punished. The broader implication is that definitions of sanity are rarely neutral. They are shaped by the structures that produce them. Recognizing this dynamic allows for a more critical reading of both literature and contemporary discourse, where similar mechanisms continue to shape how individuals and communities are understood.

If madness in literature often appears as an individual condition, the narrative structures of Wide Sargasso Sea and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde suggest something more complex. In both texts, madness is not simply discovered but produced through interpretation, authority, and response. The act of naming someone mad frequently precedes, rather than follows, any meaningful attempt at understanding their condition. Once the label is established, actions taken against the individual begin to appear reasonable or even necessary. The declaration itself becomes powerful enough to transform treatment into justification.

In Wide Sargasso Sea, Antoinette's identity is gradually redefined by those around her, most notably by Rochester. His renaming of her as "Bertha" functions as a critical turning point. Names in the novel are closely tied to belonging and recognition. Antoinette's original name connects her to a specific cultural and personal history shaped by colonial displacement and emotional isolation. By replacing that name, Rochester imposes a new narrative framework upon her. The new identity does not emerge from her own sense of self but from his need for control and clarity. Renaming becomes a method of simplifying complexity. Once she is no longer Antoinette but "Bertha," her actions can be interpreted through a narrower lens.

This imposed identity alters how her behavior is perceived. Emotional responses that might otherwise be read as understandable reactions to neglect, displacement, and mistrust are instead framed as signs of instability. The label of madness gains strength not through medical validation but through repetition and authority. Rochester's interpretation carries weight because of his social position. His words define the narrative space in which Antoinette exists. The absence of professional diagnosis within the text underscores this imbalance. There is no sustained attempt to examine her condition through care or treatment. Instead, the decision to confine her emerges from the assumption that she is already beyond understanding.

Confinement in the novel operates as both physical and symbolic control. By isolating Antoinette, Rochester limits her ability to challenge the narrative imposed upon her. Her voice becomes secondary to the story told about her. Once confined, she can no longer participate in shaping her own identity. The label of madness thus functions as a closure mechanism. It ends debate and replaces inquiry with certainty. The narrative no longer asks whether she has been wronged but assumes that her instability explains everything. This shift reflects a broader pattern in which authority defines reality and then enforces it.

A parallel dynamic appears in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, though the distribution of power changes the outcome. Dr. Jekyll's social status allows him to experiment with his own identity without immediate consequence. His transformation into Hyde represents a form of self-division rather than externally imposed renaming. Yet the concealment of this division depends heavily on his position within society. Because he is respected and trusted, his behavior is not immediately scrutinized. The violent actions associated with Hyde are initially treated as mysterious anomalies rather than direct evidence of Jekyll's instability. Society hesitates to connect the two identities, allowing the situation to escalate.

This hesitation reveals how authority influences the recognition of madness. Jekyll's instability remains hidden longer because he possesses the credibility that Antoinette lacks. While her distress leads quickly to confinement, his is interpreted through curiosity and speculation. Only when the separation between Jekyll and Hyde collapses does the narrative acknowledge the severity of his condition. Even then, the focus remains on the tragedy of his downfall rather than on the danger he posed to others. His actions are framed as a cautionary tale about repression and duality rather than as grounds for immediate institutional control.

The contrast between these two characters demonstrates how madness is distributed unevenly across gender and class lines. Antoinette's behavior is interpreted through suspicion, while Jekyll's receives initial sympathy. The difference lies not in the presence or absence of instability but in the social frameworks surrounding each character. Authority determines whose experiences are believed and whose are dismissed. This disparity raises ethical questions about the relationship between diagnosis and response. If the declaration of madness leads directly to confinement in one case but to concealment in another, then the label itself cannot be neutral.

The ethical dimension becomes particularly significant when considering the treatment imposed on each character. In Antoinette's case, confinement occurs without sustained effort toward understanding or care. The decision is presented as necessary for safety and order, yet the absence of medical intervention suggests otherwise. The justification relies entirely on Rochester's interpretation. His authority replaces institutional accountability. The narrative thus illustrates how the declaration of madness can function as a means of avoiding responsibility. Once Antoinette is labeled, her suffering becomes secondary to the maintenance of control.

In contrast, Jekyll's situation highlights how power can delay or mitigate consequences. His dual existence allows him to maintain social respectability while privately indulging in forbidden actions. The narrative presents his downfall as the result of internal conflict rather than external judgment. This framing shifts attention away from the harm caused by Hyde and toward the psychological struggle within Jekyll. The difference in treatment underscores the influence of social privilege. Madness becomes a flexible category, applied differently depending on who is being judged.

The act of renaming in Wide Sargasso Sea also resonates with broader cultural practices in which identity is reshaped through language. Renaming simplifies individuals into roles that fit social expectations. It can erase complexity and replace it with a more manageable narrative. Once renamed, individuals may find it more difficult to assert their original identities. Their experiences are filtered through the imposed label. This process illustrates how language can function as a tool of control. The power to name becomes the power to define reality.

Such mechanisms extend beyond the literary context. Contemporary discourse frequently employs similar strategies to manage difference. Individuals who challenge established norms may be described using language that frames them as irrational or unstable. These descriptions often function less as clinical observations and more as rhetorical tools. By labeling dissent as madness, authority figures can shift attention away from structural issues and toward individual behavior. The focus moves from systemic critique to personal pathology. This shift allows institutions to maintain stability while avoiding deeper examination.

The comparison between literary and contemporary contexts reveals a recurring pattern. Madness is often constructed through narrative authority rather than medical certainty. Once declared, it shapes how individuals are treated and understood. The ethical question then becomes not only whether someone is unstable but how that instability is addressed. If the response prioritizes control over care, the label of madness may serve institutional convenience rather than individual well-being.

In both Wide Sargasso Sea and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the declaration of madness redirects attention away from those in power. Rochester's actions are rarely scrutinized with the same intensity as Antoinette's behavior. Similarly, Jekyll's social standing initially shields him from direct suspicion. In each case, authority shapes perception. The narrative focus shifts toward diagnosing abnormality rather than questioning responsibility. This redirection reinforces the idea that madness can function as a protective label for those who impose it.

By examining these dynamics, the study emphasizes the importance of considering context when evaluating representations of madness. The presence of instability does not automatically justify the response it receives. Ethical evaluation must account for who holds the power to interpret and act. When authority defines reality

without accountability, the boundary between care and control becomes blurred. The declaration of madness may then serve to stabilize social order rather than to address individual suffering.

This analysis suggests that madness should be understood not only as a psychological condition but also as a relational construct shaped by power and narrative. The experiences of Antoinette and Jekyll demonstrate how differently the same label can operate depending on social position. Their stories reveal that the definition of madness often depends less on behavior itself and more on who has the authority to interpret it. Recognizing this dynamic allows for a more critical engagement with both literary texts and contemporary discussions of mental health and identity.

Ultimately, the ethical implications of declared madness remain central to the study. If the label can justify confinement in one case and concealment in another, then it functions as more than a neutral description. It becomes a mechanism through which authority maintains control while avoiding scrutiny. By tracing how this mechanism operates across different narratives, the study highlights the need to question not only who is called mad but why that label is applied and what consequences follow from it.

The patterns observed in Wide Sargasso Sea and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde do not remain limited to nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century literary contexts. When examined closely, these texts reveal a structural logic that continues to appear in contemporary social and political discourse. The central concern is not simply whether an individual is unstable, but how the declaration of instability functions once it is made. In both novels, the label of madness shifts attention away from treatment and toward justification. This same pattern can be traced in modern discussions surrounding identity, authority, and social conformity.

In Wide Sargasso Sea, Antoinette's emotional distress is interpreted primarily through the perspective of Rochester, whose authority allows him to define her condition without accountability. The narrative demonstrates how easily the label of madness can be applied when the individual in question lacks social power. Once declared unstable, Antoinette's experiences are no longer examined in terms of cause or context. Instead, her confinement becomes the focus, presented as a necessary response rather than a problem in itself. This shift in attention illustrates how the declaration of madness can function as a tool of narrative control. It determines which questions are asked and which are ignored.

A comparable mechanism operates in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, though it unfolds differently because of Jekyll's position within society. His instability remains concealed for much of the narrative, protected by class and gender privilege. The violence associated with Hyde is initially interpreted as a separate mystery rather than as evidence of Jekyll's own psychological division. Society's reluctance to question Jekyll reflects a broader tendency to grant credibility to those who already hold authority. The label of madness is applied unevenly, depending not only on behavior but on who is being judged. This disparity reveals that madness, within these texts, is less an objective diagnosis than a socially mediated designation.

When these literary patterns are placed alongside contemporary discourse, the parallels become difficult to ignore. Public debates around identity frequently employ language that frames difference as irrational or unstable. Such descriptions often function rhetorically rather than clinically. They redirect attention away from structural concerns and toward individual behavior. By focusing on whether a person or community is "sane," discussions can avoid addressing the conditions that produce distress or conflict. The label of madness thus becomes a way of simplifying complex social issues. It replaces engagement with dismissal.

The contemporary relevance of this pattern can be seen in how marginalized communities are sometimes described in public discourse. Language that portrays certain identities as abnormal or irrational can shape public perception and policy. When individuals are framed as unstable, their experiences may be dismissed rather than examined. This dynamic echoes the narrative logic found in the literary texts. In each case, the declaration of madness shifts the focus from treatment to containment. The question becomes how to manage the individual rather than how to understand them.

The comparative framework of this study therefore emphasizes continuity rather than direct equivalence. The intention is not to claim that literary events and contemporary situations are identical, but to highlight recurring structures in the use of language and authority. Both novels demonstrate how easily the label of madness can be used to legitimize control. Once applied, it narrows the scope of discussion and limits the possibility of alternative interpretations. By tracing this pattern across different contexts, the study suggests that madness often functions as a relational category shaped by power.

Another significant element in this comparison is the role of naming. In Wide Sargasso Sea, Rochester's renaming of Antoinette as "Bertha" symbolizes the imposition of a singular identity that erases complexity. Naming becomes a method of stabilizing what appears unfamiliar or threatening. In contemporary contexts, similar processes can occur when individuals or groups are categorized using reductive language. Such naming practices can influence how behavior is interpreted and how responses are justified. The act of naming thus carries ethical implications. It shapes not only perception but also treatment.

The persistence of these patterns suggests that madness, as represented in literature and society, cannot be understood solely as a medical concept. It is also a narrative and social construct. Its meaning depends on who has the authority to define it and how that definition is used. The comparative analysis presented here underscores the importance of examining the relationship between diagnosis and response. Even when instability is present, the manner in which it is addressed reflects broader social values and power structures.

By situating the literary analysis within a wider contemporary framework, this section reinforces the central argument of the study: that madness often operates as a label through which authority manages difference. The experiences of Antoinette and Jekyll illustrate how this label can justify vastly different responses depending on context. Their narratives invite readers to question the assumptions that accompany declarations of instability. Rather than accepting the label at face value, it becomes necessary to ask who applies it, why it is applied, and what consequences follow.

The dissertation extends this observation beyond the literary text by considering how identity markers function in everyday social structures. In many cultural contexts, particularly within traditional family systems, women's identities continue to shift after marriage through the adoption of new surnames or titles. While such practices are often understood as cultural conventions, they also reflect deeper assumptions about ownership, belonging, and authority. When a woman's name changes, it can signal a transition in how she is recognized within both private and public spaces. The comparison with Antoinette's renaming is not intended to suggest that the situations are identical. Rather, it highlights how acts of renaming can function as initial steps in redefining identity, making it easier for others to exercise control.

Similarly, the shift from “Miss” to “Mrs.” marks a change in social perception that extends beyond marital status. Titles carry expectations about behavior, respectability, and roles within society. Once a woman is addressed differently, she is also expected to conform to a different set of norms. The dissertation examines how such linguistic changes, although subtle, can influence how authority operates within relationships and institutions. The argument here is not that all name changes are inherently oppressive, but that they participate in a broader system where identity can be reshaped through language. This perspective aligns with the earlier analysis of Wide Sargasso Sea, where the imposition of a new name precedes the protagonist’s confinement.

The comparative dimension also considers how identity control appears in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Although Jekyll does not experience renaming in the same way as Antoinette, his transformation into Hyde represents a different kind of identity division. He attempts to manage his conflicting impulses by separating them into distinct identities. However, this division ultimately destabilizes him rather than providing control. The narrative suggests that attempts to regulate identity through strict categorization can produce further fragmentation. While Antoinette is renamed and confined by another person, Jekyll attempts to control himself through self-imposed division. Both cases illustrate how identity becomes a site of struggle when it is reshaped by external expectations or internal pressures.

The later pages of the dissertation therefore emphasize continuity between literary representation and contemporary social practices. The goal is not to equate all forms of identity change with confinement, but to examine how certain patterns repeat across contexts. When identity is redefined by those in positions of authority, it can become easier to dismiss or control the individual. The label of madness, once applied, often justifies further intervention. Whether in a Victorian novel or a modern social setting, the declaration of instability tends to shift attention away from structural issues and toward individual behavior.

By bringing together these observations, the dissertation argues that madness functions as a flexible label that adapts to different contexts. In literature, it appears through confinement, renaming, and narrative control. In contemporary settings, it can appear through language, titles, and institutional responses. The continuity lies not in identical circumstances but in similar structures of interpretation. Those who hold authority often determine how identity is defined and how deviation is interpreted. Once an individual is positioned outside accepted norms, the label of instability can be used to justify exclusion or correction.

This section ultimately reinforces the broader claim of the study: that madness, as represented in both literary and social contexts, operates less as a fixed medical category and more as a relational construct shaped by power. By examining how identity is renamed, divided, or reclassified, the dissertation highlights the importance of questioning who has the authority to define normality. It suggests that the most significant issue is not simply whether instability exists, but how societies respond once it is declared. The final section of this study brings together the literary analysis, contemporary parallels, and the broader questions that guided the research from the beginning. The central concern throughout the dissertation has not been to diagnose characters within Wide Sargasso Sea or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, but to examine how the label of madness is produced and used once it is declared. By tracing how authority operates through naming, confinement, and interpretation, the study has attempted to show that madness often functions less as a stable medical condition and more as a social and relational category shaped by power.

In Wide Sargasso Sea, the absence of any clear medical diagnosis for Antoinette is significant. Although she is repeatedly described as unstable or dangerous, there is no moment in the text where her condition is examined through a formal clinical process. Instead, her supposed madness is defined primarily through Rochester's perspective. His authority as a husband, a man, and a representative of colonial order allows him to decide how she is to be understood and treated. Once he defines her as mad, confinement becomes a justified response rather than an act open to ethical questioning. The narrative thus shifts attention away from the conditions that produce Antoinette's distress and toward the assumption that her behavior confirms her instability.

In contrast, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde presents a different pattern. Jekyll's instability is not immediately exposed or condemned. His social status and professional reputation allow him to conceal his transformation for a significant period. Even when Hyde's actions become increasingly violent, the narrative initially frames them as a mystery rather than a sign of moral or psychological collapse. This difference highlights how social position influences whether instability is hidden, tolerated, or punished. Where Antoinette is confined and silenced, Jekyll is able to delay accountability through secrecy and respectability. The comparison between the two texts demonstrates that madness is not applied consistently; it is shaped by gender, class, and authority.

The study has also explored how similar patterns continue to appear in contemporary contexts. While modern societies often frame themselves as more medically informed and socially progressive, the language used to describe difference still carries traces of earlier forms of control. Certain identities or forms of behavior are dismissed as irrational, unstable, or unnatural, which shifts attention away from the conditions that produce distress. The purpose of drawing these parallels is not to collapse historical and contemporary situations into one another, but to highlight recurring structures. When individuals or communities challenge dominant norms, their experiences can be reinterpreted through language that questions their rationality rather than examining the systems that shape their circumstances.

A significant contribution of this dissertation lies in its focus on acts of renaming and identity redefinition. In Wide Sargasso Sea, Rochester's renaming of Antoinette functions as an early step in the process that leads to her confinement. By replacing her name, he replaces the framework through which she is recognized. The analysis suggests that naming is not a neutral act; it carries assumptions about identity, belonging, and authority. The comparison with contemporary practices of surname changes and title shifts after marriage highlights how identity can still be reshaped through language. While such practices are often understood as cultural traditions, they also demonstrate how social recognition can be restructured through naming. This does not mean that all name changes are inherently oppressive, but it does suggest that they participate in a broader system where identity can be defined externally.

Through these examples, the dissertation argues that madness functions as a mechanism that redirects attention away from power and toward the individual. Once a person is labeled unstable, the focus shifts from examining their environment or treatment to managing their behavior. This shift allows authority figures to maintain control without being questioned. In literary texts, this appears through confinement, silencing, and narrative framing. In contemporary contexts, it can appear through institutional responses, public language, or social expectations. The continuity between these settings lies in the structure of interpretation rather than in identical circumstances.

The research also reflects on its own position within existing scholarship. Much of the critical discussion surrounding Wide Sargasso Sea has focused on whether Antoinette is genuinely mad or whether she symbolizes broader themes of colonial or gendered oppression. While these interpretations remain important, the present study shifts the focus toward how the declaration of madness operates within the narrative. By

asking who has the authority to define instability and how that definition shapes subsequent treatment, the study attempts to move the conversation away from diagnosis and toward power relations. A similar approach is applied to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, where the emphasis falls not only on the duality of the self but on the social conditions that allow certain forms of instability to remain hidden.

One of the key outcomes of this research is the recognition that language plays a central role in shaping perception. Words such as “mad,” “unstable,” or “irrational” carry strong connotations that influence how individuals are treated. Once such labels are applied, they often justify forms of exclusion or correction that might otherwise be questioned. By examining how these labels function in both literary and contemporary contexts, the dissertation highlights the importance of paying attention to how language is used. Understanding madness as a relational construct rather than a purely medical one allows for a more nuanced reading of both texts and social situations.

The study concludes by suggesting that literary analysis can offer valuable insights into contemporary discussions about identity, authority, and control. Texts like Wide Sargasso Sea and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde do not simply reflect their historical contexts; they also provide frameworks for thinking about how societies respond to difference. By examining how madness is constructed and applied, readers can better understand the mechanisms through which individuals are included or excluded. This approach encourages a shift from asking whether someone is mad to asking how and why that label is used.

Ultimately, the dissertation argues that the most important question is not whether madness exists, but how societies respond once it is declared. When the label of instability is applied without scrutiny, it can justify actions that might otherwise be seen as harmful or unjust. By tracing the connections between literary representation and contemporary practice, the study aims to demonstrate that the construction of madness remains a powerful tool for shaping identity and maintaining authority. Recognizing this pattern does not resolve the issue entirely, but it opens space for more critical engagement with how language, power, and identity interact.

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