

**Ph.D. Student:** Zaher Alajlani  
**Matriculation number:** 14383  
**Supervisor:** Professor Corin Braga  
**Institution:** Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
**Email:** *zaher\_al\_ajlani@hotmail.com*  
**Dissertation Title:** *Harbingers of Doom: Mad Science and the Death of Meaning*  
**Dissertation Summary**

In this dissertation, I investigate the model of the mad scientist in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein* and its reverberations in Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Jules Verne's 1892 novel *The Carpathian Castle (Le Château des Carpathes)*, and H. G. Wells's 1896 novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. I focus on the contextual sociohistorical and religious atmosphere of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the trope first took its modern shape. Therefore, I provide an in-depth investigation of the clash between science and religion and the issue of meaning and its link to morality, especially in terms of nihilism and objective morality. Then, I review the genealogy of the mad scientist archetype and probe into his madness. I approach the mad scientist from a Jungian perspective. The thesis is divided into six chapters in addition to the introduction and the conclusion.

Titled "Mad Science and the Problem of Meaning," the introduction narrows down the scope on the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an age of both scientific advancement and religious revivalism, a matter that led to the emergence of new paradigms of meaning that replaced long-standing ones. The introduction also touches upon the relevance of Darwinism, understanding nature, man's new role in the world, and the link between morality and meaning. These ideas represent the context in which the mad scientist trope rose and how its narrative can be seen as morally challenging. The madness of the mad scientist is framed in relation to 1) the destruction of meaning stemming from the annihilation of opposites, 2) an extreme sense of rationalism/scientism that ends in irrationalism, 3) mental agony, 4) creativity, and 5) tragedy.

The first chapter, “Difficulties Arising from Anachronism and Definitions,” is a brief exploration of the main two challenges facing this study: 1) The use of the term “archetype” to describe the mad scientist and 2) the issue of anachronism one may encounter when tracing the origin of the mad scientist archetype in medieval narratives and ancient myths.

“A Brief History of the Science-Religion Relationship in the West: From 19th-Century Polemics to New Atheism” is the dissertation’s second chapter. It probes into the definitions of religion and science, examines the roots of the clash between the two, and reviews the different arguments pertaining to their potential relationship (i.e., warfare and non-overlapping magisteria). Major themes investigated in this chapter include the definition of religion and its difficulty, man’s religious nature, benefits of religion, Marx’s view on religion, Nietzsche’s view on religion, the link between religion and meaning, types of religion, the role of dichotomy in culture, Karl Popper’s Demarcation issue, Francis Bacon’s method, and several notable ideas of Stephen Jay Gould, William Draper, Andrew Dickson White, Richard Dawkin, Christopher Hitchens, William Lane Craig, Charles Hodge, B. Russell, and Lawrence Principe.

Chapter three, “Morality and Immorality: From the Age of Absolutism to the Age of Indifference,” attempts to define morality and discuss the notions of objective morality, moral nihilism, and moral relativism while also investigating the role of religion in constructing shared meaning and shaping societal views on morality. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the significance of faith to the 19th-century notion of morality, especially in relation to the then-nascent archetype of the mad scientist. Key ideas in this chapter include the significance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; religious revivalism vs. skepticism; the definition of morality, its types, and evolution; atheism

vs. theism; the moral argument; science as the basis of morality; ancient views of moral diversity; and moral nihilism.

The fourth chapter, “The Mad Scientist: Subversion in Theory and Practice,” examines the precursory tropes that preceded the Frankensteinian mad scientist epitome and reviews the early texts that feature it—from the Greek mythology of Prometheus to Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. In this chapter, I also present a psychological profile of the archetype mainly based on Carl Jung’s views on the psyche and the Jehovah complex. The chapter is divided into four subchapters: 4.1) Madness and the Mad Scientist, 4.2) The Origin of the Mad Scientist Trope, 4.3) Psychological Perspective, and 4.4) Conclusion: Psychological Profiling of the Mad Scientist. In this chapter, I look into anti-science religious cults originating in the 19th century, as well as the origin of the mad scientist archetype, definition of the mad scientist, definition of madness, madness as rebellion, madness as creativity, madness and the true self, types of madness, the mad scientist as a negator of meaning, madness as a master narrative, Plato’s types of madness, the myth of Prometheus, Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Unbound*, the Marlovian hero, Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, loss of meaning in the mad scientist’s universe, phenomenology, psychological profiling of the mad scientist, Jung’s structure of the psyche, Jungian shadow, individuation, mis-individuation, God complex, Jehovah complex, among others.

“Shelley’s *Frankenstein: The Frontier of Madness and Terror*” is the title of the fifth chapter. Its scope is to investigate Shelley’s *Frankenstein* as the modern mode of the mad scientist archetype, the harbinger of doom. The Jungian theoretical approach outlined in Chapter four is used to approach the character of Victor and underscore his madness, nihilism, God complex, self-destruction, and the loss of meaning in his universe. Concepts touched upon here involve the origins of the trope of the rising dead,

significance of *Frankenstein*, history of writing *Frankenstein*, negation of death and the loss of meaning, Victor's narcissism, and Lovecraft's cosmic horror and *Frankenstein*.

Chapter six is titled "Echoes of Madness: The Reverberations of the Frankensteinian Mad Scientist in Notable 19th Century Novels." In this chapter, I investigate the mad scientists in Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Jules Verne's 1892 novel *The Carpathian Castle (Le Château des Carpathes)*, and H. G. Wells' 1896 novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. The chapter is divided into four subchapters. Its conclusion aims to compare and contrast these mad scientists while still focusing on their common traits.

"The Battlefields of Meaning: Modernity, New-Age Cults, and the Mad Scientist" is the title of the conclusion, which focuses on the importance of the study of the mad scientist, references the science-fiction influenced suicide cult of Heaven's Gate, summarizes the main points of the study, and concludes that "mad scientists are the harbingers of doom whose tragedies foreshadowed an age of meaninglessness to come" (241).