

**RESEARCH PAPER****Madness Redefined: Political Resistance in Fakhar Zaman's
*Bandiwan/The Prisoner*****¹Anka Shahid* and ² Amal Sayyid**

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***Corresponding Author:** ankashahid@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The objective of the research is to explore the character of Z in Fakhar Zaman's novel *Bandiwan/The Prisoner*, reinterpreting madness as a potent form of political resistance rather than a mere psychological breakdown. Z's actions, traditionally dismissed as madness, are reframed within the narrative as radical expressions of dissent against political oppression. By rejecting conformity and embracing an unconventional approach, Z embodies a defiance that challenges both societal and political norms. The analysis offers a nuanced understanding of how madness in this context transcends personal turmoil, becoming a powerful mode of resistance in response to the authoritarian regime. The study also engages with broader socio-political themes, questioning traditional interpretations of sanity and rationality within oppressive structures. By positioning madness as a form of agency rather than helplessness, this paper redefines it as an empowering force for those subjugated by authoritarianism, ultimately contributing to discussions on the intersection of mental health, politics, and resistance in literature.

KEYWORDS Madness, Political Resistance, Power and Control, Unconventional Defiance**Introduction**

*They were happy
They were satisfied
They thought that they had defeated you...
They forgot your last words,...
'Not I but they are hanged;
Not I but they are dying
And I have become immortal.'* (Malik, 1995, p. 276)

The inquiry into madness raises fundamental questions about whether it is solely a deficit to be cured or managed. The traditional view perceives madness as an expression of the loss of reason, an obstacle to free action, and a hindrance to social participation. On this deficit-oriented perspective, madness is excluded from valued conceptions of humanity. This stance implies that madness, as madness, contributes nothing to knowledge and poses a threat to social life that relies on adherence to norms and common-sense beliefs. Contrastingly, an alternative viewpoint suggests that madness can have value and should be accommodated within conceptions of autonomy, mind, identity, personhood, and sociality. Advocates of this perspective resist reducing madness to a mere deficit and argue for recognizing it as a complex and sometimes distressing configuration of humanity. In Fakhar Zaman's novel *Bandiwan/The Prisoner*, the character of Z serves as a profound representation of how madness can transcend conventional definitions and become a form of political resistance. Zaman's narrative offers a more complex portrayal of mental instability as an intentional response to political oppression. Z's erratic behavior, while labeled as madness, is in fact a conscious act of rebellion against the authoritarian regime that seeks to suppress individual autonomy.

Literature Review

The term, madness, has varying meanings within cultural, historical, literary, and individual contexts. Felman in "Madness and Philosophy or Literature's Reason" (1975) states that deliberate deviation from reason, driven by intense passion, is deemed weakness; however, to confidently deviate from reason while firmly convinced of following it is what we label as madness. Lillian Feder, in her work *Madness in Literature* (1983), asserts that the connection among different forms of madness revolves around a concern—whether primitive or sophisticated—with the mind and the deviation from some norm in thought and feeling. This concern may manifest as a threat, a challenge, or a field of exploration yielding revelations (Feder, 1983, p. xi-xii). Louis Sass, in "Madness and the Ineffable: Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Lacan" (2009), characterizes madness as a condition involving the decline or even disappearance of rational factors in organizing human conduct and experience (Sass, 2009, p. 1). Daniel Nettle, exploring madness and creativity, refines the perspective by stating that madness is not merely mental malfunction but rather a state of dreadful hyperfunction of certain mental characteristics (Nettle, 2002, p. 9). While, Foucault and other critics of psychiatry assert that psychiatry shapes the truths about the mind, thereby limiting the potential for madness to be perceived as transcending ordinary and realistic dimensions of life. According to Foucault (2006; 2009), madness is intricately linked to the power of classification, organizing the physical world. The very concept of the rational individual is formed by excluding mad individuals. Exploring Z's madness, the paper examines madness as a liberatory dimension and psychopolitical resistance.

Material and Methods

This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing close textual analysis to examine the character of Z in Fakhar Zaman's *Bandiwan/The Prisoner* within the context of political resistance and madness. Psychoanalytic theory, particularly the works of Lara Sheehi and Stephen Sheehi (2022), is utilized to interrogate the ways madness is perceived and constructed as a form of resistance against the authoritarian rule of Zia.

Results and Discussion

Portrayal of Prisons as Mental Asylums

Exploring the character's descent into madness requires establishing a foundational understanding of how the prison structure, as described by Fakhar Zaman, functions similarly to a mental asylum. Both function as spaces of confinement, discipline, and the conditioning of individuals, exerting authority over their movements. Examining this structure is crucial to understand its impact on the protagonist's mental state. There are notable similarities between prisons and mental asylums (psychiatric hospitals), particularly in the context of institutions designed for containment and control. As Goffman states in his book *Asylums* that both prison and asylums curtails mutual relationship (1973, p.159). Similarly, Foucault states, "we find in the asylums only the same structures of confinement" (2009, p. 270). Some commonalities between prison and mental asylum include institutionalization, loss of personal agency, power dynamics, surveillance and control.

Both prisons and mental asylums involve the institutionalization of individuals. Inmates and psychiatric patients experience a loss of personal freedom and autonomy within these structured environments. Both settings involve a significant loss of personal agency. Inmates and psychiatric patients have limited control over their daily routines, decision-making, and overall life circumstances. Confinement causes alienation and "those prisoners were to be kept in the houses of confinement whose minds are deranged ... it is acknowledged that their freedom is harmful to society, or a useless benefit to themselves" (Foucault, 2009, p. 235). This marks the moment when madness overtakes confinement.

Power dynamics also play a crucial role in both, prison and asylum environments. Authority figures, such as prison guards or psychiatric staff, exert control over those within the institution. The power relationships impact the daily lives and well-being of inmates or patients. Z is flogged on daily basis for the "cure" of his madness. The state officials forces him to renounce his blasphemous poetry against the government but his reluctance and rebellious attitude evoke the rage of the officials who only think of disciplining him through severe punishment. One can argue that this treatment is quite common on prisoners and not on insane masses but history has stated that such practice has being done on mad men as well. Pinel references a renowned monastic institution in the southern regions of France, highlighting a case where a violent madman received a specific directive to alter his behavior. In instances where he resisted bedtime or meals, he faced a warning that persistence in his deviations would result in ten lashes with a bullwhip the following day (Pinel, 2008, p. 238-39).

Both, prison and mental asylum, settings employ surveillance and control mechanisms to maintain order. Security measures are implemented to monitor and regulate the behavior of individuals within the institution. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *Madness and Civilization* (2009) examine the mechanisms of surveillance and control in institutions, "Unchained animality could be mastered only by discipline and brutalizing" (Foucault, 1975, p. 75). It highlights how power operates through disciplinary practices which sole purpose is to make the man useful for the state and society. Rebellion has no place as it disrupts the system and to save the system, the politicians need to take extra measure to root out the rebels; the revolutionaries (Zaman, 1996, p. 176). It then becomes the sole duty of the state to either discipline them through ideological state apparatuses and repressive state apparatuses or annihilate them by labelling them mad or by turning them insane. Similarly, In his "Report on the Condition of the Indigent Insane" (1813), Samuel Tuke outlines a complex system implemented at Bethlehem to manage a purportedly dangerous madman. As practices escalate to a level of intense violence, it becomes evident that they are no longer driven by a desire to punish or fulfill corrective duties. The concept of "resipiscence" is entirely absent in this regime (Tuke, 1813, p. 50). This underscores the mental asylum's resemblance to the prison system which transforms into a mechanism for asserting madness rather than facilitating the rehabilitation of prisoners. In the same way, Goffman states that humans are mostly termed "notoriously weak" as they give in to their desires. So, there is a constant need of taming and disciplining them. Such protective measures should be taken to keep the madness at bay (Goffman, 1973, p. 162). Although, Foucault argues, "it must not be forgotten that the "insane" had as such a particular place in the world of confinement. Their status was not merely that of prisoners. In the general sensibility to unreason, there appeared to be a special modulation which concerned madness proper, and was addressed to those called, without exact semantic distinction, insane, alienated, deranged, demented, extravagant" (Foucault, 2009, p. 66). In this way, Foucault differentiates between the carceral system from mental asylum. But it is this very distinction that brings the two terms together on a common ground through the portrayal of Z. Z, being a victim of unjust political system, is entrapped in a prison. He is chained to the wall to restrict any mobility and is kept under constant surveillance. It is such confinement that gives rise to his madness. The madness that not only alienates him from other so-called socially defined sane and normal but also highlights disruptions in his speech patterns and thought processes. This counters Foucault's differentiation between the prisoner and the insane.

It's important to note that while there are these similarities, there are also significant differences between the purposes and functions of prisons and mental asylums. Prisons primarily serve as punitive institutions for those convicted of crimes, while mental asylums are designed for the treatment and care of individuals with mental health issues. As Foucault states, "when the insane were particularly dangerous, they were constrained by a system which was doubtless not of a punitive nature, but simply intended to fix within narrow limits the physical locus of a raging frenzy" (2009, p. 71). However, discussions

about the intersection of mental health and the criminal justice system highlight the complexity of these institutions' roles in society.

Depiction of Z's Madness

The onset of madness is a consequence of imprisonment, as observed with individuals discovered in the Bastille and Bicetre who were left stupefied (Foucault, 2009, p. 228). With this premise established, the paper proceeds to examine Z's descent into madness within the novel. According to Hegel, madness is a condition where the mind is enclosed within itself, withdrawn and separated from immediate contact with reality (2014, p. 408). Freud's understanding of neurosis closely mirrors Hegel's perspective. He discusses "the diminished importance of reality, the disregard for the distinction between reality and fantasy" (1987, p. 368). Both descriptions emphasize two key aspects: a backward retreat or "sinking back" of the mind and the consequent detachment from reality. Z's character signifies that through his conduct. While being detached from his environment, he keep referring back time and again (Zaman, 1996, p. 99). Sometimes his speech and terrain of thoughts distort from his own sudden outbursts; shouts, laughter, anger and silence.

Psychiatric power initially emerged as a moralizing construct aimed at alienating citizens, establishing "a regime of isolation, regularity, the use of time, a system of measured deprivations, and the obligation to work" (Foucault, 2006, p. 173). Over time, this construct evolved into a highly profitable system within asylum and prison settings, connected to robust pharmaceutical industries through numerous employed agents (Whitaker & Cosgrove, 2015). Psychiatric power operates through meticulous documentation and continuous control procedures, where attending psychiatrists and physicians treat each individual patient as a 'case' to "gain hold over the body and normalize behavior" (Funnell, 2019, p. 3). This power has consistently strengthened through legislative authority globally, enabling the indefinite confinement of those perceived as threats to moral order and potential physical harm to 'normal' citizens in alignment with judicial discourse (Rose, 1990, p. 373). In the novel, Z is labeled as mad, a characterization substantiated by various instances. For instance, he keeps a nightingale captive with him (Zaman, 1996, p. 78), exhibits erratic behavior such as banging his head on the walls, painting a picture of a boat with his blood, flushing it away (Zaman, 1996, p. 121), shouting aloud at times (Zaman, 1996, p. 110), laughing without reason, and occasionally staring with no apparent purpose (Zaman, 1996, p. 113). Hence, the carceral system is designed to view the mentally ill, Z, with excessive strength and immediate punishments are deemed necessary to regulate control over him.

Madness as Psychopolitical Resistance

In *Madness of Psychiatry* (2004), Saxby Pridmore states, "To lose a leg is a terrible loss, but to suffer a mental disorder is to lose the sense of control, of autonomy" (p. 2). Contrary to Pridmore, Z's acceptance of madness doesn't lead to self destruction or identity crisis but by embracing madness, Z actually asserts his self and gets autonomy. In the corrupt system where voices are not heard, prisoners are confined in closed spaces with constant surveillance, where bodies are subjected to multiple tortures and madness prevails, Z's madness becomes agentic to voice his own thoughts, to reassert his identity as a rebel, as a revolutionary, "...certain violent crises, gradually formed the awareness of madness contemporaneous with the Revolution...it is from confinement that we must seek an account of this new awareness of madness" (Foucault, 2009, p. 224). The carceral system that deemed control over Z is failed to confine his mind. The novel revolves around political resistance, with the prisoner Z challenging the jail authorities through both his actions and demeanor. His resilience serves as a symbolic act of defiance. In the novel the lamantation of Z through poetry and songs becomes an echo of protest. Here, Zaman asserts that Z's madness is the result of unjust and brutal treatment of the of the carceral system that he is forced to endure. As much as his confinement increases, he voices his protest more

forcefully by invoking the dead spirits of Ranjha, Bullah Shah and other revolutionaries who laid their lives for the creation of Pakistan. This image mirrors Roy Porter's description of the mental asylums in *Madness: A Brief History* (2002). Porter states that how the severe imprisonment of a person leads to madness which proves iniquitous abuse of private madhouses, "Authors claim they were never crazy in the first place, or that they became mad only through the barbaric treatment meted out to them" (Porter, 2002, p. 168-9).

In the confined environment of the prison, the poet's madness represents a form of psychological autonomy. He refuses to conform to the expectations imposed by the state officials and by doing that, he retains a sense of personal agency within the institutional constraints. Foucault's ideas on power dynamics highlight the poet's resistance against the state's attempts to force conformity. His madness serves as a non-compliant response, a refusal to yield to the normalized expectations imposed by the state apparatus. By maintaining his commitment to political poetry despite state pressure (Zaman, 1996, p. 154), the poet symbolically resists the oppressive actions of the state. His perceived madness becomes a representational act of defiance against attempts to silence dissenting voices. Even, the poet's happiness about facing execution can be seen as a form of liberation from the oppressive circumstances. By embracing death, he resists succumbing to a compromised existence dictated by the state, choosing authenticity over a coerced submission. "But death itself does not bring peace; madness will still triumph—a truth mockingly eternal, beyond the end of a life which yet had been delivered from madness by this very end" (Foucault, 2009, p. 32). In summary, the madness of the poet acts as a multidimensional resistance—a symbolic defiance against oppression, a preservation of psychological autonomy, an existential assertion of values, a rejection of institutional authority, and an acceptance of death as a form of liberation. It becomes a conscious and defiant response to the unjust actions of the state, preserving the poet's sense of self and political convictions in the face of adversity. Hence, madness gains significance because it possesses the capacity to extend its ability to express itself, manifesting in rebellious outcries.

Conclusion

Through the character of Z, Zaman shows that within the space of incarceration, madness is not a form of psychosis but a mode of liberation. The madness of the imprisoned poet, despite leading to his execution, can be considered agentic and transformative in its influence on other prisoners (Zaman, 1996, p. 170) and in the symbolic birth of a new child (Zaman, 1996, p.181). The poet's refusal to conform, even to the point of facing death, has motivated others to assert their own agency by maintaining their dignity despite physical punishment (Zaman, 1996, p. 133). While, the birth of a new child following the poet's death can be interpreted as a symbolic renewal or rebirth. It represents the continuation of life and the potential for change, suggesting that even in the face of tragedy, there is agency in the creation of something new and hopeful. The poet's madness, resistance, and eventual execution serves as a catalyst for collective resistance among the prisoners. His actions have fueled a shared determination to resist unjust authority, fostering a sense of agency among those who had been subject to oppression.

Recommendations

This study recommends further exploration of the theme of madness as political resistance in postcolonial literature where madness is used as a deliberate subversion of power, particularly in contexts of oppression and authoritarianism. This could offer valuable insights into the ways literature can challenge dominant narratives surrounding mental health and resistance, highlighting how marginalized voices can use unconventional forms of expression to reclaim power.

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