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Garb of Pretentious Identity: A Psychoanalytic Study of Mirror vs. Reality in *The Madman* by Kahlil Gibran

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Abstract

This research delves into the captivating intersection of Literature and Psychoanalysis, examining Kahlil Gibran's masterpiece, *The Madman, His Parables and Poems* (1918), to unravel the fragmented nature of human identity. The book is a collection of 35 life-affirming moral stories, which begins with a description of a man's out-of-control mind and the idealized persona, he puts on to avoid encountering his actual self and the not-so appealing world. The research is anchored upon the Alan Sheridan translation (1977) of Lacan's seminal essay, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," originally published in 1949. Lacan proposes that when the child encounters his image in the mirror for the first time, he begins to think that the mirror self is the ideal-I and his own body/self is the fragmented version of the mirror image. A detailed textual analysis of the respective book has been done and the researcher has found that the Madman is compelled to wear masks because he has the fear of public opinion, societal expectations, and perceived inability to challenge deep-rooted worldly traditions. However, stripping off the masks exposes him to the risk of alienation, yet, by shedding the protective masks, the Madman opens himself up to authentic self-

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expression and the possibility of self-discovery. The significance of the study lies in the fact that it sheds light on the identity crisis faced by people, who avoid confronting the world and their actual selves, and thus opens up the possibility for further study.

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis, Mask, Madman, Mirror.*

INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

The two interconnected fields that provide valuable insights into the study of literature are literary analysis and Psychoanalysis. Literary examination analyzes subjects and images in literary writing to figure out their effect on human brain. In parallel, psychoanalysis, developed by Sigmund Freud, focuses on the unconscious mind, analyzing the deeper meaning hidden inside and its influence on human behavior and emotions (Freud, 1899).

Within the respective fields of literature and philosophy, Kahlil Gibran's contributory works hold significant relevance. The writings of Gibran, including his renowned work *The Madman; His Parables and Poems* (1918) express poetic and philosophical qualities that explore universal themes of love, spirituality, and self-discovery. Professor Suheil Bushrui is of the view that "We are talking about a renaissance in modern Arabic literature and this renaissance had at its foundation Gibran's writings" (Amirani & Hegarty, 2012, para 22)

One recurring theme in Gibran's *The Madman* (1918) is the mask. The freedom of the mask is prodigious: all who wear it are free to create something, no matter how ridiculous, if only in the motion of the moment (Lindahl, 1996). Thus, studying the theme of mask in *The Madman* (1918) offers insights into the psychological implications of metaphorical masks. Preliminaries for the investigation are provided by Lacan's mirror stage theory (1977). This method blends literary study with psychoanalysis to provide light on the psychological elements that Gibran's writing contains.

2. Introduction of the Author

Kahlil Gibran was a well-known poet, philosopher, and visual artist, born on January 6, 1883, in the Lebanese village of Bsharri. He grew up in a multiracial setting and gained a profound love of books and the arts. The poetic, spiritual, and universal themes of love, self-discovery, and the human condition are frequently explored in Gibran's literature. As worded by Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins (1998), Gibran's life has been described as one “often caught between Nietzschean rebellion, Blakean pantheism and Sufi mysticism” (p .23). He is best known as the author of The Prophet (1923) which is a collection of poetic essays that has since gained widespread recognition. Bushrui and Jenkins (1998) write: "He was one of those rare writers who actually transcend the barrier between East and West, and could justifiably call himself - though a Lebanese and a patriot - a citizen of the world" (p. 10). On April 10, 1931, Kahlil Gibran passed suddenly, leaving behind a significant artistic and literary legacy that has inspired and resonated with readers of all ages.

3. Introduction of the Book

With the release of Kahlil Gibran's collection of literary works, *The Madman: His Parables and Poems* (1918), the poet first came to the attention of Americans. Gibran's poetic skills and philosophical insights are on display in this book, which explores deep issues and the complexities of human existence. It is a tale written in account of an individual who has his own particular vision of everything, referring to humans who behave differently in different situations; either happy or sad, evil or good, or among friends or strangers. Many of these poems and parables are indicative of Tagore and Nietzsche's writings, two authors who had a significant influence on Gibran.

4. Statement of Problem

This study aims to investigate why the main character Madman in the book feels compelled to wear masks. By examining the motivations, experiences, and interactions, the research seeks to uncover the underlying reasons behind the desire to conceal true identities and project altered personas. By gaining insights into these psychological and

sociological factors, this study intends to provide a deeper understanding of the narrative by shedding light on the consequences of tearing all the masks apart.

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the reasons behind the main character Madman's compulsion to wear masks in the book *The Madman* (1918) and the consequences of unveiling the true identities. This research paper focuses on the identity crisis many people face in their lives. By examining the psychological motivations behind the use of masks and the effects of unmasking, this research offers insight on the difficulties of identity building, self-perception, and the desire for recognition and authenticity. The findings of this study have the potential to contribute to our understanding of disguised human nature and the role of masks as both protective cloaks and vehicles for self-expression in contemporary society.

6. Delimitations

In the setting of the book *The Madman* (1918), this research paper focuses primarily on the crisis of the seemingly ideal self or identity. Instead of attempting to fully address all apparent elements, it focuses on investigating the concept of masking throughout the narrative. Although this study acknowledges that there may be existing literature on the subject, it examines the interaction between veiling and reality more thoroughly in an effort to advance knowledge and comprehension in this particular field of study.

7. Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives

- To find out the reasons that compel The Madman to wear masks.
- To examine the consequences of stripping off the masks and revealing true identities.

8. Research Questions

Following research questions would be the focus of the study

- Why The Madman is compelled to wear masks?

- What are the consequences of stripping off the masks and revealing true identities?

9. Theory and Methods

This research is a qualitative research based on the textual analysis of Kahlil Gibran's *The Madman; His Parables and Poems* (1918). This research paper narrows down to the work of Jacques Lacan on Psychoanalysis known as Lacanianism. The essay "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" sourced from the partly translated version known as *Écrits: A Selection* (1977) by Alan Sheridan, has been used as the framework. The Mirror stage is one of the three orders gave by Lacan, and the imaginary order is closely tied to Lacan's theorization of the mirror stage. According to him, when an infant is encountered with his image for the first time in the mirror, he feels startled. Soon he realizes that his mirror image has a connection between his soul and body, but in reality he has no apparent connection between his soul and body, as a child has no control over his body.

Lacan called the particular image itself in the mirror as the "Ideal-I", for Lacan, it provides an image of wholeness which constitutes the ego. He used the term "Alienation" to illuminate the tension between the infant's inner uncoordinated and disconnected insight of self and the mirror's united image.

This research particularly talks about concealing truth and reality within oneself constantly. It argues that how people hide their true identity by putting on an alternative persona of Ideal-I, which is actually a fake identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The thesis will argue about the reasons the Madman tries to hide his identity by putting on a created sense of identity and his fear of tearing it off. This claim takes support from psychoanalytic theories, based on the discoveries made originally by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, taking support from other psychoanalysts. The literature review examines the ways in which the mirror stage is manifested in *The*

Madman (1918) and how it contributes to the themes of masks, identity and discrimination in the poems.

1. Psychoanalytic Approach

Psychoanalysis, the first theory of personality introduced by Sigmund Freud (1896), is one of the modern theories that are used in English literature. Psychoanalytic theory propounds that our unconscious desires and childhood experiences shape our behavior and personality, even if we are not aware of them. It is generally regarded as the theory of personality organization, and suggests that people can experience catharsis and gain insight into their state of mind by bringing the content of the unconscious into conscious awareness. Before delving into the specific contributions of Jacques Lacan to psychoanalytic theory, it is important to situate his work within the broader context and the influential thinkers who came before him.

2. Psychoanalysis, the Unconscious and the Human Experience

The field of psychoanalysis owes much to the work of numerous scholars and practitioners who have added to its theoretical framework. A well-known psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1916) introduced the concept of the "collective unconscious". His essay *"The Structure of the Unconscious"* (1916) distinguishes between the "personal", Freudian unconscious and the "collective" unconscious encompassing the soul of humanity at large.

Karen Horney (1937) brought to psychoanalysis a new understanding of the importance of culture and environment. Her book *"The Neurotic Personality of Our Time"* (1937); argues that social and cultural conditions, especially childhood experiences, are largely responsible for shaping personality, otherwise they may develop basic hostility.

Through the eclipse of large areas of the self, by repression and inhibition as well as by idealization and externalization, the individual loses sight of himself; he feels, if he does not actually become, like a shadow without weight and substance. (Horney, 1945, p. 151)

The origins of psychoanalysis can be traced back to the medical profession, but it has since expanded into various fields first into psychology and then literature, where it is now used as one of several

approaches to analyzing literary works. A French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist sometimes, Jacques Lacan often referred to as "the French Freud", and is regarded as an important figure in the history of psychoanalysis. The Imaginary, the Symbolic, the Real and the Mirror Stage are some of Lacan's most notable ideas he gave in the seminars during 1950s and 1960s. The Imaginary stage is associated to Lacan's Mirror Stage theory (1977) that has been taken as the framework of the study.

3. Theoretical Framework

In his seminal essay "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" (1949), Lacan proposed a groundbreaking theory of the mirror stage, which has since become a cornerstone of psychoanalytic theory. The mirror stage theory proposes that the infant's recognition of their image in the mirror leads to the development of a sense of self and identity. This theory has been widely applied in literary analysis, particularly to explore themes of identity and subjectivity. For Example, Hovannesian (2021) conducted a study on Lacan's mirror stage to explore the potential of queering the characters of Scout and Dill in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a pedagogical approach for high school students to identify and unpack their own gendered identities.

4. Lacanian Theory: An Overview

Lacan introduced the concept of *the mirror stage* in lectures he gave in 1936-37, and then further developed his ideas in his 1949 paper (originally written in French), in which he expanded upon the idea of the mirror stage as a crucial moment in the formation of the self, and emphasized the role of identification.

5. The Real Order

Lacan's Real Order is the original state of human psyche, where the child has no individual identity and is solely driven by fulfilling needs. Lacan (1977) states that, "the child at the infants stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence." (p .2) Lacan called the image 'imago' which creates the ego ideal, as the child both hates and desires

for it, but they can never truly become the complete image as Lacan (1977) puts it "namely the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image". (p. 1) This imago can be seen in the play Richard II by Shakespeare, where the smashing of mirror, represents king losing his rule which was his ideal self, his speech also reinforces Lacan's belief of perfect reflection, as Richard still has a narcissistic preoccupation. "No deeper wrinkles yet?" (Shakespeare, 1598, p. 172) The glass is described as "flattering", which only shows his physical self not follies.

6. Narcissism in Myth and Literature (Imaginary stage)

The mirror stage initiates entry into the Imaginary Order as the child now experiences the world through images. Humans desire narcissism and create images of a perfect self, which are actually false and thus Lacan called it "impenetrable void" (Lacan, 2001). This impossibility of desire is exemplified in the Greek myth *"Echo and Narcissus",* where Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection and ultimately withers away. For Lacan the ego was only the reflection, the imaginary double, but for Freud the ego made narcissistic identification possible. (Vasseleu, 1991) Ovid's *Pygmalion myth* (2004) can be analyzed through the lens of mirror stage. Pygmalion's obsessive attachment to his beautiful statue reflects the displacement of unconscious desires for the idealized mother of infancy, creating what Lacan calls *"objet petit a"*. The myth also highlights the author's investment in the imaginary order, creating a perfect character in the statue that is privileged over others.

7. Kahlil Gibran and his Literary Works

Kahlil Gibran was a Lebanese-American writer, poet, and artist, who is best known for his philosophical and spiritual writings. He was born on 1883, in the Lebanese village of Bsharri. On April 10, 1931, Kahlil Gibran passed suddenly, leaving behind a significant artistic and literary legacy that has inspired and resonated with readers of all ages. Gibran's most famous work is *The Prophet* (1923), a collection of prose poems that has been translated into over 40 languages. In addition, Gibran wrote several other books, including "Broken Wings" (1912), The Madman

(1918), and "A Tear and a Smile" (1914). In many of his works, his characters often experience a struggle with self-identity and self-recognition. For example, in the novel *Broken Wings*, Selma struggles with her sense of self-identity and her place in society. “The appearance of things changes according to the emotions; and thus we see magic and beauty in them”. (Gibran, 1912, p. 9)

8. The Madman

The Madman (1918), originally published in English, is a collection of 35 short moral stories and parables is a rich source of psychoanalytic literary analysis. One particularly rich lens for interpreting these poems is through the concept of the Lacanian mirror stage. Numerous studies and analyses have been conducted on *The Madman* (1918) from various perspectives, including literary, philosophical, and psychoanalytic approaches.

9. Different Dimensions of *The Madman*

Riza Rafsanjani (2015) has conducted a study on the analysis of Figurative language on *The Madman* (1918). The study analyzed 11 poems, and identified various figurative language devices used in them. He found out that the dominant figurative language used in *The Madman’s* (1918) poetry was found to be personification. In terms of themes, a profound scholar Shaheer (2021) has done a thematic analysis of *The Madman* (1918), and concluded that the Madman is able to overcome his fear and break through the obstacles that were holding him back.

The literature reviewed in this paper highlights the substantial influence of the mirror stage theory on psychoanalysis and our comprehension of human development. However, an apparent research gap exists as the application of the mirror stage theory to Kahlil Gibran's book *Madman* (1918) from a psychoanalytic perspective remains unexplored; hence it is fulfilled by this study.

TEXT ANALYSIS

This section aims at analyzing and examining the selected text *The Madman, His Parables and Poems* (1918) by Kahlil Gibran. The

psychoanalytic theory, specifically Lacan's mirror stage, serves as the overarching framework for this research. In support of the chosen approach, Glen Owens Gabbard on Psychoanalysis, "No body of knowledge approaches psychoanalytic theory in terms of its capacity to explain the mysteries of the human mind." (Sadock, 1967) By implementing this theoretical perspective of Gibran's work, a profound examination seeking is done to understand the intricate layers of meaning embedded within his poems and parables. The text chosen also touches upon the complexities of the human mind and emotions particularly by delving into the inner workings of the human psyche through a series of poetic and philosophical reflections.

1. Why The Madman is compelled to wear masks?

The research question of this analysis is to explore the reasons behind the Madman wearing a mask in the narrative; this exploration of masks goes beyond literal meaning and delves into the metaphorical realm. Masks are representation of the multifaceted nature of the various roles individuals assume in their interactions with society, and of course the human existence. By examining this dominant theme an insight into the characters' struggles with their identities can be gained. The significance of Lacan's mirror stage theory lies in its exploration of the complex interplay between the individual's perception of themselves, and their relationship with others. Lacan (1977) describes:

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for all the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the infants entire mental development. (p. 3)

The Madman (1918) begins with the tragedy *How I Became a Madman* and goes on till the last parable to tell a tale that describes protagonist’s own particular vision of everything, referring to humans who behave differently in different situations; either happy or sad, evil or good, or

among friends or strangers. For one who swims in the river of Kahlil, this is a narrative featuring an individual who, when speaking the truth, is labeled as a 'Madman.' *The Madman* (1918) is telling something which is against the societal beliefs, or understandings. In an interview published in Birmingham News, Kahlil eloquently describes his book: "it appeals to young and old. There's a sort of universal agelessness about the book which furnishes inspiration to everyone who reads it." (Kalem, 2021)

What sets *Madman* book apart is its ability to transcend the limitations of a singular character or individual. Instead, it delves into a broader perspective, capturing the essence of humanity as a whole.

i. Embracing the Unrevealed Depths Within

According to Lacan (1991) human psyche is divided into three orders: The real, the imaginary and the symbolic. The imaginary order links to the mirror stage and marks the movement of the subject from primal necessity to what Lacan terms "demand." Whereas needs can be fulfilled, demands are, by definition, unsatisfiable. At its core, *The Madman* (1918) challenges society's conventional notions of demand by embodying a radical departure from materialistic desires, by presenting an alternative perspective. As the Madman delves deeper into his musings, he reveals a profound truth: that the truest and most genuine demands are those that arise from the depths of the human soul. The narrative takes its initial steps with a gripping sentence of the prologue: "You ask me how I became a Madman. It happened thus: One day, long before many gods were born, I woke from a deep sleep and found all my masks were stolen" (p. 1).

The Madman's choice to wear masks stems from a numerous of reasons that can be widely observed in society. It disrupts the construction of the ego and challenges Madman's perceived identities. This mirrors Lacan's (1977) framework being used where individuals initially seek recognition and validation from external images (represented by the stolen masks) but eventually strive to move beyond these constructed images to find their authentic selves. The theft of Madman's masks serves as a catalyst for transformation. The world contrasts the individual in society,

conforming to class, role, and behavior -- the normal -- with the one who sees through hypocrisy, and judges others as deceived, or treacherous – the Madman. “For what is there can quench a madman's thirst but his own blood?” (p. 17) The Madman becomes “The Madman” having suffered a cruel fate or simply he got too aware of the nature of things, thus he ignores the truth and masks his perception. The world categorizes him as mad, but the reality is quite different because he is in fact the wise one.

ii. Anonymity and Power

Ramani Durvasula (2020), a clinical psychologist has emphasized the psychological implications of wearing masks: “Anonymity carries power, It can feel like trying on a different ‘role’ and the associated expectations of that role, perhaps freeing us of what can feel exhausting and insincere about smiling.” (Robb, 2021, para 11) She highlights the concept of "emotional masks," serving as defense mechanisms, but the prolonged use of emotional masks can lead to an erosion of authentic self-expression.

As the connection to the mirror stage suggests, the "imaginary" is primarily narcissistic. Just as the child gazes upon its reflection with an unwavering narcissism, the Madman, too, finds solace in his elaborate array of masks. Similarly in the poem *My Friend,* Gibran states "Seeming is but a garment I wear—a care-woven garment that protects me from thy questionings and thee from my negligence". (p. 2) Gibran explores the interplay between our seeming selves and our being selves with a hint of pride. With a profound sense of pride, Madman revels in the artistry of his ever-transforming disguises. In the poem *My Friend* he wants to tell his friend that his appearance is merely a ‘care-woven garment’ – a mask he has put on to avoid questioning. And because of the mask he’s feeling pride, that he’s “unperceived” (p. 2) and “unapproachable” (p. 3). This tells that the actual self and the ideal self though they’re the part of same human being but are disconnected, one exists and the other does not, similar in the way child’s inner fragmented version is disconnected to his mirror reflection.

"And yet I am mad. But I mask my madness. I would be mad alone." (p. 2) This idealized self, commonly referred to as the 'Ideal-I' or 'ideal ego' by Lacan, a longing shared by all individuals. The image is a fantasy, one that the child sets up in order to compensate for its sense of lack or loss.

The child in the mirror stage mourns for the mirror image and in making a connection to this ideal image he enters a lifelong quest, which according to Lacan, can never be fulfilled. We can get this idea from the poem *The Sleep-Walkers*. On one hand the mother is seen calling her daughter as "My Enemy" who destroyed her youth by building her own life. On the other hand, the girl calls her mother "O hateful woman, selfish and old" (p. 3). These 2 slang phrases can be interpreted as the reality which is their actual truth, but the main characters try to hide this bitterness by veiling their true selves. They at the end of the poem start using sweet words like "Darling" and "Dear" (p. 4) for each other.

The Perfect World gives a reminder to all the people out there that there is no such thing as a perfect world. Here he acts like a lost soul in a perfect world, and sees the world around him as complete and orderly, with everything precisely measured, assigned, and accurate. In contrast, he feels like a chaos, the genuine self here is comparable to "a human chaos, a nebula of confused elements." (p. 22) He further goes on to state that,

But why should I be here, O God, I, a green seed of unfulfilled passion, a mad tempest that seeks neither east nor west, a bewildered fragment from a burnt planet? Why am I here, O god of lost souls, you who are lost among the gods? (p. 23)

The dilemma of Madman is that why he was created, if he is so different from the rest of the world. It explores the idea of fitting in and the feeling of being different. Similarly, Lacan states that when a baby is born, the different atmosphere around create a lot of negative feelings in the baby, and this frequent anxiety lead the baby into a stage of perpetual helplessness. What finally comforts the helpless creature is his own reflection, his apparently perfect self (or Ideal-I) in this imperfect world.

Just like a shattered mirror reflecting innumerable facets of his being, the Madman perceives himself as disjointed from the world.

The multiple masks Madman wears represent his different selves. In the poem *The Seven Selves* each self can be interpreted as representing a different mask that individuals wear. The dialogue among the seven selves unveils distinct aspects of the Madman's personality, each self-embodying a different role. “the seven masks I have fashioned and worn in seven lives” (p. 1). This line from the prologue *How I Became a Madman* resonates with the concept of multiple selves in *The Seven Selves* poem. These masks serve as vessels for different experiences, emotions, and identities that the speaker has embraced along their spiritual and existential path. These selves are among the ultimate ‘Others’ that Madman yearns for, or in other words, the Ideal-I. An idea of human desires can be gained from the poem of chosen text entitled, *The Blessed City*, where the protagonist desires to explore “the blessedness thereof” (p. 12) by determining that “I will seek that city”. (p. 12) The parable delves into the human desire for a utopian society, where the Madman encounters a city seemingly perfect, and upon closer inspection, he discovers the hidden truths that lie beneath its surface.

The Ideal ego according to Lacan is the stable and autonomous version which the child does not experience in itself and hence yearns to be the Other. Here Lacan’s concept of ‘Other’ can be highlighted. Prior to the mirror stage, the child becomes aware of its own fragmented and disconnected body, apprehensive about returning to that state. However, upon encountering a mirror, a triumphant and whole version of itself is reflected back, contrasting with the inner fragmented perception. This mirroring creates a deep longing within the child to become that complete and connected version.

Thus the Madman, a vessel of profound introspection and unfulfilled desires, becomes a symbol of the universal human longing for implication and connection.

2. What are the consequences of stripping off the masks and revealing true identities?

An intriguing question after reading Madman arises: what unfolds when the Madman resolutely rejects this sham of falseness? The research question of this analysis is to explore the consequences of Madman ripping off all the metaphorical garments.

As hinted by Gibran, our true selves can be messy and confusing. “One side of her face was pale, the other was blushing.” (p. 11) The majority of us struggle with accepting who we really are because of the pressure to be stable and conform to expectations, and it can be scary to face flaws, but these imperfections are what make us human. For example in the poem *The Scarecrow,* Gibran states that "A year passed, during which the scarecrow turned philosopher" (p. 3). The poem highlights transformation over time, suggesting that it evolves beyond its initial purpose of scaring birds and gains wisdom or introspection. The Scarecrow, in itself, can be seen as a metaphor for individuals who are shunned or judged by society due to their perceived flaws or differences, and represents those who might be considered imperfect or outcasts. Our unique ability to connect with others come from embracing our "madness." When we hide our imperfections behind a mask, we lose an important part of our humanity. We can get this idea where the poet signals towards embracing one’s madness. “They come weeping and go weeping—you only come laughing and go laughing.” (p. 11)

Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 16 (2014) contains transcripts of Jung’s essays or lectures. Jung speaks to the idea that masks we wear deceive ourselves and others, concealing our true individuality:

A mask of the collective psyche, a mask that feigns individuality, making others and oneself believe that one is individual, whereas one is simple acting a role through which the collective psyche speaks... [it is] a compromise between individual and society as to what a man should appear to me. (para 245)

During the mirror stage, the child perceives a unified image for the first time, revealing a sense of completeness that contrasts with the inner

fragmentation. Just as the child's realization of a fragmented self can be disorienting and distressing, The Madman's awareness of a different perspective from the societal norm can lead to a similar sense of dissonance.

i. Embracing the Uncommon and the Quest for Authenticity

Gibran delves into the consequences of shedding societal masks and embracing madness, He explores the idea that before God, one can only be equal to God, transcending the roles of slave, creature, or child. It is through the loss of these masks that the divine power within oneself and the universe is revealed. An insight of the concept can be gained from *God*: "My God, my aim and my fulfillment; I am thy yesterday and thou are my tomorrow." (p. 2) This concept is not egoistic but rather a profound realization of identity and substance that goes beyond societal constructs. Living without masks allows for freedom and authenticity, but it also carries the risk of loneliness and misunderstanding. Gibran adds in the prologue "But let me not be too proud of my safety. Even a Thief in a jail is safe from another thief." (p. 1)

Society expects conformity and mask-wearing, and those who reject this norm may be deemed mad or hermits. The quote in *The Wise King* ironically adds, "The king is mad. Our king and his lord chamberlain have lost their reason" (p. 8) It signifies that those who are actually mad, as they pretend to be different, are the so called normal people and the one who tries to bring a change is referred to as "The Madman", because he's not mad like them. Nonetheless, burying our masks and selves does not exempt or save us from societal consequences, as discussed in the introduction of *The Madman* (1918). Society reacts to those who refuse to conform, and the path of authenticity may be met with challenges and misunderstandings.

ii. Madness and Sanity

A paradoxical relationship between madness and sanity is thoughtfully explored in the narrative, as in the text: "he who had upheld the gods, burned his sacred books. For he had become an unbeliever." (p. 19) Gibran suggests that by embracing one's own madness, a peculiar sense

of freedom and protection can be attained, shielding individuals from the weight of external expectations and judgments. “The Madman” symbolizes a rebellion against societal norms, advocating for the liberation found within the authenticity of one's true self. However, amidst the liberating embrace of madness, Gibran also hints at a potential consequence of “enslave something” (p .1): an enslavement that may befall those who reveal their true selves, opening the door for others to understand them. By exposing our innermost thoughts and vulnerabilities, and making others understand our nature (or in psychoanalytic context: psyche) we risk becoming subject to the perceptions and interpretations of others.

iii. The Transformative Power of Defeat and Disillusionment

A unique and unconventional perspective on *Defeat* is presented in the narrative. “Defeat, my Defeat, my solitude and my aloofness; You are dearer to me than a thousand triumphs, And sweeter to my heart than all world-glory.” (p. 14) However, delving deeper into the nature of this defeat raises an important question: What are the underlying causes of the “Madman's” defeat? It becomes apparent that his defeat stems from a profound tiredness of pretense: the fatigue of maintaining a facade of sanity and conformity. As Gibran writes in the parable *Defeat:* “And together we shall dig graves for all that die in us”. (p. 14) Madman finds himself disarmed, having surrendered all his defenses and weapons against the cruelty and rigidity of the traditional world.

This disillusionment can be interpreted in the light of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, other than the mirror stage, which emphasizes the notion of lack and desire. In his Seminar *Les formations de l'inconscient* (1957) Lacan proposed the idea of the "objet petit a", which represents an unattainable object of desire that is forever elusive. The object petit a is an object that individuals yearn for but can never fully possess. “The objet petit a is what falls from the subject in anxiety.” (Lacan & Mehlman, 1987) This unattainability can create a sense of defeat, as individuals yearn for something beyond their reach.

There also comes a pivotal moment in the book when the protagonist, the Madman, has a profound realization that all of his masks, the various personas he had constructed, have been taken from him. In response to this shocking revelation, he exclaims in *How I Became a Madman*, "Thieves, thieves, the cursed thieves." (p. 1) However, mask-less, he begins to grasp the true significance of this theft. He recognizes in a moment of enlightenment the actual value of his authentic self, the essence that lies beneath the masks he once wore. Thus he expresses gratitude and confesses that: "Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks." (p. 1) The outcomes for such an act are also revealed by the author, if an ordinary man removes the metaphorical faces above his true face, true to human nature, the world and the people around him, unable to comprehend or accept the profound transformation taking place start to exclaim: “He is a madman” (p. 1), carrying undertones of dismissal, ridicule, and even fear.

Lacanian psychoanalysis supports the notion that living authentically and being true to oneself can lead to a sense of purpose and fulfillment. It encourages individuals to explore their genuine desires and identities, rather than conforming to societal norms or hiding behind a mask.

An individual also gets reward for removing the masks, but the reward comes with a great penalty of societal rejection and fear of being called out as Madman. The act of burying one's "dead selves" in the poem *The Grave-Digger* can be seen as a metaphor for shedding the personas that individuals often wear to conform to societal expectations or to hide their true selves, serving as protective layers. The grave-digger's remark that the speaker is the only one he likes among those who come to bury is significant. “Of all those who come here to bury, you alone I like.” (p. 12) The quote suggests that the speaker stands out because they are not weighed down by sorrow or inauthenticity. The individuals, they may face challenges and even experience a sense of loss, as the act of burying the "dead selves" represents recognition that the old masks and identities no longer serve a purpose. So, by choosing to come and go with laughter,

the speaker demonstrates a willingness to embrace their true self and live authentically, without pretense or masks.

Reading The Madman in its entirety is a transformative experience, revealing Gibran's timeless insights on the foolishness of our self-righteousness. This work serves as a wellspring of his enduring wisdom on this topic.

FINDINGS

In *The Madman, His Parables and Poems* (1918), the findings firstly underscore the significant reasons of wearing masks in society. The act of masking, indicating madness, is portrayed as a deliberate response to the challenges of revealing one's true self in a complex societal landscape. In essence, the study reveals a nuanced exploration of how individuals navigate between conforming to societal expectations and expressing their authentic selves, using the metaphor of masks to capture this dynamic interchange. The study explores the idea of fitting in and the feeling of being different.

The second question was related to the consequences of rejecting societal norms and removing all the masks. Society often pushes people to conform, rejecting those who deviate from the perceived norms of "normalcy." The Madman recognizes in a moment of enlightenment the actual value of his authentic self, the essence that lies beneath the masks he once wore. This act of authenticity and self-revelation by Madman is met with various reactions from society. Society pressures individuals to conform and present a polished image, leading to the fear of being seen as different or flawed, and when they don’t conform to the perceived roles of normal humans then the society simply throws them away. When we hide our imperfections behind a mask, we lose an important part of our humanity. Our unique qualities and ability to connect with others come from embracing our "madness."

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the text from the psychoanalytic lens it can be established that the research has been able to meet its set objectives and has been able to answer the questions posed at the start of this research

venture. The normal person, conforming to societal expectations, wears these masks as a form of self-preservation in a world that molds identities for collective purposes. Societal norms force individuals to conform, fostering a fear of nonconformity and rejection, resulting in the marginalization of those who deviate from perceived ideals. The exploration of Lacan's Mirror Stage inside the context of donning and disposing of Madman masks and its consequences sheds new light on the complicated interplay among choice, authenticity, and the human psyche.

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