



**BLURRING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN SANITY AND  
INSANITY: A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE USE OF THE FOOL  
TO DECONSTRUCT POLITICIZED INSANITY IN LEONARD  
WOOLF'S 'THE VILLAGE IN THE JUNGLE'**

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**Abstract:**

The present study intends to explore how Leonard Woolf has questioned the boundaries between sanity and insanity in his first novel, *'The Village in the Jungle'*. Arguing that these words are highly embedded with political meaning, the paper proves the two characters in the novel; Silindu and the old beggar resemble the characteristics of the Shakespearean Fool. Thus, the characteristics of the Fool in King Lear are compared with those of Silindu and the beggar in the novel. With the findings, it is expected to encourage students of literature to understand the political character of the polarizing words and emphasize the need to deconstruct and challenge their effect in society to limit and marginalize people.

**Keywords:** sanity, insanity, political meaning, Fool, *The Village in the Jungle*, King Lear

**1. Introduction**

*"If you are not like everybody else, then you are abnormal, if you are abnormal, then you are sick. These three categories, not being like everybody else, not being normal, and being sick are in fact very different but have been reduced to the same thing."* (Foucault, 2006, p. 352)

Literature makes it clear that the judgment of whether somebody is insane or not is a social decision, based on norms and moral values in a given society. The insanity we encounter in literary works could be either clinical or figurative, but when the Renaissance plays present insanity through the Fool it is almost always figurative. Shakespeare, who is often discussed for the significant Fools he has created, proves

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insanity and sanity to be highly political and socially constructed presenting utmost wit through the Fools.

The present study intends to explore how the authors have questioned the boundaries between sanity and insanity, which is highly political with the use of the Fool characters in their literary works. Even if the use of Fools is common in the plays, the present research explores the characters of Silindu, the protagonist and the beggar who appears only in Chapter 8 (p. 152-159) in the novel 'The Village in the Jungle' by Leonard Woolf to prove that their characters represent the Shakespearean Fool, comparing those two characters with the Fool in Shakespeare's 'King Lear'.

### 1.1 Objectives

The research aims at:

- analyzing the theme of sanity vs insanity in 'The Village in the Jungle' by Leonard Woolf, to prove how the word insanity has been endorsed with political meaning that justifies harassment against those who are labeled as insane in the society.
- showing the transcendent boundaries between sanity and insanity in the novel
- analyzing the characters of Silindu and the old beggar in 'The Village in the Jungle' to be the Fools used by the author, comparing them with Lear's Fool.
- encouraging students of literature to understand the political character of the polarizing words and emphasizing the need to deconstruct and challenge their effect in the society to limit and marginalize people.

## 2. Literature Review

### a) Theme of Sanity vs. Insanity in Literature

The theme of sanity vs insanity has been exploited in various genres of literature by many writers relating it to various contexts. Shakespeare in particular explores the theme in a new light by combining both sanity and insanity in the character of the Fool and makes the audience question the thin boundaries between the two.

According to Shafer (2014), madness or insanity is, "a severe and perhaps dangerous state of mind, leading the possessor of the madness to break rules, threaten the status quo, and provoke a general state of anxiety and unrest" and the author further points out it to be a way for the "afflicted" to get away from "society's fetters, liberating them to do what is right rather than what is normal". In the article, "Madness and Difference: Politicizing Insanity in Classical Literary Works," Shafer discusses madness to empower people because, "it operates outside of carefully regulated spheres of acceptability, it suffers none of the impediments that are part of the polite mainstream discourse. And while it often lacks the expected decorum or propriety, it also tends to explore the vistas of thought that were off limits to those who are sane."

Referring to the Visual Thesaurus website, by ThnkMap, Inc, Jesus draws parallels among the following words: folly and foolishness, lunacy, craziness, and insaneness, rage

and fury (the inability of self-control), imbecility, stupidity, betise, and, most important, and unwiseness. An interesting point is brought forth with its link to wisdom as follows.

*“Only in the visual thesaurus of folly can we see that it is also linked to its antonym, wisdom, showing the close relation between wisdom and folly. The link between wisdom and folly is indeed very strong and significant, since fools are frequently taken to be wise and to say things others cannot understand or accept.”* (p. 100)

Accordingly, the boundaries between all the said emotions are thin and writers of literature question the overlapping margins of these emotions in a variety of contexts. Haghshenas (2017) in her article, “The Aesthetics of Mutability in ‘*The Village in the Jungle*’ (1913)” presents various mutable boundaries of gender, social class and animality in the village of Beddagama and puts forward an authentic and shifting vision of the East. Haghshenas describes the novel as one that is “*both animated and shaped by multiple and constant mutations, transformations and reversals*” (2017 p. 1), pointing out how, throughout the novel the borders separating “*humans and animals, men and women, the visible and the invisible*” are so “*porous and indefinable*” (p. 2) making any form of transgression is possible. The author has not discussed the ambiguous boundary of sanity discussed in the novel, which is the major focus of the present paper.

### **b) The Fool in Literature**

Fool, according to Welsford (as qtd in Jesus, 2012, p. 18) is an outsider, living on the margins of society because he is either a real or pretended madman. He further says that the Fool in plays is “*the truth-teller whose real insight was thinly disguised as a form of insanity*” (ibid). Janik (1998) states,

*“... they remain isolated observers, evaluating the world as if they care for nothing. With their pranks and parodies, fools question prevailing order, and their objectivity makes them at once comic individuals who are too removed to suffer and ironists who see existence as absurdity. Fools mock social structures, individual righteousness, passionate personal relationships, and the mutating and fragile underpinning of human thought – language itself. Fools, then, operate as antirulers, offering society skeptical, unencumbered viewpoints that scorn pride and challenge such concepts as logic, cause, reward, and solution.”* (Janik, 1998, p. xiv)

Being in the society, and at the same time distant from it, fools in every literary piece are made to be qualified to comment on the society in general from a wider perspective. These characteristics of the fools qualify them to challenge the viewpoint of the audience or the reader, as they present their ideas with the deep insight being objective about social truths. These characters are made to amuse the spectators or the readers, but the irony is most often when the audience laughs at them, they are actually laughing at themselves.

Being a 'detached commentator', while the serious hero is worried about grave matters, the fool does not care about them and does not believe they are worth worrying about; he takes attention away from problems: "*the serious hero focuses events, forces issues, and causes catastrophes; but the Fool by his mere presence dissolves events, evades issues, and throws doubt on the finality of the fact*" (Welsford 1966, p 324).

Videbaek (1999), discussing the impact of the presence of the fool on stage says that the appearance of the fool changes the perception of the audience of a given scene or may be of the whole play. She argues that the fool appears when the audience needs him, be it to relieve the tension of the play or to serve as a guide to the happenings on stage (pg 3, Quoted on p. 27 Jesus).

Another characteristic of the fool as pointed out by Videbaek is that the fools appear and disappear on stage without any introduction or excuse, and they are not missed when they are not seen.

A clown emerges from nowhere, pulled onto the stage with a rope. He is totally disconnected from the play's plot, and he is given only a short time to captivate the audience before he is thrown off the stage not to be seen again (Videbaek 1999, p. 195).

The fool may appear several times or just once in dramas but most of his appearances are made in a crucial situation. For instance, in Macbeth, the drunkard gatekeeper at the Inverness appears only once on the stage, giving the dramatic relief the audience so much expects to have after the cold-blooded murder of saintly Duncan.

According to Videbaek (1999),

*"Though the clown may appear in one scene or a few scenes only and have very little dialogue written down for him to speak, even small parts prove to be placed at significant turning points in the action."* (p. 1-2)

In "Twelfth Night" (Act III, Scene I, 64-72) Shakespeare presents the characteristics of the fool when Olivia says,

*"This fellow's wise enough to play the fool,  
And do that well craves a kind of wit:  
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,  
The quality of persons, and the time,  
And, like the haggard, check at every feather  
That comes before his eye. This is a practice  
As full of labour as a wise man's art;  
For folly that he wisely shows is fit,  
But wise men, folly-fallen, quite taint their wit."*

A common characteristic of almost all the Fools in Shakespeare is that they show wisdom and quick wit through language, twisting the meaning of words, including puns and riddles in their talk. Another significant characteristic is that the Fool has the power

to foresee and thus makes predictions based on his intuition or social knowledge. The irony is the Shakespearean audience trusts the Fool to reveal the truth that they do not know and enlighten them. With this Shakespeare questions 'madness' as interpreted in the society.

Michel Foucault believes that since the Middle Ages, the madman's word had two possible and very different paths (Foucault *L'Ordre du Discours* 1970, quoted in LV Jesus, 2012 p. 25). It was either taken as unimportant or untrue and thus a madman was forbidden to sign contracts and testify in court. On the other hand, the madmen's discourse is taken to hold strong powers as it contains prophesy. Foucault believes that it was in the theatre where the madman was seen as someone who had possession of hidden truth. According to him, the theatre characters of madmen have taught us that there can be some piece of knowledge even in their often confusing and blurry discourse, and, because of that, we should not simply dismiss them as being seemingly insane (ibid p. 25).

### 3. Material and Methods

The present study analyses the theme of sanity versus insanity in '*The Village in the Jungle*' by Leonard Woolf (1913) by comparing the characters of Silindu and the old beggar who makes a brief appearance in the novel with the Fool in '*King Lear*' by William Shakespeare. The Fool in '*King Lear*' is used for the comparison as Lear's Fool is more significant than the other Fools created by Shakespeare mainly because he makes his appearance more than the other Fools in his plays, making his characteristics more vivid and helping the protagonist comes to terms with reality. The Structuralist notion of Foucault; "*it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together*" (Foucault, 2006, p. 352) is taken into consideration, in analyzing how '*The Village in the Jungle*' transcends the boundaries of sanity and insanity.

### 4. Discussion

#### 4.1 '*King Lear*' by William Shakespeare

'*King Lear*' by William Shakespeare is a tragedy in five acts, written in 1605-06 and published in 1608. Later on, in 1623 he has done a theatrical revision apt for a shortened performance (Bevington, 2020).

In the play, Lear, an old king of Britain, divides his kingdom between his three daughters only to be disheartened by experiencing the depths of human suffering. Being flattered by the phrases of love by his older daughters, Goneril and Ragan he gives away all he has for them, disowning Cordelia, the youngest daughter for her genuine silence. Lear quickly learns his blunder, as the older daughters start betraying him. Slowly going insane, he flees his daughters' houses and wanders on a heath with his Fool and another loyal nobleman in disguise. In the end, Lear dies out of grief learning that his youngest daughter was executed in prison in her attempt to save Lear.

The Fool accompanies Lear, protecting him in his hard times on the heath, and he makes Lear understand his own folly, using his license as the Fool to tell anything directly to the king without being punished.

#### 4.2 'The Village in the Jungle' by Leonard Woolf

'The Village in the Jungle', the first novel written by Leonard Woolf, was published in 1913 on his return to England after his seven years' service in Ceylon (present Sri Lanka) as a colonial administrative officer. The novel depicts Ceylon under British colonial rule, and a village that was gradually taken away by a jungle. Woolf's authentic understanding of Ceylon, its people, their beliefs, animals, and jungles are seen throughout the novel. The protagonist, Silindu, is openly condemned, psychologically and verbally harassed by the villagers for his madness, low caste, and being a *vedda* or a hunter. Living a very independent life, he makes his twin daughters Punchi Manika and Hinnihami independent in their will, different from the other village girls. Three of them are constantly tormented by the ill-will of Babehami; the village headman, Punchirala; the village medical practitioner, and Fernando; a money-lending trader who comes from the town. Being silent and patient over the injustices and condemnation to the extreme of losing his younger daughter, Hinnihami due to the extreme inhuman cruelty of the villagers, Silindu kills both Babehami and Fernando in seeking justice for her elder daughter Punchi manika and her husband, Babun. Silindu was sentenced to death and on his journey to the prison, he meets a 'mad' old beggar who advises him not to sin and to contemplate his sins. Silindu, finding great solace in his guidance, learns a Pali stanza from him and continues to recite it throughout his stay at the prison. He finds peace in mind and lives happily in the prison. The novel ends with the village in the jungle being taken over by the jungle.

#### 4.3 Politicizing 'Insanity' in 'The Village in the Jungle'

As Hall (2001) points out even if we "*naively believe*" that language is under our control, it "*largely controls us*" (p. 138), with the union between language and power manipulating us by using those politically charged words to regulate the society. Once a person is labeled as insane, he/she is considered the other justifying discrimination, harassments, acts of cruelty and condemnation. Sanity and insanity are essentially social constructed ideas that marginalize and set limitations on people. Through literature, these conditions can be explored to understand the political character of such binary oppositions in order to deconstruct them and challenge their effect. Woolf brings out the theme, of sanity vs insanity as one of the so many boundaries which are transcendently presented throughout the novel. At the very outset of the novel in terms of the jungle, when Woolf writes he introduces the transcendental effect of the so-called boundaries as follows.

*"The jungle surrounded it, overhung it, continually pressed in upon it. It stood at the door of the houses, always ready to press in upon the compounds and open spaces, to break through the mud huts, and to choke up the tracks and paths."* (Woolf 2007: 3)

The first introduction to the village comparing it to a “*see of trees*” to mean the sea and the jungle are ‘*interchangeable settings*’ confirms the ‘*dynamic and constantly mutating*’ conditions of the village (Haghshenas, 2017 p 3). The distorting boundaries between the village and the jungle, and the sea and the jungle symbolize the upcoming transitions in the novel. The present paper discusses how the margins of sanity and insanity are shown to be blurred throughout the novel until its final culmination where Silindu, the protagonist who is known as “*tikak pissu*” (slightly mad) accidentally encounters another ‘mad’ beggar. Through this meeting and the insight presented by the old beggar Woolf suggests to his audience that just as the other boundaries he focuses on in the novel, the margin between sanity and insanity too are indefinable and blurring. He thus draws our attention to the insanity present in all of us, or the issues of interpreting ‘sanity’.

Language is one of the main unifying elements of a nation, or society and ironically politicization of language is prevalent in almost all societies at different levels. Language becomes politicized when it is used to divide people into various groups or discriminate a group of people against services that are available in society. The encyclopedia of world problems & human potential presents an example of politicizing the language taking the word ‘*gypsy*’ as an example. According to a contemporary Concise Dictionary of Slovak Language (1997), the word Gypsy is given additional meanings like, “*liar, wanderer, someone who looks like a Gypsy because of his dark complexion or affection, animal of a dark or black colour (horse, dog), Gypsy life is a wandering one, Gypsy blood means intemperate nature of someone, Gypsy roasted meat is one that is roasted into a dark colour. Gypsy used as a verb unambiguously means to lie. It is also common to say about someone that he is dirty as a Gypsy*” (Web, 2022). In the novel, ‘*The Village in the Jungle*’ too, Woolf uses this word referring to same connotations, and also the word ‘*vedda*’. Woolf gives a footnote to the word ‘*vedda*’ as “*The vedds are the aborigines of Ceylon, and are or were hunters. They are often associated with Yakkas or devils*” (p. 18). Yet, the Sri Lankan audience understands the reference to Silindu and his family as ‘*vedda*’ has more discriminative connotations in it, just as the word ‘*vesi*’; is an extremely derogative term used in Sri Lankan society to discriminate women.

The theme of madness is brought in to the novel, ‘*The Village in the Jungle*’ with the introduction of the protagonist, as ‘*tikak pissu*’ (slightly mad). The writer lists many reasons why he was thus called by the villagers.

- a) He seemed only at first sight a little more taciturn and inert than the other villagers.
- b) Silindu slept with his eyes open like some animals, and very often he would moan, whine, and twitch in his sleep like a dog; he slept as lightly as a deer, and would start up from the heaviest sleep in an instant fully awake.
- c) When not in the jungle he squatted all day long in the shadow of his hut, staring before him, and no one could tell whether he was asleep or awake.
- d) Although he knew the jungle better than any man in the whole district, and although he was always wandering through it, his fear of it was great.
- e) Silent, inert, and sullen he worked in the chena or squatted about his compound

The villagers establish their power over Silindu and his family through the use of political discourse that discriminate them from the rest of the villagers because the unique independence of the family was considered a threat by the other villagers. For instance, out of jealousy of the way Karlinahami brought up the twins of Silindu, Nanchohami, the headman's wife says,

*"I pity you, Karlinahami, to live in the house of a madman, and to bring up his children shameslee, having no children of your own. They are vedda children, and will be vedda women, wndering in the jungle like men"* (p. 17)

As Shafer (2014, p. 43) mentions, *"once a person is branded o be mad, he/she will never be accorded the same power which was granted earlier"*, and the *"otherness justifies acts of cruelty"*. This is proven throughout the novel with the harassment inflicted upon Silindu's family.

When Silindu tells Babehmi in his last conversation with him before the murder,

*"I was thinking, thinking. You know they call me mad in the village"* (p. 130)

*"They laughed at me then. A foolish old man, a mad old man, eh? Ha, ha! Little Arachchi, you have laughed at me too – for years, haven't you, haven't you?"* (ibid)

Here, Silindu calls himself mad to accomplish his goal, making it possible to sarcastically tell Arachchi that he was not foolish in understanding how he has been ill-treated by him. Taking up the role to be mad is the only way for Silindu to challenge Babehamy, who rules the society that claims to be *"saint"*. Woolf presents the fact that in order to fight against the perpetrators of injustice and cruelty one needs to assume the role of the *"other"* a person living away from the sane society. Here, the attempt of Silindu resembles Prince Hamlet who also pretends to be mad to challenge the authority. Likewise, Woolf by presenting Silindu to be mad gives them the authority to question the status quo.

#### **4.4 'Silindu' and the 'old beggar' as the Fools 'The Village in the Jungle'**

This section brings out many similarities between the Fool in *'King Lear'* and the two characters of *'Silindu'* and the *'old beggar'* in *'The Village in the Jungle'* to prove that Woolf followed the characteristics of the Shakespearean Fool in developing these two characters to demonstrate how insanity transcends its boundaries and how it is politically charged with meaning.

Wise and with the ability to predict, the Fool in *'King Lear'* is an outstanding character for the way he criticizes his master, the king. Taking the advantage of being a fool, that he will not be punished by the king, he speaks his truth enlightening both the audience and the king. Leonard Woolf also presents the character of the old beggar with this ability to predict and talk stark truth. Woolf's beggar is equipped with both social

knowledge and the strange power to see through the future. The dirty English newspaper through which he sees Silindu's daughter lying in the hut crying proves that he actually possesses a special power, and on the other hand he advises Silindu for his future with the knowledge he has gained by studying the society. He says that because of this ability to see through things through the piece of the newspaper that the other people call him mad. Thus, the similarity between the Shakespearean fools, especially the Fool in *King Lear*, and the old beggar can be seen as they all are considered insane because of their ability to predict and tell the truth, which may be not what the society wants to listen to.

*"The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool"* (Act V, Scene 1, page 2)

Proving this statement Shakespeare has included in '*As you like it*,' Lear's fool accepts his folly, and thus he is able to see through others' follies. Even if the Fool says both King Lear and Kent are fools, they do not accept their follies, and thus continue to make blunders. Thus, the Fool proves himself to be a wise man with his acceptance of his folly (Act I, Scene 4, 137-44). The old beggar who appears in the novel, '*The Village in the Jungle*' on page 152, for the first time in the novel also accepts that he is 'mad' thus baring similarities with the Fool in '*King Lear*'. The beggar says,

*"The man is not mad, no more mad than you, or you – but I – I am mad. So at least they say. Why do they say that I'm mad?"* (p. 153)

Here, Woolf brings forth the theme of madness and questions the reader of true madness. The beggar also says,

*"I'm mad perhaps. But very often it is they who seem to me to want but a little to be mad."* (p. 153)

Woolf here enlightens the reader on the social interpretations of madness. If to utter truth is called madness, as the beggar says, "*it is they who seem to me to want but a little to be mad.*"

Also, the old beggar constructively criticises Silindu in the novel, just as the Fool does to Lear. Even if Silindu is not from the Royalty, he is the protagonist of the novel; a hero with faults just like Lear. Just like Lear, Silindu also becomes a victim of the society and not understanding his own follies continues to think himself to be correct, resembling Lear.

The Fool once calls himself a 'sweet fool' and Lear a 'bitter fool' making King Lear the actual Fool in the drama. This is probably the only play, except *Romeo and Juliet* where Romeo also places him to be a 'fool', where the protagonist is accused thus. However, from this Shakespeare apart from the *harmartia* of his protagonists, exposes follies in his character making them a common man just like each one in the audience.

Even in Act I, Scene 5 (34-48), the Fool claims that his master *"wouldst make a good fool"* (Act I, Scene 4, 137-44). The Fool repeats this, when he says, *"thou souldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise"* (Act I, Scene 5, 43-4) meaning that Lear lacked wisdom and did not know how to deal with the fact that he was getting old. Thus, he did not know to whom should he give his kingdom after his rule. With the continuous references to Lear as a 'fool', Shakespeare creates two fools in his drama; Lear, the real fool in making unwise judgements, and the character of the Fool, who conceals his wit in madness to be willingly misunderstood by the others to be a 'fool'. Lear was unable to see the truth about the world when he was sane, but in semi-insanity state, he understands his follies. Shakespeare again questions the madness as it is interpreted in the society bringing the central paradox in the drama: *"reason in madness and madness in reason"*. In *'The Village in the Jungle'* however, Silindu is referred to be mad from the beginning. He was thus referred to in his village and then the other people he comes across in his walk towards the prison also start to call him thus. But, ironically, it is in this journey that Silindu comes into terms with his follies and determines to correct himself gaining wisdom through the truth of the world taught by the beggar.

In Act I, Scene 4 (115-124) the Fool advises Lear and all of us on guarding one's behaviour. He says, we should not ostentate our wealth, not tell others everything we know and lend what we possess. We also should listen to what others have to say, and weigh in our minds whether they are relevant or believable, and spend more time at home.

*"Have more than thou showest,  
Speak less than thou knowest,  
Lend less than thou owest,  
Ride more than thou goest,  
Learn more than thou trowest,  
Set less than thou throwest;  
Leave thy drink and thy whore,  
And keep in-a-door,  
And thou shalt have more  
Than two tens to a score."*

The old beggar in *'The Village in the Jungle'* also instructs Silindu on guarding one's own behaviour. As the Fool advises the king to stay "in-a-door" as much as possible avoiding the company of the outside world, here beggar says the same in a different way. The beggar finds isolation, not being attached to others. He says he goes from village to village, town to town, and from jungle to jungle. Thus, he does not stay in a place for too long. Also, he advises Silindu to guide himself on the path of virtue, protecting the five precepts.

As Welsford (1966, p. 256) states, *"his tactless jokes and snatches of song spring so evidently from genuine grief"* the Fool is sorry for the king, and despite he acted wrong, the

fool wishes he had not. Thus, there is sorrow underneath his sarcasm. Despite criticising blatantly, the Fool repeats that Lear is 'nothing' now. Once he says, I had rather be any kind o' thing than a fool: and yet I would not be thee, uncle; (Act I, Scene 4, 185-186). He then repeats in a few lines that come after this, that Lear is "*an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing*" (Act I, Scene 4, 187-90). Despite how harsh his criticisms are against Lear, he sympathizes with him and wants him to be better in his situation. The harshness of his words gradually opens his eyes of Lear to his follies. The same bitterness could be seen in the novel when the beggar openly accuses Silindu for being a hunter and a killer.

*"Each is a sin, for I told you, didn't I...It was a greater sin to kill them than the other two. For those two, you say, were bringing evil upon you; but what did the deer and pig do to you? Eh, hunter?"* (p. 156)

Shakespeare also brings out another truth to the audience through the Fool. Lear, from the beginning, curses his daughters bitterly. Once he calls Goneril a "*degenerate bastard*" (Act I, Scene 4, 280-1), and then to both the daughters he says, "*you unnatural hags, I will have such revenges on you both*" (Act II, Scene 4, 280-1). He curses them because he believes that his daughters caused all the trouble that he was undergoing, and they are to be blamed for his plight. He never admits that he was completely responsible for his present situation. Silindu also tells the beggar,

*"But surely, I have committed no sin. All these years they plagued me, and did evil to me. Was I to be starved by them, and my daughter starved? Was I to allow them to take her from me and from Babun?"* (p. 155)

Listening to this, the old beggar makes Silindu understand how according to Buddhism killing is a sin, and on whatever grounds it cannot be justified. He gradually makes Silindu understand killing animals, despite being a hunter is a sin. He further teaches him about the kammic influence of sorrow and shows it through animals who suffer in the jungle. When other people around laugh at the beggar, Silindu throws himself down at the feet of the old beggar, and '*touching his feet with his hands burst out*'.

*"It is true, father, it is true what you say. I did not understand before, though I knew; yes, I knew it well. I have seen it all so long in the jungle. But I did not understand. .... Always this killing, killing, killing; everything afraid: the deer and the pig and the jackal after them, and the leopard himself. Always evil there. No peace, no rest – it was rest I wanted. It is true father, I have seen it, it is the punishment for their sins. And always evil for me too, there; hunger always and trouble always."* (p. 157)

Lear contemplates on his wrong doings and says, "*I did her wrong*" and "*I will forget my nature. So, kind a father!*" understanding he is responsible for his present situation of

being homeless. He furthers, *"Oh, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!"* (Act I, Scene V, 45-6). The same fear of going mad is repeated in Act II, Scene 4 *"Oh, Fool, I shall go mad!"* (288) and then in Act III, Scene 2, *"My wits begin to turn"* (67). Silindu also fears about his future that he would be too late to correct himself, following the path suggested by the old beggar. Thus, he tries his best in learning the Pali stanzas, which is not easy.

It was a difficult task, and it was only after innumerable repetitions that Silindu, at last, got it by heart. When he had at last done so, he sat mumbling it over to himself again and again, so as not to forget it (p. 158).

Physical humor cannot be much seen in Lear's Fool even if that is a characteristic Shakespeare has used in many of his other Fools. Thus, Shakespeare's motif in using Lear's Fool is to teach the truth about society and life in general to the king as well as the audience. Even in *'The Village in the Jungle'* the character of the old beggar does not add amusement to the novel, but it definitely brings comic relief when other people laugh at what he says, and the way he shuffles slowly forward into the circle of other people discussing Silindu's murders, in the same squatting position. And his laugh when Silindu worships him is the only genuine laugh that comes in the novel which also adds to the relief of the readers' tension of a series of tragic events.

Lear's Fool is made with so much deep compassion for the human condition and he is well aware of the weaknesses of people and human society in general. His knowledge seems to have been acquired, through observation of the world. This understanding might have been possible for him because he is excluded or marginalized from society to be a Fool, thus he sees society from a distance, without being a part of that. The old beggar in *'The Village in the Jungle'* also expresses his sorrow for people who are busy with their lives committing sins and not meditating to achieve peace of mind.

All this doing and doing, - running round and round like the red ants - thieving, stabbing, killing, cultivating and this and that. Is there much good or wisdom in such a life? It seems to me full of evil- nothing but evil and trouble. Do they ever sit down and rest, do they ever meditate? Desire and desire again, and no fulfillment ever (p. 153).

*"Lear's madness makes him see things clearly. He calls himself a fool, but talks more sense than when he was sane.*

*Pray, do not mock me:*

*I am a very foolish fond old man,*

*Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;*

*And, to deal plainly,*

*I fear I am not in my perfect mind.*

*Methinks I should know you, and know this man;*

*Yet I am doubtful for I am mainly ignorant*

*What place this is; and all the skill I have*

*Remembers not these garments; nor I know not*

*Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me."* (Act IV, Scene 7, 60- 9)

Shakespeare makes his audience understand that rather than living a life of a 'wise' man knowing nothing and practicing cruelty, being a madman who gains wisdom and learns about the society around him. "*Misery teaches Lear things he never could know as king*" (Quoted by Jesus (p. 55). David Bevington and David Scott Kastan in their introduction to *King Lear* 1998, p. xv). Silindu in '*The Village in the Jungle*' too learns the truth in life when he meets the old beggar, and starts to practice the path which brings him the solace of mind.

He began, however, to forget the village and Punchi Menika, and all the trouble that had gone before. He repeated the Pali stanza many times during the day. He was very happy; he grew fat upon the good prison food (p. 159).

Just as Shakespeare, Woolf also uses insanity as a tool to show the politics operating in a society where to accomplish the goal of criticizing contemporary society. Silindu is portrayed to be mad because he is different from the others, smarter than the others in hunting, raised children unconventionally disregarding patriarchal gender notions, etc., so society considered him dangerous and threatening. When a person is branded insane, he is considered the other and could be exempted from the rights and privileges the other 'sane' people in the society enjoy. Silindu, later on, uses his 'insanity' as a weapon to act against the injustices breaking the social pressure heaped upon him on his as well as his family members' lives. The mad beggar, slandered to be mad gets the freedom to criticize society freely and act in a way he understands what is right rather than being controlled by the set norms of regularity in the society. The theme of madness in *King Lear* also is used for better understanding and fighting the evil forces operating around Lear in society.

## 6. Conclusion

The references to the novel, '*The Village in the Jungle*' show that insanity is based on being different, and in the binary opposition, the word madness or insanity is placed below the 'other' term; sanity or else the 'other' term; sanity is made to be more privileged than this one. The analysis of the said theme in the present paper proved how the two words, sanity and insanity transcend their boundaries, especially with the labeled 'insane' characters acting 'sane' and the so-called 'sane' are acting 'insane.' Demonstrating characteristics of Lear's Fool, Woolf has developed his protagonist Silindu and the old beggar to unravel the politics coated in the word mad/insane.

As teachers of literature, the students should be made aware of the power of language to create inequalities making a marginalized class and encourage irony in the society that one has to or pretends to be 'mad' to challenge the status quo.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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BLURRING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN SANITY AND INSANITY: A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE USE OF THE FOOL TO DECONSTRUCT POLITICIZED INSANITY IN LEONARD WOOLF'S '*THE VILLAGE IN THE JUNGLE*'

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