CHAPTER ONE

Women in Madness: Postcolonial Feminist Perspective

1.1 Introduction

Madness is more than a disease to literature. In fictionalized madness, the medicine is sometimes subverted and other times glorified. Madness draws its distinct line by separating a medical text from a literary representation with its direct or indirect display of certain characteristics. While a few authors prefer making madness visible to the readers, the other texts remain ambiguous about the presence of madness. In postcolonial women writings, madness has many other connotations, which this thesis aims to address. This chapter tries to highlight key ideas of postcolonial feminist theory, which would be useful for understanding madness in postcolonial writings. The next part of this chapter locates madness in texts authored by postcolonial male writers. Then the chapter discusses how madness is portrayed in postcolonial female texts excluding the primary texts. The focus will be then fixed on research on postcolonial women writing and madness in the perspective of anti-psychiatry movement.

"With medicine we come to one of the most tragic features of the colonial situation", asserts Frantz Fanon in his work *A Dying Colonialism* (120). Medicine, as the tragic feature of postcolonial situation, as Fanon views, affected more adversely the women of those countries. Women in these countries, ostracized as psychologically deficient, are driven towards death. The research highlights the relation between madness and revolution presented in the postcolonial women’s fiction.
“Everybody knows that it’s easy to silence people by saying they’re mad” (Pridmore 14). Taking Pridmore’s view into consideration, it can be argued that, madness is used as a label to suppress people who are against social order. The protagonists of primary texts chosen for this research speak about this victimization as how they are labeled with madness. Madness is presented in many genres other than fiction, but fiction presents a detailed account on the protagonist’s mindscape, recording the initial thoughts, progressive illusions and choices. In poetry, these details are to fit in a limited space. For that reason, this thesis aims at providing a detailed analysis of the plot and the role of madness in novels and short stories.

1.2 Postcolonialism and Feminist Writing

Postcolonial feminist Anne McClintock says:

I am not convinced that one of the most important emerging areas of intellectual and political enquiry is best served by inscribing history as a single issue. Just as the singular category ‘Woman’ has been discredited as a bogus universal for feminism, incapable of distinguishing between the varied histories and imbalances in power among women, so the singular category ‘post-colonial’ may license too readily a panoptic tendency to view the globe within generic abstractions voided of political nuance. (2)

McClintock is of the view that both postcolonial and feminism are terms misused, overused and abused in the contemporary political, social, cultural, literary, and religious situations. At this phase, the term postcolonial feminism becomes more ambiguous.

Postcolonial women critical theorists have identified cohesive change within the discursive structure. Written about madness with diversity of geography and culture, the texts speak of their countries and women’s personal turmoil. The primary texts for the research are
taken based on their comparative method of treating madness in the postcolonial sense. Bessie Head’s novel *A Question of Power* (1973) shows how hallucinations of the protagonist parallel with her consciousness on her nationality. Tsitsi Dangarembga’s novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and its sequel *The Book of Not* (2006) locate madness and younger generation women of Africa. Jean Rhys’s novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) can be recognized not merely as a prequel to Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre*, but for its own potentiality of talking about colonization, dislocation, witchcraft and the label of madness. Myriam Warner-Vieyra’s novel *Juletane* (1987), Makuchi’s short story collection “Your Madness, Not Mine” (1999) and Calixthe Beyala’s novel *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* (1996) can be compared for their evocative language, metaphors and the way chosen to resist oppression. These primary texts have a similar way of defining madness as a social construct, as a label and as a weapon used against women who are resilient. These texts have a common approach in showing how the protagonists use madness as their resistance method. These texts written in different timeframes represent different geographies, focus on different social and economic problems, but have a common approach of defining madness as a challenge to the oppression they experience based on their gender and racial identity.

Arundhati Roy in her talk “Come September”, delivered at Lensic Performing Arts Center, says: “The theme of much of what I write, fiction as well as nonfiction, is the relationship between power and powerlessness and the endless, circular conflict they’re engaged in” Similar to her observation, postcolonial women’s texts strive to resolve the dichotomies of power and powerlessness that define their particular stance. Taking madness as the backdrop, the chosen writers shift the intensity of powerlessness towards the power that the protagonists can hold. Madness is used in fiction as a method of privileging their selves.
The method of resistance articulated in the postcolonial women’s writing can be different. In her essay “Difference: ‘A Special Third World Women Issue’”, Trinh T. Minh-ha says, “Silence as a refusal to partake in the story does sometimes provide us with a means to gain a hearing. It is voice, a mode of uttering and a response in its own right” (8). The chosen writers use the silence of madness in their fiction to create a positive space for suffering. Suffering is no longer a helpless state of the women. In the process of asserting this idea of explicating madness as a method of resistance, texts where madness is not powerfully portrayed, in the texts where madness is a tragedy or subversion, in the fictional representation where madness is not celebrated, madness in texts where it is secondary to the plot, are not taken for this research.

1.3 Madness and Postcolonial Men’s Narratives

Looking at madness from a gender perspective raises the question of excluding men’s narratives on madness, which constitutes considerable contribution to the larger discourse on madness. However, taking madness in women’s writing of postcolonial backdrop enables us to view madness from a different perspective, which this thesis aims at. Madness in male narratives has connotations that are more political. Derek Walcott’s play Dream on Monkey Mountain (1970) can be taken as one of the examples in telling the political lives of the individuals in relation to dreams. This play collages dreams and madness of the people inhabiting the Caribbean island. Makak the protagonist’s dreams, which he tells to the listeners at the prison, can be taken as symbolic of the voice, which was oppressed. His dreams in dreams tell the rupture of being black, his thrust over the black law, his hatred towards everything, which is white. This play tells how people plead for freedom and how they do not accept the cultural shock when colonized. Representing dehumanized situations of colonial authority through Makak’s character, Walcott challenges the disintegrated cultural consciousness of the natives.
Walcott represents his country of birth, St. Lucia through the protagonist’s chaotic space. Challenging time and space, this play is one representative of the postcolonial madness accentuated by the male postcolonialist.

Patrick White’s novel *The Aunt's Story* (1948) also has the similar theme of telling madness and political situation through the protagonist Theodora Goodman, a lonely aunt, who suffers isolation and betrayal, and finds solace in new freedom she gains in America. This dislocation reflects the idea that her freedom in Australia was subversive and a new life in America offers new experiences to her, which she would have wished for in her unconscious. This novel opens with the death of Theodora’s mother suggesting the isolated state of the protagonist. She is often looked down by her mother and her charming sister Fanny. From her childhood, she experiences the contrary tomboyishness, which she embraces, and she loves to be feminine and impressive to men. She faces the dreams and realities all appearing in her mind invading her psyche.

Saadat Hasan Manto portrays the political aspects of madness through his short story about partition. His short story “Toba Tek Singh” brings out multiple facets of partition and madness through the setting of an insane asylum where the inmates were forced to be separated based on their religion. Bishan Singh, one of the inmates in Lahore insane asylum, gets shattered when he learns that he has to go to India while his village Toba Tek Singh is in Pakistan. His tragic death shows the colonial onslaught where the divide and rule policy was introduced in India, and how the two countries were formulated. Partition narratives often talk of the trauma, nostalgia, memory and cultural shock. Saadat Hasan Manto politicizes the theme of partition and reflects through the character of a victim who was to change his insane asylum because of
partition. Manto’s way of paralleling political history and individual’s personal illness contributes to the capturing of the historical moment.

J.M. Coetzee’s treatment of madness too is connected to the political situation with an emphasis on racial differences. Coetzee also tries experimental fiction. His novel *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) features Fyodor Dostoyevsky as the protagonist. Fictionalizing the death of his son and the life of a writer, Coetzee draws on self-fictionalization and literary fictionalization. Coetzee’s earlier novel *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) shows vengeful madness of a white spinster called Magda. In both the novels, Coetzee draws colonization, dreams, madness and revenge as interlinked and complimentary in defining the political context of change.

Though postcolonial men’s narratives can be primarily seen as having political overtones, a few writers extended their views on madness in relation to the rewriting of myths. Earl Lovelace’s novel *Salt* (1996) is one such example for this kind of portrayal of the myth of Guinea John with the protagonist Bango, a modern leader. Alford George, another important character in this novel, is invaded by ex-centric dreams. In his dreams, he devours the Eurocentric culture. In blending history and myth focusing on Trinidad, this novel takes the deepened layers of the psyche situated in the cultural pluralism of Caribbean landscape.

In postcolonial men’s narratives, madness is a dream, a representative of the community and never an isolation or alien. Patrick Chamoiseau's novel *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* (1986) can be taken as an example where Chamoiseau fictionalizes stories of real life accounts of the people from Martinique, whose stories are haunted with past, who were not able to come out of the bitter memories of slavery, who hear the voices of ghosts every night and whose words are
to be recorded in Creole. The characters in this novel represent hallucinating modern Martinique. Henry Lawson’s short story “Water Them Geraniums” also have similar outlook in telling a compelling story about the Australian aborigines. This short story tells the dwindling relation between Joe and Mary where Joe narrates the course of happenings. Chaos, bleakness of the bush in Australia in representing the lives of aborigines and insignificance of life all get accommodated in madness. Lawson’s another short story “The Bush Undertaker” presents an eccentric individual, an old man living in bush. Isolation maddens him and his little world. The old man’s extreme loneliness and separation from civilization of the outside society make him eccentric and ambiguous. Similar to this eccentricity, Mohun Biswas’s dissolutions are portrayed in terms of his continued feeling of alienation from the society in V.S. Naipaul’s novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*. In this novel, Naipaul centers on Mr. Biswas’s personal disarranged mind related to his feeling of belonging nowhere.

While highlighting the aspect of madness and postcolonialism, several writers have taken history as another method for representation. Rohinton Mistry’s novel *A Fine Balance* (1995) is such a one where Maneck’s suicide marks the psychological rupture and chaotic political condition in the postcolonial country. These texts also talk of the forced inferiority on the individuals. In postcolonial men’s narratives, madness is related to the politics of the country— a suffering, while in women’s narrative it is mostly related to patriarchy.

1.4 Madness and Postcolonial Women Writing

Other than the primary texts chosen for this research, madness is presented in several postcolonial female narratives, where different connotations were given. Shashi Deshpande presents madness as a suffering in her novel *That Long Silence*. “No women can be angry. Have
you ever heard of an angry young woman? A woman can never be angry, she can only be neurotic, hysterical, frustrated” (Deshpande 147). The protagonist of the novel, Jaya’s persistent question “Have you ever heard of an angry young woman?” has a powerful frustrated state to convey. Jaya deeply regrets the loss of her identity once she is married. In mirroring Jaya’s hallucinations and incomplete thoughts, Deshpande mirrors her experiences with Kusum, the other character in the novel.

Kusum had a miserable childhood. She has no one to care for her. She did not receive love from anyone. She was looked upon as a burden. At the trauma, she loses reason. Things get intolerable when she is labeled as madwoman. She repeatedly tries to convince her family and society that she has the ability to think well. But, no one listens to her agonies. She ends her life in solitude. Kusum is left without any option except becoming insane. “In her madness, she had been able to get away from the burden of pleasing others” (Deshpande 126). She cannot accept the submissive role society offers her. She cannot stand on her own, as she has no financial assistance or moral support. Kusum knows her life is tragic. She wants to end her life. She kills herself. She has the thinking ability to kill herself, but she has no mental ability to live. This is the ironic situation Deshpande creates.

Jaya is stuck between two forces: the agony to create her own self and the fear of societal ostracization. She could not tolerate the thought of being Kusum, her rival, the thought of being a madwoman. She could not even continue pleasing others.

I came floundering out of the depths, thinking- am I going crazy like Kusum? Kusum- as if the thought of her had been an Open Sesame, I found myself engulfed by the ghost of Kusum, welcoming me to the category of unwanted wives, deserted wives, claiming me
joyfully at last as a companion. I could not escape her any more: there was nowhere I could go, nowhere else she could go either. Here we were together at last- Jaya and Kusum. (Deshpande 123)

Jaya is scared of madness, scared of being called a madwoman. In this novel, madness is personal, not related to the postcolonial country.

Anita Desai’s novel *Fasting, Feasting* (2006) too reflects on madness in a more personal sense. This novel tells how Melanie, an American girl, refuses to eat and gets admitted in a psychiatric hospital. Uma, the Indian woman, on the other hand, stays in the isolation of a family and has to face being labeled hysterical. “She should be put away, locked up, Aruna sobbed” (Desai *Fasting, Feasting* 44). Her sister Aruna is enraged when Uma spoils the wedding party. This novel tells the psychiatric phases of two women where culture confiscates their bodies and minds. Melanie is a teenager where she is vulnerable to the present anorexic condition. Melanie has the possibility of imitating her peers, and starts refusing to eat for losing weight. Melanie is admitted to the hospital to be cured of her illness, to make her accept food. Uma, a middle-aged woman, lives the life of a spinster and even got married. Her illness is used more as a label to keep her at serving mode to her family. Melanie and Uma show their various phases of accepting their respective illnesses.

In portraying the intensity of the personalized illness, the postcolonial women’s fiction also talks of depression.

If one is deeply depressed, is this mood an expression of the “true” self or is the self distorted beyond recognition? Does the manic mood, which frequently results in brilliant
insights, reveal an aspect of the authentic self that might otherwise remain muted? Or does it alter the “real me” beyond recognition? (Beilke 29)

Depression is one of the states of mind reflected in postcolonial women’s narratives often with the trauma of loss and marital disturbances. Anita Nair’s novel Ladies Coupe (2008) presents Mrs. Chettiari as a victim of depression. After giving birth to her children, she suffers from puerperal insanity. Puerperal insanity is obvious to affect her, as sufficient food is not given to new mothers, adequate knowledge is not provided to new mothers about their own self and their baby and superstitious beliefs circumscribe their natural actions. From the Victorian age, women scholars have offered a critical commentary about this disease, where the new mother gets depressed, disillusioned and constantly tortured by the thought of killing herself or her baby. In the Victorian age, Isabella (wife of William Makepeace Thackeray), Sara Coleridge (daughter of Samuel Taylor Coleridge), and Queen Victoria have experienced puerperal insanity. The new mother is in the state of persistent confusion and agony which are unaddressed by the family, leaving her disadvantageous. In Victorian age, several writers have dealt with this theme. Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s novel Lady Audley’s Secret also has this theme, where Braddon talks of revenge and manipulation of events for self-interest as a part of insanity.

Anita Nair introduces Mrs. Chettiari as a passive woman, who has no thought for herself except being dominated by her husband. In her village, she is not given any solace for her psychological state. When her behaviour changes, the village terms her into a madwoman and locks her in the attic. Mr. Chettiari takes this incident as an opportunity to have illegitimate relations with other women. The ironic situation privileges him as a compensation for his wife’s madness. She becomes intensively rebellious. Madness becomes a weapon for expressing her discontent. She becomes exceedingly violent in her solitary confinement. For several decades,
she experiences this restriction. All Mr. Chettiar’s family members forget her presence. When her daughters-in-law try to meet her, she throws away their children. By this, her daughters-in-law become scared of her. Her obsession for children replicates how she still lives in that moment; she was forced to lose her sense of reason. Marikolanthu, her servant, fails to find any sort of unreason in her acts. In the course of the plot, her madness is not stressed by Nair. Nevertheless, she challenges the notion of madness in relation to women. In Mrs. Chettiar’s life, madness was imposed on her. If her confusions and anxieties when she was a new mother were treated properly, she would have gained back her life. The people around her made her temporary state as a permanent moment.

Anita Nair’s portraiture of madness is related to confinement in the attic. Similar to Nair’s portraiture, Anuradha Roy brings out confinement and madness through her character Kananbala in her novel An Atlas of Impossible Longing (2008). Filled with gothic imagery of old castles, vampires, wanderers, and monsters, this novel explicates madness also as a gothic element. Kananbala is locked in a tiny room in Songarh by her husband, cut off from the world. This incident is a representation of women being brutally locked in the attic. Arundhati Roy too talks of confinement through Ammu in the novel The God of Small Things.

Ammu in Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things (1994), does not stand for societal norms. She leaves her violent husband. She even resists her mother’s injustice in overprotecting her brother. She develops clandestine relation with an untouchable called Velutha. All her acts make her mother lock her in their bedroom. She often gets the thoughts of madness. She has many dissolutions, nightmares and melancholia. Her resistance to social structures leads to her forced confinement.
Anita Desai’s another novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1984) is also an attempt to portray madness and confinement in relation to woman and her family’s view of her. The protagonist Sita is unwilling to deliver her child and insists on keeping her child in her womb forever. Her husband and her grown up children disrespect her for this insistence. They also try to make her understand how impossible it is. She insists on staying in an island, which makes this miracle possible. Her husband Raman often accuses her for her madness and she contests him. She says, “What I’m doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be safe again” (Desai *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* 23). In the island, she becomes melancholic, thinking that the island lost its miracle. She moves from her paranoiac state to paralysis. People around her fail to understand her psychic disorder. Similar theme was articulated in Kamala Markandaya’s novel *A Silence of Desire* (1960). Sarojini, the protagonist, hopes on Swamiji’s miracles; her fear of surgery frames her obsessive. Markandaya and Desai particularly stressed on women’s physical selves and their psychological turmoil.

While many of the works focus on confinement and isolation, Jhumpa Lahiri presents a different story where people try to break the confinement of a young woman. In Jhumpa Lahiri’s short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), the question of interpreting maladies becomes a two-way process. While many of the stories have the American way of life as the setting, the story “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” centers on an unprivileged woman left uncared for many years. Bibi is often treated as a mystery, a patient of an undiagnosed illness, a burden to the family and a woman who does not know household actions. Bibi is neither womanly nor married. It is easy for the people around her to label her as insane. “She had not been taught to wear a sari without pinning it in four different places, nor could she embroider slipcovers or crochet shawls with any exceptional talent” (Lahiri 49). Bibi desires to get married and to lead a
family life like any other woman, but her dream is away from reality as she is treated inferior to other women of her age.

Bibi is an object for people around her to gossip, pity and show their resentment.

Who would marry her? The girl knows nothing about anything, speaks backward, is practically thirty, can't light a coal stove, can't boil rice, can't tell the difference between fennel and a cumin seed. Imagine her attempting to feed a man! (Lahiri 49)

Bibi is fragmented because of the numerous doctors she was made to visit, number of changes she is expected to make and contradictory suggestions from all her acquaintances.

After x-rays, probes, auscultations, and injections, some merely advised Bibi to gain weight, others to lose it. If one forbade her to sleep beyond dawn, another insisted she remain in bed till noon. This one told her to perform headstands, that one to chant Vedic verses at specified intervals throughout the day. (Lahiri 48)

Bibi’s condition reflects many unprivileged women who do not get proper care from their family and who get suffocated by too many contradictory advices. Bibi tries to imitate other women, willing to get married, imagining her conjugal life. She aspires for simple life lived by any other woman, but she is deprived of that life once labeled with madness. Bibi’s father makes a case study of his daughter’s illness, but after his death those papers remain useless. Her remaining life is also treated as futile by her family members. Convinced that Bibi will infect her baby, Haldar’s wife punishes her severely. These harsh treatments are the reasons for Bibi’s repeated breakdowns, but Haldar and his wife never acknowledge. After few years, Bibi proves as an eligible mother, a shop owner to feed herself and her son. Bibi’s life breaks the myth of illness, and asserts the constructivity of illness.
Excentuating the constructed illness is also present in Gisele Pineau’s novel *Macadam Dreams*. Set in Guadeloupe, this novel gives a moving picture of Eliette’s traumatic ruptures in life. A cyclone destroys her town, and even herself. Both she and her town could not come out of the harsh miseries of the cyclone for sixty years.

Cyclone curled up inside of her like a snake that strangled all the babies that she could have carried, all the infants she would have liked to let suck on her breast. A cyclone that had crushed the love in her. A long beast like an insidious tapeworm that had devoured her insides and brain. (Pineau 201)

The rape of the landscape by Hurricane Hugo is equated to the rape of the protagonist, which resulted in loss. Moving towards the memories, past and present, the protagonist’s decision to act on the past violence makes this novel catering to a psychiatric study. The protagonist is shattered by the misery of the black people. “She wept over the accursement of the black people, the calamity of misery, and the dead dreams on this earth” (Pineau 34). Gisele Pineau who is a psychiatric nurse weaves this story blending memory and reality leaving many fragments, focusing on how illness can be constructed by circumstances.

The representation of madness in Caribbean women writing, similar to Gisele Pineau’s articulation, is a trope accentuating domestic suffering. Christina Garcia’s novel *Dreaming in Cuban* explores women in relation to mental illness as a vital force in transcending their household roles. The novel presents the intricate madness of Celia Del Pino, who is forced to live a difficult life with insensitive people around her. The abandonment by her own family followed by chronic depression makes her a victim of tragic death. Her daughter Felicia Del Pino, shares similar breakdown and inability to cope with life.
The Jamaican writer Erna Brodber’s novel *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* also tackles the domestic suffering of the protagonist. The novel frames the narrative in a postcolonial and postmodern approach in telling the psychology of postcolonial Jamaica. The protagonist Nellie’s belief of being pregnant with fish can be taken as the perplexing structure of language consciousness in a postcolonial Jamaican country. “Strangely enough, I felt neither sadness nor frustration no even pain that the fish couldn't come for after all I could still see it” (Brodber 147). Women in postcolonial countries dealt with madness in such a way of expounding and asserting their rage. Prominent African women writers like Ama Ata Aidoo and Buchi Emecheta, also articulated women in psychiatric flux.

African female writers have done much to cast away their presumed silence in a world of print still dominated by colonial and masculine forms of control. They have also pointed out that masculinity rests on specific forms of silence aimed at maintaining social control.

(Rodrigues, Isabel Feo P. B. and Kathleen Sheldon 79)

Isabel Feo P. B, Rodrigues and Kathleen Sheldon are of the strong point that Lusophone African women’s fiction should be reread with the context of silenced political stature of women in everyday life as they decode mental illness as evident from *A Louca de Serrano* (The Mad Woman of Serrano) by the Cape Verdean author Dina Salustio (1998) and *Niketche: Uma histcrria de poligamia* (Niketche: A Story of Polygamy) by the Mozambican novelist Paulina Chiziane (2002). Both the stories talk of the liberation through silenced madness, marking a new space in dealing with madness and colonization.

The diasporic women writers too explicated how their female protagonists are subjected to depression and alienation. Diasporic women writer Bharati Mukherjee in her novel *Wife,*
Meena Alexander in her novel *Manhattan Music* and other prominent diasporic women writers in their works talked about the protagonist’s psychological suffering in experiencing racial discrimination in a foreign country. The protagonists in their novels are nostalgic about their past in India and nervous to accept their present state of an emigrant in a different country. These protagonists were taken to other countries as marriage properties in most of the situations. Having the loss of their native traditions in a different country, and the fear of losing their own selves being subjected to reduction into mere beings in less opportunistic countries resulted in their nervous conditions. Diasporic living and its related trauma is emphasized in their fiction. Individual attention to the theme of madness does not have a considerable place. On the contrary, in the works of African-American women writers, the alienation is intensively portrayed, sometimes, with the pathological outcome.

Toni Morrison, the prominent African American writer, in her novel *The Bluest Eye*, presents Pecola, a twelve-year-old girl, who wishes to possess blue eyes. Being brutally raped by her father, receiving harsh discrimination in the society, Pecola’s ability to reason is vanished. Similarly, being an emigrant writer and sexually abused in the early childhood, Shani Mootoo connects her experiences with that of the protagonist of her novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Mala Ramchandin, the protagonist of this novel, violently raped by her father and suspected for her father’s murder is regarded as suffering from madness.

Alice Walker declares war against a social practice aimed at suppressing women’s desires in her novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. Hysteria of Tashi, the protagonist in this novel can be viewed as her anger for being mutilated, which had adverse effects on her. Walker’s portraiture is a moving image of women of African reign. The women are subjected to repression of their desires in the name of religion, myth and mystical beliefs. This novel is a powerful picture of
telling the darker lives of the African women, subjected to brutal genital mutilation when they were little girls. This custom was introduced to repress their sexual experiences and their ability to desire for \(^1\). Walker has portrayed this harsh reality after an extensive research and she presented Tashi as the victim. Tashi understands what has happened to her and decides to kill the woman who performed genital mutilation. Taking this subject as the main backdrop, this novel represents a community where many women like Tashi were constantly suffering. Portraying madness with a reason similar to what Walker did highlights how madness is used as a method against oppression.

Madness is creativity and art of life in Susmitha Bhagchi’s novel *Children of a Better God* (2010). This novel makes sense of madness through picture making. As an arts teacher in a school for mentally challenged children, the protagonist learns the art of life. Her prejudices about mentally retarded children are evanesced; her simplistic view over life is transformed. In the simple narrative, the writer unfolds the presumptions on madness and criticizes pictorial representation of madness in popular culture. The protagonist lamenting over her sanity is an out breaking theme of this novel.

Madness is more than a theme in some of the women’s fiction from the postcolonial literature. While political aspects of madness are presented by postcolonial male writers, the political is personalized in postcolonial women’s fiction. Postcolonial women writers have particularly talked about confinement and pathological illnesses in relation to madness. They differ in choosing madness contributing to the plot of their texts.
1.5 Madness and Postcolonial Anti-psychiatry

Anti-psychiatry, an important movement, emerged in 1960s stresses the idea that psychiatry is harmful and inhuman. Anti-psychiatry movement pioneered by prominent theoreticians like Michel Foucault, R. D. Laing and Thomas Szasz points to the non-existence of madness. They try to find meaning in madness. This term is first used by David Cooper in his work *Psychiatry and Anti-psychiatry*. The movement gained much recognition with its emphasis on abolishing harmful practices of treating mental illness. In the postcolonial context, anti-psychiatry movement can be ascribed to the various meanings of madness. In the postcolonial context, the inferiority complex, the imitation of colonizers and eating disorders can be defined in terms of serious conflicts due to the postcolonial oppression. “Psychiatric diagnosis is often little more than a simplification of a complex reality and by formulating an individual's experiences in terms of pathology it can be profoundly disempowering and stigmatizing” (Bracken 17). This stigmatizing is stressed by the anti-psychiatrists where they insisted on eradicating harsh treatments given to the patients suffering from mental illness.

In the postcolonial situation, anti-psychiatry movement can be attributed to the illnesses deriving from racial inferiority what Fanon explains in his work *Black Skin, White Masks*. He talks of one of his patients who dreamt of being white. In this context, Fanon gives an explanation about the patient’s obsession. In the chapter “The So-Called Dependency Complex”, Fanon clarifies:

If he is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one
race; to the identical degree to which that society creates difficulties for him, he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation. (Fanon Black Skin, White Masks 74)

The writers chosen for this research show how their protagonists live in a society, which makes it possible for the inferiority complex. Fanon’s example can be ascribed to the differences in race and culture that rupture individuals from colonized countries.

In Martinique there are two hundred whites who consider themselves superior to 300,000 people of color. In South Africa there are two million whites against almost thirteen million native people, and it has never occurred to a single black to consider himself superior to a member of the white minority. (Fanon Black Skin, White Masks 68)

It was the long continued racial supremacy, which was able to perpetuate as the black individual was unable to come out of the inferiority shackles and thoughts superior of himself. Here is the question of the inferiority, which infects even the hundred years after colonization. The internal colonization providing the independence to the inferior individuals leaves them perplexed. “Independence is killing us as surely as colonialism did. But then, she added, sighing, that is because it isn’t really independence” (Walker 52). That independence of the colonized is dangerous, especially, for women, is the long continued view. Challenging the aspects of modernity, in giving the independence, in general, for women is questioned by the traditionalists. Nevertheless, reconstructing the independence in the light of non-conformity is the prerequisite for the postcolonial feminists.

The colonized is put in the miserable condition where he or she suspects their own humanity. As Fanon says, he is starved for anything to be human.
Technologists and sociologists shed their light on colonialist maneuvers, and studies on the various “complexes” pour forth: the frustration complex, the belligerency complex, and the colonizability complex. The native is promoted; they try to disarm him with their psychology, and of course they throw in a few shillings too. (Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 140)

Making the colonized skeptical about his own humanity, existence, and his own self is the essence of colonization. The sociological impact of colonization is intensified in women’s fiction. However, the theoretical works on madness in postcolonial countries contribute to the archive of the medicine and people in the lives of the people. Waltraud Ernst, one such scholar, gives such an account. As a parallel to Foucault’s study of madness in his prominent work *Madness and Civilization: A History Of Insanity In the Age of Reason* and Roy Porter’s history of madness presented in his work *Madness: A Brief History* and other writings, Waltraud Ernst’s *Mad Tales from the Raj: Colonial Psychiatry in South Asia, 1800 - 58* looks at madness in an entirely different perspective in relation to the colonial period in India. As a new and challenging work, this book tries to peruse a few unaddressed aspects of colonization and madness. Her meticulous understanding of the madness in British India brings colonial understanding of madness, East-West standards on madness, indigenous medicine, healing in Eastern and Western practices and historical interpretation to the colonial psychiatry.

The book has prominent chapters for telling madness in the colonial times. The first chapter “Introduction: Colonizing the mind” appears as traditional argument in presenting the ways of colonization. Further, the political nature of the insane was explained. Mostly lower class soldiers were confined in asylums. The British wanted to impose Westernized, standard treatment for the “unhappy persons” of India. This phrase “unhappy persons” was critically
analyzed in this chapter. Poverty and low standard in treatments caused massive deaths in the lunatic asylum in Bengal. People who were thought as causing nuisance to society were pushed to these asylums to make them invisible and to maintain the societal order. Another chapter in this book titled “The Medical Profession” introduces several myths attached to the medical professionals of the mentally ill. Similar to the perplexity and confusions attributed to the insane, the doctors for the insane were also treated as of unsound mind and low social position. The medical profession was obtained from them even without a qualifying degree. They started owning insane asylums as they resulted profitable. This was controlled in the second half of the eighteenth century. Madness was medicalized during this time. Waltraud Ernst makes a considerable effort in archiving the conditions of the natives during the colonial period, contributing to the larger view of insanity and asylums associated with the British policies and authoritarian attitude.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s collaborative work *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* focuses on women writing of Victorian age. It can be seen as an archival of writing madness and female authorship. The chapter “Infection in the sentence: the woman writer and the anxiety of authorship” presents crucial arguments about anxiety of forgetting, disguised identities, images of prison and illnesses like Anorexia and Agoraphobia. In highlighting Jane Eyre’s anger, Bronte’s fear of sin, in talking about George Eliot’s rebellious women characters, identifying forgetting in Elizabeth Barret Browning’s poem, decoding the post-partum illness of the protagonist in the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” and citing Virginia Wolf’s idea of killing the angel in the house, this work offers a new critical study in the field of psychiatry of women. A considerable attention to view madness from the postcolonial perspective has no place in this book. This book also views
madness more as a psychological illness, offering no scope to view it in the light of anti-psychiatry.

Similar to this book, Elaine Showalter, who has extensively written about female maladies, in one of her works *Hystories*, views hysteria as a physical reaction or an expression to psychological repression. Hysteria was more prevalent in the nineteenth century repressed women was the popular view of the scholars. Showalter proposes that, in contrast, with the invention of new terminology, the medical professionals have trivialized the patient’s sufferings. Showalter also recalls how the word hysteria originated from Greek to denote Uterus, and how hysteria was feminized. Hysteria and women were viewed as two sides of the same coin, and Showalter tries to explain this dichotomy. She expounds Nancy Chodorow’s strenuous effort in interviewing 44 woman psychoanalysts and finding that gender concern is absent in their discourse. In Showalter’s view, French feminism contributed to revolutionizing hysteria with the works like *The Laugh of the Medusa* by Helene Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman* by Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement and works of Julia Kristeva. These feminists argued that hysteria takes its origin in women in the pre-oedipal stage. These women tried to feminize psychoanalysis. In 1980s, women were unaware that vomiting is also a form of repressing physical needs. However, with the psychoanalytic themes in novels, emphasis on Princess Diana’s courage in overcoming her eating disorder, and existing medical knowledge contributed to the women’s awareness of how they are psychologically conditioned.

Female hysteria was viewed as women’s disease of any class whereas male hysteria was viewed as working class men’s disease. Charcot, the prominent psychiatrist, started a small unit for treating men in Salpêtrière, and most of them were working class men, destitutes, vagabonds, and beggars. It was also viewed that train accidents and other injuries caused male hysteria. In
1914, Myers found the signs of hysteria among the English soldiers in France, but he was unwilling to admit that English soldiers could be hysterical. He invented a new term “Shell shock” for their symptoms and the others believed it. Shell shock faded away, when the war ended. Making a clear observation about how female reactions to oppression are termed and how Charcot marketed his female patients’ reactions explaining how theory of seduction was used against women said to suffer from mental illness, Showalter stresses on how hysteria is forced on women, oversimplifying their various reactions to life. Showalter takes a stance of defining gender-constructed hysteria which is similar to the anti-psychiatry perspective where the psychiatric insistence on mental illness and its various forms are trivialized.

Showalter observes that in eighteenth century, working class women migrated to cities. The urban culture, low wages, and family betrayal led to more women in Salpêtrière. She also talks about how in the modern sense, feminists were viewed as hysterics. That women cultivates their minds and neglects their biological limitations was the popular argument. Women who gave public speeches about the rights of the women were regarded hysterics. It was strongly argued that intellectual women were suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome. In talking about many labels associated with women’s progress, Showalter takes an anti-psychiatric perspective, although she criticizes the anti-psychiatry movement.

“Insanity was that remote, self-sufficient region to which science had no access” (Allan Ingram and Michelle Faubert 72). The postcolonial women writers also assert that science could not access something like madness. Its approaches are vague, harmful in reality, ambiguous, and manipulative. The theory of anti-psychiatry too supports the argument that madness is a social construct. My thesis takes this viewpoint using some of the women’s texts to demonstrate.
Though much work was done on the idea of women and madness, the sole emphasis on postcolonial women writing and madness is absent. This lead to my choice of this topic.

Seingier Stephanie’s thesis “Coping with Alienation and Attaining Psychic Wholeness in Three Novels of Bessie Head: When Rain Clouds Gather, Maru and A Question of Power” from University of Canada in 1997, focused on Bessie Head’s novels. Her emphasis on Head’s novel A Question of Power makes my thesis distinct from this work. The researcher primarily focused on Head’s novels bringing out the references to the Bible philosophy in her works followed by researcher’s own interpretations. Nalini Caroline Paul’s Ph.D thesis “Identities Displaced and Misplaced: Aspects of Postcolonial Subjectivity in the Novels of Jean Rhys” from University of Glasgow, 2008, focuses on Rhys in the postcolonial context. These researches were done on individual authors whereas my research would take a wider approach in the selected writers’ metaphorized madness for describing postcolonial patriarchal oppression. Jayashri Kolathil’s doctoral thesis and the subsequent writings focus on the wider intensity in representing madness in films and popular culture, which do not primarily talk about fictionalized madness. Letizia Gramaglia’s “Representations of Madness in Indo-Caribbean Literature” from Warwick University, 2008, is one of the significant Ph.D theses to delve the perspective of madness in postcolonial epoch, restricted to a particular geographical area. Taking madness in postcolonial female narratives as a metaphor of resistance is the new aspect that my research aims to contribute.

Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature by Flora Veit-Wild is a prominent study to delve into the perspective of madness in African women writing. As an African woman writer, Bessie Head received wide recognition for her portrayal of social reality, which lead to many M.A and Ph.D theses about her writings. “Character and Identity in Selected
Works by Bessie Head” (MA thesis from University of Zululand in 1998) by Nokuthula Monica Thusi takes Bessie Head’s novels to support her idea of writer’s self-realization through her characters. Many other M.A theses like “Fictions of Power; The Novels of Bessie Head” by Mei Choo Aileen Bong-Toh from McGill University in 1990 and “Identity, Discrimination and Violence in Bessie Head’s Trilogy” by Corwin Luthuli Mhlahlo from University of South Africa in 2002, provide substantial findings about Bessie Head’s works. Susan D. Atkinson’s Ph.D thesis, “A Living Life, A Living Death: A Study of Bessie Head's Writings as a Survival Strategy” from The Open University in 1998 highlights Bessie Head’s writing as her survival strategy. “Postcolonial Cultural Identity and the Caribbean White Creole in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea and Phyllis Shand Allfrey's The Orchid House” (M.A thesis by Laura Nurminen from University of Turku in 2012) makes a comparative analysis of these two novels in the subject of postcolonial cultural identity. Emma Short’s Ph.D thesis, “No Place Like Home: The Hotel in Modernist Women's Writing” from Newcastle University in 2011 situates Jean Rhys’s works along with the works of Katherine Mansfield and Elizabeth Bowen, and highlights how hotel is represented in their works.

There were researches on Tsitsi Dangarembga’s novels Nervous Conditions and The Book of Not in recent times. “Breaking the Silence: The Influence of Class, Culture and Colonisation on African Women’s Fight for Emancipation and Equality in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions and Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus” is one such MA thesis by Eva Corneliussen from University of Tromso in 2012 that partially deals with Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions. Similarly, Randi Jean Rodgers’s MA thesis “Representations of Women, Identity and Education in the Novels of Tsitsi Dangarembga and Kopano Matlwa” from Stellenbosch University in 2013 deals with Dangarembga’s novels Nervous Conditions and The
*Book of Not.* Considerable themes in the writings of Bessie Head, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Jean Rhys were carried out, but my research brings these writers individual works along with Calixthe Beyala, Myriam Warner-Vieyra and Makuchi’s works with their English translations to emphasize on language and its distorted appeal to metaphorize the psychological instability of the characters.

1.6 Conclusion

Fictionalizing madness and highlighting gender trouble is a double process, where the chosen writers present myriad contexts of poverty, polygamy, racial differences and isolation. In the postcolonial feminist phase, writing about madness is an innovative task. Fanon says,

> Every colonized people- in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality-find themselves face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. (Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks* 9)

To come out of the jungle state which colonizer assigns to the colonized, many try to struggle to attain the desired new status imposed by the colonizer. In this process, women lose track of what has to be accepted by the colonized. The desire to be the conformist threatens the colonized women and they find madness as an escape or a tool to challenge the conformists. “If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:—primarily, economic;—subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization—of this inferiority” (Fanon
In writing about how the colonized are inferior, postcolonial women writers hold this view and the same argument is narrativized in the fiction.

As Fanon says, “Psychologically, the colonized has difficulty, even here in the presence of illness, in rejecting the habits of his group and the reactions of his culture” (Fanon A Dying Colonialism 130). Though the women in postcolonial countries reject a few aspects of their native country, they are unable to absorb Western culture. This cultural shock, disguising the rooted inferiority with vengeance and falsehood, and gender-centric writing purports articulated self-creation, invention of new consciousness and new ideologies towards the whole social spectrum.

As postcolonial feminists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Sara Suleri and Trinh T. Minh-ha propose, gender and race should be viewed equally while considering postcolonial women’s issues.

The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us searing bullets and bloodstained knives, which emanate from it. For if, the last shall be the first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the head of things, and to make them climb at a pace (too quickly, some say) the well-known steps which characterize an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence. You do not turn any society, however primitive it may be, upside down with such a program if you have not decided from the very beginning, that is to say from the actual formulation of that program, to overcome all the obstacles that you will come across in so doing. The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready
for violence at all times. From birth, it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence. (Fanon The Wretched of the Earth 37)

The postcolonial world is associated with violence as a common practice in the circumstances of threat and war, though it is not perpetuated by women, the fear of provoking the violence by a madwoman leads more towards the confinement. In the literary representation of madwoman in postcolonial women’s fiction, the women provoking violence or acting violently in madness with rage is absent. The women have taken madness as a path, not the violence as it is often misinterpreted.

The methods are infinite in fixing the norms for women. However, a few women have taken a different stance in violating those norms. The society has termed this violation, which is in its highest extremities as madness. It is the madness, which created a free space for women. Madness is the weapon that enabled the women to present their newly created selves. As Roy Porter explains, “The mad tried to explain their own behavior to themselves and others in the language that was available to them” (Porter A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane 63), the women writers articulated the language available to the madwomen, in translating the unheard. From the time of the Bedlam hospital to the present psychiatric hospitals, from the time of representing the artist by Aristotle to the present postmodern mad self, the history of madness remained an intricate subject to be contemplated upon. The women in this fence with the postcolonial tag are to be studied empathetically and in multifaceted approach. A detailed account on how madness is metaphorized in chosen texts would follow in the subsequent chapters.
Notes

1 Leyla Hussein, anti-FGM activist, equating the female genital mutilation as the violation of human rights, expresses the humiliation and pain the child has to undergo in the name of being a good Somali woman.

http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/day-of-the-girl-a-survivors-journey-after-female-genital-mutilation-8874232.html

2 The first chapter, “Toward a feminist poetics”, traces the forgotten poetry of women, the songs they used to sing and the lyrics they used to write. In “Queen's looking glass: female creativity, male images of women, and the metaphor of literary paternity”, Gilbert and Gubar begin overthrowing male images of woman, from classical writers to D.H Lawrence, which propounded that man must be pleased, and woman should derive pleasure from it. They recall, Southey’s letter to Elizabeth Barret Browning, which condemns women entering writing profession. Gilbert and Gubar mark various instances where women started taking the forbidden profession. They cite Arora Lea presenting the mother figure, which is passive and ghostly. Through Snow White myth, they illustrate the image of woman as angel and monster through the maiden queen and her passive daughter. The enmity of women, as they suggest, emanate from the patriarchal coffin.


