

PH.D PROJECT REPORT – DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Title: **“The Menace of Madness: Rationalisation, Franken-science, and the Eighteenth-Century Metaphoricity of Unreason” (2007)**

Name of the Research Student: **AHMER NADEEM ANWER**

Supervisor: **PROF S. N. H. JAFRI**

The doctoral research project of AHMER NADEEM ANWER supervised by Prof S.N.H. Jafri and submitted in 2007, was brought to successful completion with the Viva-Voce examination held on 12 October, 2011 at the Department of English and Modern European Languages under the Headship of Professor Shyamala Narayan.

A. N. Anwer’s multi-volume study **“The Menace of Madness: Rationalisation, Franken-science, and the Eighteenth-Century Metaphoricity of Unreason”** undertook an enquiry into the constitutive factors underlying the pervasive engagement with insanity and the irrational in English discourse of the so-styled “age of reason”. Of particular interest for the study was to understand and uncover the pejorative tonality and aspersion impressions surrounding a wide variety of irrational phenomena, led by mental disturbance itself. The thesis, among other things, was an attempt to probe the ‘unobvious meanings’ implicit in such overdetermined references that abound in literary constructs and cultural expressions emerging from the period and terrain under reference.

In order to decipher the peculiar dialectic that both contrapositions and inter-involves “madness” and “reason” in Enlightenment, the study subjected a number of cultural, quasi-political and sub-literary productions and discourses to a New Historicist type of analysis, extending its analytic and exegetical scope to documents and institutional practices within the History of Medicine and History of Psychiatry domains.

Significant parts of the materials examined in these sections of the thesis comprised original study objects hitherto unexposed and unaddressed in academic research.

Using this broad analytic and referential frame the project was thus able to buttress its key findings, central among them being the revelation that additional to the extant medical and scientific literature which sought to theorise the phenomenon of ‘literal’ psychopathology, we also witness the presence of extensive ‘metaphoric’ deployments of “madness” as a term of damning and demonising characterisation, the semantic load and pertinence whereof is best described as “ideological”. In this context, the social-scientific theory of “rationalisation” offered a useful horizon of exegetical tools and referential concepts that helped index the period’s range of insanity references in a way that might reveal what else, besides the cognate medical phenomenon, the term “madness” may have been used to evoke and ‘signify’.

The dissertation’s probing of such ‘buried significations’ unfolded through a series of closely read visual and literary ‘texts’ in which the play of signs and meanings surrounding the binaries ‘reason’ and ‘madness’ was extensively sifted and deciphered along multiple axes so as to indicate just how constitutive and historically saturated was this central antithesis that consumed and preoccupied an entire age. The study concludes with an extensive discussion linchpinned on Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. In this section the range of concerns occupying the project as a whole is pushed to a point of maximal suggestiveness in the reading of the looming ‘crisis’ of a modernity birthed by the position of privilege and authoritative reference accorded to rational science by the project of Enlightenment.