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## “The judges of normality are present everywhere”

Some critical thoughts on Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish* presented through an analysis of Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

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## Abstract

This thesis on individual heterogeneity and institutional medical care and education in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) and Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) focuses on 'otherness' and psychological variance within Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975). The thesis aims to investigate how 'otherness' is treated within two different institutions represented in the novels – the psychiatric ward in Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest* and the school in Haddon's *Curious Incident*. Using Foucault's aspects on madness and mental illness in his *Madness and Civilization*, the thesis argues that the patients in Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest* are a perfect illustration of Foucault's 'Stultifera Navis'. Because the patients are labeled as 'the other' and 'the abnormal' in society, they are isolated, alienated, dehumanized, normalized and stigmatized within an institution that has the same structures of a totalitarian system. Erving Goffman's ideas of stigma is used to illustrate the extremely negative consequences of labeling an individual as 'abnormal', as it decreases an individual's quality of life and self-esteem. Furthermore, Foucault's different elements of disciplinary power presented in *Discipline and Punish* are carefully examined in order to explore the totalitarian structures that the medical staff operates upon the patients' bodies. The interpretation of the *Cuckoo's Nest* investigates how modes of power dehumanize the patients' individuality with the attempt to create Foucaultian 'docile', 'productive', 'normal' and 'better' bodies. The interpretation offers a detailed description of inmate Chief Bromden's critical point of view of the Combine institution and his understanding of how it suppresses and normalizes every form of individuality. The unstable power relation between the Big Nurse and McMurphy is investigated, where it is argued that the patients *and* the medical staff are all menials of a totalitarian system that controls and regulates them. In contrast to the controlling and suppressing institution illustrated in the *Cuckoo's Nest*, Haddon portrays a much more improved institution in *The Curious Incident*. The school is beneficial in Christopher's life as it focuses on a people-oriented system where inclusive education and the single individual's abilities are highly valued. The thesis invites for a different interpretation of *The Curious Incident*, as it looks beyond Christopher's diagnosis and rather explores the school as a well-functioning institution that supports individuals who are labeled as 'abnormal' by diagnostic systems and a conventional society. Foucault's philosophical treatise and Kesey's and Haddon's novels contribute to change radically concepts of normality, difference and

otherness for the sake of cognitive acceptance of human diversity and social reform of the important democratic institutions of individual thinking, arts, social care and education.

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# Introduction

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“The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the ‘social-worker’-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements”<sup>1</sup>.

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Michel Foucault’s theories are radical to most philosophical discourses, especially the enlightenment positions of David Hume, René Descartes and the positivism of Karl Popper. Foucault’s theories are challenging to any authoritarian mindset, and to social structures of exclusion, especially within institutions. Therefore, Foucault is significant to our age because his philosophy defends radical thinking and criticizes the structuring of social systems that affect our larger world. At a social level, his theories are important for the development of health care, education and literature, which are three main institutions in democratic society. Only through a paradigm shift, which Foucault triggers, is it possible to re-interpret and to change basic concepts in society that stigmatize and isolate specific groups of individuals. Foucault challenges our assumptions of ‘otherness’. He additionally highlights the importance of studying and interpreting historical events because we need to learn about the past in order to change the present. This thesis on individual heterogeneity and institutional medical care and education in Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962) and Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) focuses on ‘otherness’ and psychological variance within Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975).

The central core in Foucault’s philosophy is the focus on a specific group of individuals that is labeled as ‘abnormal’ in society. Foucault explores the treatment of ‘otherness’ and how it has changed through historical shifts. Being labeled as ‘abnormal’ and as ‘the other’ by a larger system or institution of diagnosis, medical care and education is, for Foucault, always negative. An important point that he makes is the fact that ‘abnormal’ individuals are always suppressed, isolated, dehumanized and stigmatized by a powerful authority that attempts to

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison*. London: The Penguin Group, 1977:304



regulate and to control all individuals. According to Foucault, the individual is a product of power. Foucault always sides with the individual against the powers that be.

In *Madness and Civilization*, he particularly concentrates on the treatment of the mentally ill who always have been treated as outcasts in society. Foucault argues that the institutionalization of the mentally ill in the Classical Age transformed ‘madness’ into ‘mental illness’. In other words, mental illness is a social construction. During the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, ‘madness’ or ‘insanity’ was far more accepted as a supernatural and inexplicable gift given by God. It was perceived as something that was part of one’s own nature rather than something *other* and uncanny. In the introduction of Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* written by David Cooper, he argues that

Madness, as Foucault makes so impressively clear in this remarkable book, is a way of seizing in extremis the racinating groundwork of the truth that underlies our more specific realization of what we are about. The truth of madness is what madness is. What madness is is a form of vision that destroys itself by its own choice of oblivion in the face of existing forms of social tactics and strategy. Madness, for instance, is a matter of voicing the realization that I am (or you are) Christ (vii).

Roy Boyne describes ‘madness’ as something that is both inexplicable and explicable – inexplicable in the way it is difficult to grasp and to understand, and explicable in the way it is a false illusion of a constructed flaw that must be standardized.

On the one hand, madness is inexplicable and hold out the threat of dark and unknown regions. On the other hand, madness is explicable; it is foolishness and illusion, a condition of error which has some prior cause. The line of cleavage, then, is between the Other and the Same, between the transcendental and the empirical, between the sublime and the mundane, between fear and control, and ultimately perhaps between the bright hope of difference and the monotony of bourgeois reason (15-16).

‘Madness’ is a matter of Unreason which deviates from Reason. Foucault explores the negative consequences of Enlightenment, where the birth of the asylum led to the eternal confinement of ‘madmen’ and those who deviated from the social norms. Mental illness could be observed, conceptualized, categorized, controlled, regulated and suppressed within the walls of institutions. It was the beginning of the process of constructing ‘mental illness’ as a stigma that was forced upon an ‘abnormal’ body. The enlightenment of ‘madness’ and the birth of the asylum created a gap, a division between normality and abnormality in society. This division, according to Foucault, is the root to all suppression and dehumanization of individuals that are labeled as ‘the other’.

A definition of ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’ is difficult to offer, as it is not that simple

to find one clear definition to each term. The phenomena are not straight forward, and there are no definite black and white borders. In order to understand the dehumanizing effect that ‘otherness’ has on the body, several critics attempt to define ‘otherness’.

Zygmunt Bauman explains ‘otherness’ in terms of binary opposites:

...abnormality is the other of the norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health, barbarity the other of civilization, animal the other of human, woman the other of man, stranger the other of the native, enemy the other of friend, ‘them’ the other of ‘us’, insanity the other of reason, foreigner the other of state subject, lay public the other of expert. Both sides depend on each other, but the dependence is not symmetrical. The second side depends on the first for its contrived and enforced isolation. The first depends on the second for its self-assertion (14).

According to Jean-Francois Staszak, ‘otherness’ is rather an issue of ethnocentrism, where ‘otherness’ is the result of a discursive process by which

...a dominant in-group (“Us”, the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them”, the Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negotiation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination. To state it naively, difference belongs to the realm of fact and otherness belongs to the realm of discourse (2).

Staszak further goes on to highlight the consequences of othering, which classifies individuals into two hierarchical groups – them and us – where ‘us’ is always superior to ‘them’.

The out-group is only coherent as a group as a result of its opposition to the in-group and its lack of identity. This lack is based on stereotypes that are largely stigmatizing and obviously simplistic. The in-group constructs one or more others, setting itself apart and giving itself an identity. Otherness and identity are two inseparable sides of the same coin. The Other only exists relative to the Self, and vice versa (2).

Andrew Okolie offers another explanation of the term ‘otherness’, where he argues that the two groups ‘us’ and ‘the other’ are interrelated because a group defines itself in relation to others. Okolie argues that this is because

...identity has little meaning without the “other”. So, by defining itself a group defines others. Identity is rarely claimed or assigned for its own sake. These definitions of self and others have purposes and consequences. They are tied to rewards and punishment, which may be material or symbolic. There is usually an expectation of gain or loss as a consequence of identity claims. This is why identities are contested. Power is implicated here, and because groups do not have equal powers to define both *self* and the *other* (44).

‘Otherness’ then, is always inferior to the superior group that is considered as ‘normal’. Anne Waldschmidt defines ‘normality’ as an average that

...involves comparing people with each other in light of a standard...Normality...refers to the existence of behaviors or characteristics that are regarded as customary, and whose statistical documentation can become basis of guidelines of standards...Statistical normality, as an ordering category, refers to the ongoing production of a mean or an average, that is, symbolic or factual production of normal distribution curves (194).

Waldschmidt, who adapts Foucault’s critical point of view, considers Western society as ‘the government of deviance’, where society seeks to normality as the “decisive point of orientation” (191). The process of standardizing and normalizing everything that deviates from the average of normality takes place *everywhere* in society. Whereas ‘normality’ is always positive, ‘abnormality’ is always negative.

The standardization and normalization of individuals that are considered to deviate from the social norms is a stigmatizing process that Foucault strongly criticizes. He focuses especially on the authority’s power that is acted upon the ‘abnormal’ individual in his *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault explores how authority suppresses single individuals within institutions that practice disciplinary power. The purpose of practicing disciplinary power is to create ‘docile’ and productive bodies that obey the system’s rules, routines and norms. Normalization of ‘otherness’ dehumanizes the individual as there is no room for individuality and freedom. Foucault argues that this institutionalization of individuals is always negative, as the individual is suppressed and imprisoned within a powerful totalitarian system.

In a larger context, the authority of society and institutions stigmatizes extraordinary individuals by determining that these individuals are ‘less worth’, ‘weak’, ‘inferior’, ‘different’, ‘abnormal’ in contrast to the regular average. Erving Goffman’s ideas of stigma is relevant in accordance to Foucault’s philosophy, as it highlights the suppression of ‘the other’. Stigma is part of the process of dehumanizing an individual which decreases the individual’s quality of life and self-esteem.

Within Foucault’s philosophical framework and Goffman’s critical meditations upon stigma, this thesis explores the structure of two different institutions, the psychiatric ward in Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and the school in Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. It investigates how these two different institutions are organized and how the authority in these institutions treat ‘otherness’. In addition, the thesis takes a closer look on how the institutions’ treatment of ‘otherness’ affects

the single individual.

Chapter one in this thesis serves for a detailed description of Foucault's philosophy, Goffman's ideas of stigma and narrative point of view as an important narrative strategy, which draws the framework for a further analysis of the two novels. Chapter two portrays an in-depth interpretation of Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest* and how the authority in the psychiatric ward works upon the single individual. The interpretation of the novel reflects how Foucault's elements of disciplinary power are practiced by the authority, and how it suppresses, controls, regulates, dehumanizes and stigmatizes the patients. The analysis concentrates on Chief Bromden's understanding of the Combine, which he interprets through his critical point of view. It also investigates the medical staff's authoritarian role towards the patients and how they operate within a totalitarian system. The contradictions and similarities between the Big Nurse and McMurphy are further examined. This is because the Big Nurse is a representation of the powerful authority and McMurphy of the outcasts in society. The purpose with chapter two is to illustrate the victimization of *every* single character in the novel, which means that the patients *and* the medical staff mirror the production of productive and 'normal' bodies that obey and serve the system. This chapter is additionally a reflection of Foucault's critical aspects represented in his *Madness and Civilization*. The patients in the *Cuckoo's Nest* portray 'the other' in society that are always suppressed, isolated, alienated, dehumanized and stigmatized. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault highlights the confinement of people who do not conform to the standards of society and institutions:

We have yet to write history of that other form of madness, by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbors and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness... In the serene world of mental illness, modern man no longer communicates with the madman: the man of madness communicates with society only by the intermediary of an equally abstract reason which is order, physical and moral constraint, the anonymous pressure of the group, the requirement of conformity (xi-xii).

Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident* counteracts this statement. Chapter three in this thesis offers an interpretation of the school as an institution in Haddon's *Curious Incident*, and how the authority in Christopher's school stays in contrast to the authority in Kesey's ward. The thesis argues that the school in *The Curious Incident* represents an improved institution that is people-oriented and beneficial for the single individual. The school does not operate within a totalitarian system where power suppresses all individuality. The school provides and maintains Christopher's uniqueness, and the professionals appreciate his 'otherness'. The purpose of this chapter is to offer an interpretation that serves as a response to Foucault's

philosophical concepts, which reveals some of his philosophical flaws. It is further argued that it is important to look beyond Christopher's diagnosis in order to understand the school and its functionality in a larger context. The thesis as a whole addresses the consequences of labeling another individual as 'the other'. The thesis does not attempt to change society, but it rather invites for a critical reflection upon power relations within the structures of our system, and how this system treats 'otherness' within different institutions.

## 1.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical part of this thesis aims to focus on a more detailed description of Foucault's philosophy within a historical context. I will explore Foucault's aspects of the 'Ship of Fools', the birth of the asylum, 'animality' and mental illness as a social construction. I will further investigate Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power and punishment, where all elements of disciplinary power are discussed in detail. The theoretical part additionally includes Erving Goffman's aspect on stigma, and the consequences of stigmatizing an individual. I will connect stigma to the psychological term 'self-fulfilling prophecies' in order to argue that stigma and the label of being 'abnormal' can become a reality for the individual. Once the individual believes that the label 'abnormal' reflects the truth, the individual will act and behave accordingly. The theoretical framework also addresses the importance of narrative point of view, as it is a central narrative strategy in Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest* and Haddon's *Curious Incident*.

### 1.1.1 Exploring 'Madness' and the History of Mental Illness

The relevance of Foucault's critical aspects of society challenges how we study ourselves and the system we live in. Foucault is particularly interested in how discursive changes, or social shifts in history have altered the way society has treated, and still treats people who deviate from the social norm. In his *Madness and Civilization – A History of Insanity and the Age of Reason* (1961), Foucault discusses the treatment of the mentally ill within a historical context, where he stresses that mental illness is a social construction that has developed with time and history. An essential part that has contributed to the construction of mental illness, for instance, is the Classical Age and the birth of the asylum. Whereas 'madness' was understood as a supernatural gift given by God during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, the Classical Age transformed 'madness' into a totally negative human capacity. The Enlightenment transformed 'madness' into 'mental illness', which could be observed, controlled, categorized and stigmatized within the medical gaze. It is important to investigate the history of 'madness', as it illustrates tremendous changes in society that have shaped and deformed people's knowledge about mental illness.

In the chapter "*Stultifera Navis*", Foucault uses an allegory, the 'Ship of Fools', to show how the Renaissance treated 'otherness'. The 'Ship of Fools' is originally a satire by

Sebastian Brant (5), and there is no evidence that these ships existed outside the fictional uses of art and literature (Gordon 32). The concept of the 'Ship of Fools' illustrates the exclusion of individuals who had the courage to think and act differently. Individuals who were commonly accepted as 'different' were excluded on the margins of society and driven to nomadic existence upon rivers and canals. This historical process still echoes in the current idiom of 'being sent down the river'. These individuals were artists, dissenters, freethinkers, nomadic people, travelers and the politically incorrect. Most importantly, their common trait was to deviate from the expected normal average. Although these individuals were not officially abandoned by society, they were sent on an endless journey with no destination. Foucault states that

Confined on the ship, from which there is no escape, the madman is delivered to the river with its thousand arms, the sea with its thousand roads, to that great uncertainty external to everything. He is a prisoner in the midst of what is the freest, the openest to routes: bound fast at the infinite crossroads. He is the Passenger par excellence: that is, the prisoner of the passage (9).

The 'Ship of Fools' was a result of the exclusion, the stigma and the othering in society. The government refused to deal with their 'otherness' by expelling them from the system's established structures. However, it became a place where these individuals were allowed to unfold their individuality. Foucault regards the 'Ship of Fools' as symptomatic of the deviant's freedom within society.

The essence of the 'Ship of Fools' can often be linked to 'otherness', diversity, stigma and mental illness represented in literature. The ship does in fact exist in Ken Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest*. The protagonist McMurphy takes all his fellow inmates on a voyage. This ship and voyage also functions as symbols of the inmates' freedom. The ship allows the patients to break out of the ward's imprisonment. Their journey on the ship reflects the contrast between the ship and the ward. Whereas they are told in the ward that they are incapable of functioning as 'normal' human beings, the events on the ship highlight the opposite. Freedom sets no limits, and most importantly, it makes room for individuality. On the ship, the characters are not patients, not mentally ill, not mad and not deviant. They are simply extraordinary individuals outside the institutions' delimited ideas of normality. On the contrary, the ward and the medical staff create limits through pre-established rules, routines and norms that seem impossible to change. The power of the system suppresses the patient's individuality and reduces diversity to conformity. The system is practically maintained by the medical staff through punishment and disciplinary power, with its purpose to realize the

authorities' law. The suppression of individuality and the maintenance of the system is made possible through the institutionalization of human beings, which became the foundation of the dehumanization that developed in the Classical Age.

Haddon's *Curious Incident* is another novel which brings 'otherness' into light through Christopher's unique personality and his special needs. Foucault's idea of '*Stultifera Navis*' is present in this novel too, but in more oblique terms. Christopher's inability to communicate with people makes it difficult for others to understand his mindset and his way of understanding the world. This leads to Christopher's alienation and isolation within society, which serves as a symbol of the 'Ship of Fools'. Although he is not physically imprisoned like the patients in the *Cuckoo's Nest*, he is still isolated from those who do not truly understand him, such as his parents. Christopher is an extraordinary character in the way he deviates from everyone else in the novel. Therefore, he will always be 'the other'. Nevertheless, Christopher's 'Ship of Fools' in a symbolic term does not only alienate him, it also gives him the freedom to unfold his creativity and his incredible mindset. This kind of freedom is provided in Christopher's school, where his special needs are accepted and supported by professional caretakers. He is understood by educated teachers that help him to communicate with others and ease his way of interpreting his surroundings. The novel illustrates an improved institution that includes, accepts and helps Christopher. In other words, the school as an institution does not normalize him. This improvement shows that Western society must have changed in a positive direction, and that Foucault was unable to envision an improvement of how society and institutions treat 'otherness'.

During Renaissance, the treatment of 'otherness' took another direction, which was the beginning of the confinement of individuals that were labeled as 'useless' for society. Foucault explores a period in the seventeenth century, where society constructs enormous houses of confinement (35). We can study the imaginative presentation of such houses in the literary universe of Dickens. Their purpose was to isolate all individuals who were unemployed – beggars, the poor, the sick. People who did not fit into the mainstream were physically confined in workhouses that isolated every individual that deviated from the average norms. The grouping of the 'weak' on the one side and the 'superior' on the other side was a result of the governments' powerful impact in society.

We are all born into a system that influences our thoughts, behavior and decisions. It is possible to claim that the system is a machinery that needs to be held in motion in order to function. One way to maintain the machinery is to serve the system by working and by obeying its rules, routines and norms. During the seventeenth century, people who were



unemployed were seen as a moral problem, and most importantly – a threat to the authority. People who were unable to serve the system were ‘useless’ for society. Foucault argues that the central idea with a total isolation of the ‘weak’ and ‘useless’ individuals was to balance the system and to keep order in society. By isolating the deviants, society regained control over the ‘abnormal’ individuals by gathering them in a large group, and by physically keeping them away from the ‘normal’ group. In the asylums, the ‘abnormal’ individuals were easy to control, to observe and to regulate. The danger of categorizing individuals into groups that are labeled as ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’, ‘healthy’ or ‘sick’, ‘strong’ or ‘weak’ is the foundation of the system’s power to control all individuals in society, and to regulate all individuals in order to favor the authority. The system operates on different levels – in families, in institutions, and in Western society. However, the basic concept is always the same: the individuals need to be categorized and labeled in order to maintain control. Kesey’s *Cuckoo’s Nest* is a perfect illustration of the categorization and grouping of the ‘abnormal’ and ‘sick’ individuals, isolated and imprisoned within the psychiatric ward. Here, the patients who are merely treated as prisoners, are controlled, observed and regulated by the powerful medical staff. The medical staff’s duty is to dehumanize and to normalize every single individual, which is practiced within a well-established totalitarian system that deletes every form of individuality, freedom and independence.

As Foucault points out, the categorization of individuals took place among the deviants, as the mentally ill were further divorced from the other deviants and categorized as another subgroup. This group was accepted as something uncanny and inhumane that needed to be investigated and controlled. The idea was that these people were removed from the public gaze in order to be controlled, tamed and dehumanized. This change created a physical gap in society, where on the one side the ‘abnormal’ individuals existed in mental institutions, and on the other side the ‘normal’ individuals who continued to serve the system. Foucault distinguishes between these two groups as the ‘undesirable’ and the ‘desirable’.

This historical shift and the polarization of the ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ was a starting point for the institutionalization of the mentally ill, who were replaced from the public gaze and forced into the medical gaze. Through the institutionalization, confinement and categorization of the mentally ill, individuality and freedom was controlled and suppressed. Dehumanization that developed through the birth of the asylum lead to serious consequences for the mentally ill. It was the beginning of a new era, where ‘madness’ transformed into ‘mental illness’ because of the institutionalization and the medical interest in the doctor-patient relationship:

...this is the apotheosis of the medical personage. Of them all, it is doubtless the most important, since it would authorize not only new contacts between doctor and patient, but a new relation between insanity and medical thought, and ultimately command the whole modern experience of madness. Hitherto, we find in the asylums only the same structures of confinement, but displaced and deformed. With the new status of the medical personage, the deepest meaning of confinement is abolished: mental disease, with the meanings we now give it, is made possible (256).

Another aspect of the dehumanization that evolved through the birth of the asylum was what Foucault describes as ‘animality’. Because all individuality and humanity were deprived through the institutions’ active use of punishment, disciplinary power, diagnosis and medicine, the patients were treated as, and reduced into wild animals. The ‘animality’ of the mentally ill reinforced the gap between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ even more. Foucault argues that the animalistic features dominated people’s false knowledge of mental illness in the eighteenth century, and that it is the absolute result of the system’s dehumanization:

The animality that rages in madness dispossesses man of what is specifically human in him; not in order to deliver him over to other powers, but simply to establish him at the zero degree of his own nature. For classicism, madness in its ultimate form is man in immediate relation to his animality, without other reference, without any recourse (69).

The ‘animality’ and the dehumanization of the patients in the *Cuckoo’s Nest* is central because it illustrates how the powerful medical staff suppresses the patients. The staff ‘animalizes’ the patients through their efficient methods of disciplinary power which dehumanizes, stigmatizes and suppresses the individual. In *The Curious Incident*, ‘animality’ occurs when Christopher interacts with someone that does not understand his special needs and treats him in a way that makes him extremely uncomfortable. Christopher’s physical reaction, such as groaning, hitting and laying down on the floor reminds of Foucault’s description of animalistic features. However, ‘animality’ in *The Curious Incident* is not acted upon Christopher in order to dehumanize and to suppress him. It is rather a consequence of some characters’ inability to understand him. It is also difficult to understand him because his special needs are in many cases not visual. One might claim, then, that ‘animality’ in the *Cuckoo’s Nest* is an exact illustration of Foucault’s understanding of the concept. In *The Curious Incident*, ‘animality’ is represented differently because it is not used to harm Christopher.

Although several methods of treatment in contemporary psychiatric wards have been improved, it is crucial to notice that basic concepts in the treatment of mental illness have in fact not changed. Interestingly, Foucault draws an important line between the past and the

present, and argues that the stigma, suppression, disciplinary power, punishment etc. still exists in contemporary society but that it is difficult to trace as it exists in a new form. The mentally ill are still isolated in psychiatric wards that are dominated by rules, routines, strict timetables and medical research. Several aspects of current treatment are therefore still questionable. When determining a diagnosis, it instantly labels an individual with a disorder. Every diagnosis has certain characteristics that describes the specific disorder, which creates a common understanding of the diagnosis. These specific characteristics might, however, conceal the individual's unique qualities by standardizing the individual within a category. The danger lays within the opportunity that the individual further is perceived as 'the patient' with a 'flaw' that needs to be modified. The individual is not simply unique anymore as he or she is transformed into the category of 'the sick' and 'the weak' that must be cured in order to normalize the 'unusual'. The question is if it is possible to look beyond someone's diagnosis? The stigma arises when the individual is defined through the disorder which lays a veil on the person's individuality. It further alienates and isolates the individual within the category of being part of something 'abnormal'. It is natural to argue that one needs to find a problem that can be treated in order to help an individual. Thus, Foucault argues strongly against this kind of treatment of 'otherness'. He states that society's attempt is not to help or to treat the individual. Society tries rather to *cure* the individual, which in other words means to normalize and to standardize a 'dysfunctional' individual. In the introduction of *Madness and Civilization* Foucault argues that

We are beginning to recognize the prevalent tradition of clinical psychiatry today as a convenient but ultimately misguided way of evaluating the social meaning of madness. The actual preoccupation of psychiatry is nothing less than the quasi-academic compartmentalization of certain states of experience into formally reduced types – of 'illness' that are then logically disposable in the field of curing. Curing we understand here as a sort of anti-healing – a process not entirely dissimilar to the curing of bacon, and totally opposed to healing in the sense of making whole of persons (ix).

The process of amending a flaw that is perceived as something 'abnormal' is portrayed in the *Cuckoo's Nest* through the staff's attempt to change the patients into 'something better'. The process of normalization in the novel is very obvious, which opens for a critical interpretation of the ward's system. In *The Curious Incident*, the extreme form of normalization is not present. The school as an institution is able to look beyond Christopher's diagnosis and appreciates his individuality. The school does not try to change or to cure him. The professional help that Christopher receives in school provides his special needs within the framework of inclusive education.

According to Foucault, historical shifts have caused a social construction of mental illnesses. In other words, Foucault states that mental illnesses are created by society and are not biologically pre-determined. He alleges that mental disorders cannot be understood and explained as a natural fact. It is therefore extremely wrong for Foucault to accept how the mentally ill are treated within the medical gaze. The problem is not the single individual, but the system - which creates, provokes and aggravates mental illnesses by categorizing and marking individuals as rather unfortunate for society. Foucault concludes that mental illness does not exist because it is a social and cultural construct. Thomas Szasz, former Professor of Psychiatry at Syracuse University of New York, supports Foucault's argument that mental illness does not exist. In his *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961), Szasz accentuates that 'mental illness' is a 'myth' rather than a natural fact:

Psychiatry is conventionally defined as a medical speciality concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of mental diseases. I submit that the definition, which is still widely accepted, paces psychiatry in the company of alchemy and astrology and commits it to the category of pseudoscience. The reason for this is that there is no such thing as 'mental illness' (1).

There are other psychiatrists who approach mental illness in similar ways. The Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia, for instance, abolished mental hospitals in Italy with his principles of Law 180. Although Basaglia does not reject the possibility that mental illness exists, he strongly argues that mental illness is a result of a society's structure, categorizing the 'well' as productive and the 'sick' as unproductive (Roth and Kroll 23). Many of Edgar Allen Poe's short stories, 'The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether' in particular, offer thought-provoking insight into the structuring of diagnosis and treatment of unconventional people. The purpose of Law 180 is to integrate the mentally ill through a process of deinstitutionalization, where stereotypical psychiatric hospitals are replaced with alternative community-care services. The central core of the deinstitutionalization includes a lower focus on the medical gaze and a stronger focus on integrating the mentally ill as equals within society through daycare centers, unstaffed apartments and group homes.

One might ask how effective Law 180 actually is for the patients. *If* mental disorders are biologically pre-determined, how can it be treated if there is no focus on diagnosing and medicating the patients if it is truly necessary? How can society deal with the mentally ill if mental illness does not exist? It is important to acknowledge that Foucault's, Szasz' and Basaglia's claims and arguments are highly controversial and not absolute. Their statements are often argued to be provocative and too naïve, with little or no evidence. In Roth and

Kroll's *The Reality of Mental Illness* (1986), they give a critical view of Basaglia's reformation:

Basaglia, and the legislators, acted as though schizophrenia, manic-depressive illnesses, epileptic psychoses and toxic conditions were all uniformly caused by inequities of power and wealth in society. It was as though brain and body and individual life experiences (such as early death of a parent) did not exist (24).

Is it too vague to claim that mental disorders are caused by society? If mental disorders in fact exist, a patient has to be diagnosed and presumably medicated in accordance to the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10<sup>th</sup> Revision (ICD-10)*. In other words, categorization and classification of an individual is impossible to avoid. The question is whether it is possible to avoid stigma, deviation, othering and the loss of individuality by categorizing individuals within the medical gaze. In order to help a patient, one important point is to be able to recognize the type of disorder. Using medical psychiatric diagnosis to detect similar features of a disorder serves as an advantage in the treatment of diseases. Roth and Kroll do also explore the disadvantages of classification and argue that it is problematic to divide mental disorders into categories because it obscures the actual truth about mental disorders. They stress that mental illness is a complex phenomenon that cannot be separated from the rest of the body. It is therefore crucial to recognize the relation between the mind and the body as they influence each other:

The risk of such a classification system, however, is that it tends to reify the categories, as though depression or pneumonia were things which exist apart from the person with the illness. In addition, the separation of diseases into distinct categories tends to obscure the relatedness of diseases to each other, and to focus on single causes at the expense of an appreciation of the multiple levels of causation in the development of illness (26).

There are obviously several advantages with the classification of mental disorders in terms of the ICD-10, and it seems impossible to avoid categorizing patients in order to treat a mental disorder. However, this thesis is particularly interested in the dangers that follow with the categorization of individuals within institutions. According to Roy Porter, disease diagnosis

...thus constitutes a powerful classificatory tool, and medicine contributes its fair share to the stigmatizing enterprise. Amongst those scapegoated and anathematized by means of this cognitive apartheid, the 'insane' have, of course, been conspicuous. This polarizing of the sane and the crazy in turn spurred and legitimized the institutionalizing trend... (63).

The categorization of individuals seems difficult, if not impossible to avoid. The following section will take a closer look on Foucault's interpretation of disciplinary power and how a powerful authority affects the 'abnormal' individual. Power relations are important to investigate in order to analyze the use of disciplinary power that is present within institutions.

### 1.1.2 Authority, Disciplinary Power and the Obscured Individual

In *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault explores the power of authority and how it controls and confines individuals by a frequent use of punishment and disciplinary power. Foucault focuses particularly on how authority regulates and controls individuals' behavior within institutions. His study of how the use of power has changed within a historical and social context is crucial in order to acknowledge the effects of disciplinary power in contemporary society. Foucault recognizes a change in the use of punishment that occurred in the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to Foucault, there are two modes of power – sovereign power and disciplinary power. Sovereign power dominated before the nineteenth century, where public torture was used as punishment. The central idea of torture was to make punishment visible by exercising it within the public gaze. This form of punishment served not only to physically harm a single person, but it was also used to control and to regulate behavior of the public by showing them the consequences of not acting in accordance to the structure of society. This form of punishment was eventually replaced with disciplinary power:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, then, the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared; the tortured body was avoided; the theatrical representation of pain was excluded from punishment. The age of sobriety in punishment had begun (14).

Through the practice of disciplinary power, punishment was made invisible for the public. Disciplinary power is exercised in institutions, for instance in prisons, psychiatric wards and in schools. The essence of disciplinary power is to regulate and to control behavior in order to create 'docile bodies'. Foucault elaborates the meaning of 'docile bodies' in his statement below:

The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body – to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces (136).

The system and its routines, rules and norms are in other words forced upon the external surface of the body, which affects the internal part of the body. This results in a productive or ‘docile body’ (135) that acts and behaves in accordance to the pre-established structure of the system. Foucault claims that the creation of ‘docile bodies’ is necessary, as productive individuals keep the machinery in motion by serving society in a beneficial manner. Roy Boyne stresses that

A fundamental feature of the development of discipline is the deconstruction of the masses; discipline converts the mass into a collection of specified individuals. In the name of the increased social productivity and enhanced political stability, the masses are recomposed into an efficient machine... (112).

The creation of ‘docile bodies’ is constantly visible in *Cuckoo’s Nest*. Nurse Ratched reminds the patients several times why they are isolated at the ward: “You men are in the hospital, she would say like she was repeating it for the hundredth time, because of your proven inability to adjust to society” (167). Only if the medical staff manages to create ‘docile’, or ‘normal’ bodies, the patients are released. In *The Curious Incident*, Siobhan can be seen in contrast to Nurse Ratched’s dictatorship. Siobhan is an example of a carer who facilitates Christopher’s individuality. She helps him to sit for exams way above his level, she teaches him how to treat other people and she eases his way of understanding facial expressions, metaphors and rhetorical questions. The school and its teachers in *The Curious Incident* are much more nuanced than in Kesey’s institution in the *Cuckoo’s Nest*.

Foucault further addresses how disciplinary power operates in society in order to create ‘docile bodies’ and to maintain its productive effects. For Foucault, disciplinary power is based on several principles that describe how society creates ‘docile bodies’, and how the system maintains and controls them. The first principle is what Foucault defines as ‘the art of distribution’ (141), where he argues that ‘spatialization’, or a particular place, defines who and what an individual is. For instance, if a person is hospitalized, the individual is a patient. The individuals are divided into categories which are further organized in a hierarchy. Foucault uses rank as an example, as a hierarchy creates ranks between individuals. Each rank defines a person’s duties and power, which regulates and controls their behaviour and actions. This hierarchical grouping sets the foundations of institutions – psychiatric wards (medical staff and patient) and schools (administration, teachers and students) are two examples. The individuals are further controlled by rules and routines, where each activity is controlled by the authority. ‘The control of activity’ (149) is part of the structure of disciplinary power.

Foucault especially highlights the use of strict timetables that are governed by the authority. The authority of the institution further defines ‘abnormal’ and ‘normal’ behaviour. Only if the transgressors act in relation to what the institution defines as ‘normal’, the transgressors are not punished. By doing so, the authority regulates behaviour with punishment. Foucault refers to this action as ‘normalizing judgements’ (177). ‘Normalizing judgements’ are central in *Cuckoo’s Nest*, where the authority uses drugs, electroshock-theory (EST), lobotomy and straightjackets as a punishment to regulate ‘abnormal’ behaviour among the patients. The medical staff is the authority that enforces the rules of society. In *The Curious Incident*, ‘normalizing judgements’ are present in the way the school decides that Christopher needs special education in order to function in society. It is, however, beneficial for him rather than stigmatizing and suppressive.

Foucault argues that the use of disciplinary power is extremely efficient, as it not only punishes, but also rewards good behaviour. Another strategy that society uses to control individuals are ‘panoptical mechanisms’ (195), which is based on a frequent surveillance that triggers self-regulation. ‘Panoptical mechanisms’ are frequently used in *Cuckoo’s Nest*, although they might be hard to grasp. Thus, Kesey’s representation of the ward’s system and the nurse’s omnipresent obsession of power and control highlights the use of ‘panoptical mechanisms’. For instance, Nurse Ratched uses a big log book, where patients can note things they have seen and overheard at the ward. Its purpose is to gain control by receiving inside information that the medical staff is unable to see and hear. The log book serves as a tool for self-regulation, as the patients might control themselves in fear of being mentioned in the log book. The nurses use punishment as a consequence of negative behaviour. However, the patient who writes things down in the log book gets rewarded (15). Another ‘panoptical mechanism’ is that the patients are able to see all types of patients, the “Vegetables”, the “Wheelers”, the “Acutes” and the “Chronics” as Chief Bromden calls them (16), just to remind the other patients what they can become if they refuse to obey the system.

When acknowledging Foucault’s philosophical principles, one might conclude that all individuals are victims of a powerful system. This regards especially to individuals that are labeled as ‘abnormal’ or ‘deviant’. The question is if each individual must adapt to the pre-determined structure of society, or if the system must change in order to adapt to the diversity of human beings. Hence, as Foucault argues, contemporary society operates in the belief that ‘abnormal’ is something that is always negative and that it must be evened or transformed into something ‘normal’. A serious consequence of how society operates is the stigmatization



of the polluted individual. In the following section, the term ‘stigma’ will be presented, and it will be argued that stigma is a consequence of a suppressing system.

### 1.1.3 Stigma: The End Result?

In Erving Goffman’s *Stigma – Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963), he highlights that individuals were marked as unusual and bad already by the Greeks, based on visual aids and bodily signs (11). However, Goffman argues that little effort has been made to actually define the term ‘stigma’. Like Foucault, Goffman addresses this issue by examining how stigma arises through the categorization within social groups. When we meet a person, we automatically anticipate the person’s category and attributes, which is termed as ‘social identity’ (12). If the person’s social identity appears less desirable than the average, the person will be stigmatized.

He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes it is called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap. It constitutes a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity (12).

The danger of stigmatizing another human being is that we often believe that the person with a stigma is not quite human (Goffman 15), which results in a withdrawal from the ‘abnormal’ individual. In other words, stigma dehumanizes. Furthermore, the use of categorization often appears in our language: “We use specific stigma terms such as cripple, bastard, moron in our daily discourse as a source of metaphor and imagery, typically without giving thought to the original meaning” (15). The daily discourse shapes the perception of people with special needs as something less worthy than ourselves. The use of certain stigmatizing terms is powerful in *Cuckoo’s Nest*, as it highlights how Kesey’s patients are stigmatized by their surroundings. The patients frequently refer to themselves as ‘idiots’, ‘crazy’ and ‘lunatics’, because that is how they are labeled by society. In contrast, Christopher in *The Curious Incident* is not fully stigmatized. He is rather accepted for his otherness because he operates in an environment with highly educated individuals. Nevertheless, he is stigmatized by Terry who believes Christopher is too ‘dumb’ to receive a high education (33). Interestingly, this stigma does not influence Christopher because he is aware that he is capable of going to university.

However, the stigma might develop into a self-fulfilling prophecy (Martin, Carlson and Buskist G20) where the stigmatized person adapts the ‘false truth’ and further acts like he is ‘dumb’ or ‘incapable’ although he is not. It can be argued that it is the most dangerous consequence of labeling and stigmatizing another individual. The effect of self-fulfilling prophecies has been proven in research completed in psychiatric hospitals and in schools. In 1973, the American Association for the Advancement of Science published David Rosenhan’s research study “On Being Sane in Insane Places”. He found that a sane pseudo patient was diagnosed with schizophrenia based on the patient’s statement that he heard voices when he arrived the psychiatric ward. He was treated like a schizophrenic patient although he was sane. Rosenhan argues that “Having once been labeled schizophrenic, there is nothing the pseudo patient can do to overcome the tag. The tag profoundly colors other’s perceptions of him and his behavior” (31). The existence of self-fulfilling prophecies has also been found in a research study done by Rosenthal and Jacobson, where they found that teachers treat pupils based on their expectations whether the student is going to make positive progress or not. Interestingly, those pupils who made the largest progress were pupils who were expected to do so. Rosenthal and Jacobson argue in their study that the positive progress occurred among these pupils because the teacher paid more attention to them. This was based on the teacher’s pre-given expectations which influenced his or her perception and behavior.

Self-fulfilling prophecies are mirrored in *Cuckoo’s Nest*, which has a highly negative effect on the patients. The fact that most of the patients in the ward are there out of their free will, articulates society’s powerful influence on these individuals. Society labels them as outcasts that are abnormal and mentally ill until the patients believe it and act accordingly. In contrast, Christopher in *The Curious Incident* experiences positive self-fulfilling prophecies. Through the teachers’ encouragement, Christopher knows that he is smart and that he has the same opportunities in the future as everyone else. Although Christopher recognizes Terry’s belief that he is not capable of doing more than collecting trollies at a supermarket (33), Christopher is not affected by the stigma. He has dreams and plans in the future that the school supports. For instance, they let him take the A-level exam so that he can study mathematics at a University in his future. Whereas the school supports Christopher’s capabilities, the ward in the *Cuckoo’s Nest* mutes the patients’ capabilities and opportunities.

### 1.1.4 Narrative Point of View

When exploring madness and mental illness, power relations and stigma in Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest* and Haddon's *The Curious Incident*, the scrutiny of narrative strategies serves to disclose important details and nuances in the novels. According to Suzanne Keen, the scrutiny of narrative form offers new perspectives of a novel, which leads to new understandings and new questions (5).

Narrative point of view is highly relevant when examining both novels. In the *Cuckoo's Nest*, the events are presented through the third-person narrator Chief Bromden. Kesey himself argued that he wanted to create a character "who leaves the ground and breathes in print" (Tanner 23). This character is one of the chronic patients who is believed to be 'deaf and dumb' (Kesey 3). In other words, Chief Bromden is a perfect observer of his surroundings. Only through the eyes of a patient is the reader able to observe the unbalanced distribution of power between the medical staff and the patients. Through Chief Bromden's point of view, the dehumanization of the patients is brought into light. The Chief's observation of the other patients, as well as the staff members, make Foucault's concepts visual. This is only made possible by the Chief's static and ghostly appearance. As he himself states: "They don't bother not talking out loud about their hate secrets when I'm nearby because they think I'm deaf and dumb" (3). In other words, Chief Bromden functions as a 'panoptical mechanism' that sees even more than the head of the medical staff, Nurse Ratched. This makes him a powerful character in a suppressive environment, which offers a critical perspective of the systematic institution. However, being a Chronic patient has shaped the Chief's perception of society and the institution. Being aware of the suppressing power that has imprisoned him for years, causes his frustration of the system. His frustration is the foundation of a critical view of the medical staff, and Nurse Ratched, 'the Big Nurse', in particular. Nevertheless, his convincing point of view needs to be critically examined. In many ways, the Chief's imprisonment has blinded the truth about the system. He sees the medical staff as pure evil, but the truth is that they are as victimized as the patients. Therefore, one needs to question the Chief's reliability as a narrator because the truth about the system is too complex to accept as only negative or only positive.

The narrative point of view in *The Curious Incident* is also a central feature in this text, as the reader gets access to Christopher's brilliant and unique mind. The novel portrays how the narrator, Christopher, sees and understands his surroundings. Despite the fact that Christopher has difficulties in communicating with other individuals, he is still able to

communicate with the reader thanks to Haddon's use of a consonant first-person-narrator. Christopher's view of the world alerts that he is a highly functional individual, and that a diagnosis does not totally disable an individual. In the article "Normalcy, Knowledge and Nature in Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*", Sarah Ray strongly argues that a first-person narration is necessary in order to highlight that diagnoses are socially constructed:

Writing about Christopher from any other point of view would have undermined the novel's critique of an ableist society: "normal" is not an absolute; it is a social construction that reflects more about society than a person's mental or physical attributes<sup>2</sup>.

Unlike the patients in *Cuckoo's Nest*, Christopher operates in a less destructive environment. Christopher's point of view shows the reader how he is perceived and accepted in society. This enables the reader to interpret Christopher *and* other characters, and how they understand and misunderstand his 'otherness'.

Not only does narrative point of view visualize modes of power in society, it also gives insight into the treatment of mental illness and 'otherness', and how it shapes the characters' perception. Take Chief Bromden as an example – the stigmatization of Native Americans has transformed him into a passive but careful and angry character. Christopher on the other hand is shaped by his own mind, where his internal core creates a self-regulated and controlled behavior. Most importantly, narrative point of view gives these unique and different narrators a voice in society. Therefore, point of view is crucial in both novels, as it serves as a pathway between the silenced individual and the public. Only by giving the silenced individuals a voice in society, the public is challenged in terms of their assumptions about abnormality and the categorization of 'the other'.

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Ray, "Normalcy, Knowledge, and Nature in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*", (*Disability Studies Quarterly*, 2013) <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3233/3263> Accessed April 2018.

## Chapter 2 – Presenting a Foucaultian Perspective of Ken Kesey’s *Cuckoo’s Nest*

After it was published in 1962, Kesey’s *Cuckoo’s Nest* contributed to a critical debate in the United States. In the article “Banned and Challenged Classics”, American Library Association (ALA) writes that the *Cuckoo’s Nest* belongs to the group of banned and challenged literary works. The novel was challenged at several schools in the US, arguing that it is a non-required American Culture reading, that it is pornographic, or that it glorifies criminal activity. Even in the year 2000, the novel was criticized by several parents at Placentia-Yorba Linda, CA Unified School District, who considered the novel as “garbage”<sup>3</sup>. How then, is it possible to enlighten individuals that society creates ‘abnormality’ and ‘otherness’? How is it possible to educate society about its destructive features if one ignores such challenging literature?

Kesey’s *Cuckoo’s Nest* is an important novel because it focuses particularly on the stigmatization, suppression and isolation of the mentally ill. In addition, the novel highlights how the institutionalization controls and regulates individuals who are labeled as ‘abnormal’. In Bernie Gorley’s book review of the *Cuckoo’s Nest*, he argues that “I’d highly recommend this book. It’s an evocative story with insights into mental health, some of which – sadly – are as valid today as they were then”<sup>4</sup>. Charles McNair’s review of the *Cuckoo’s Nest* reveals Ken Kesey’s insight of a mental institution as he worked night shifts in a mental health facility in the mid 1950’s. According to McNair, Kesey’s experience makes up his brilliant understanding of institutional power: “Kesey saw firsthand the enervating, soul-killing effects of institutional care on many men he honestly believed weren’t crazy when they came in but were certainly FUBAR when they left”<sup>5</sup>. The *Cuckoo’s Nest* challenges the prejudice and the stigma of mental illness, and how it is a result of the powerful and controlling system that operates upon us. Kesey manages to present the extreme dehumanization that occurs in the ward. Society must therefore acknowledge the importance of the novel, as it reflects the system’s damaging power. However, a crucial detail that is important to highlight here, is that

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<sup>3</sup> ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, “Banned & Challenged Classics”, (American Library Association, 2010) <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/classics> Accessed April 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Bernie Gorley, “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest by Ken Kesey”, (goodreads, 2011) <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show/214072540> Accessed April 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Charles McNair, “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest by Ken Kesey”, (pastemagazine, 2013) <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2013/08/one-flew-over-the-cuckoos-nest-by-ken-kesey.html> Accessed April 2018

the *Cuckoo's Nest* was written in the 1960's. Several literary works in contemporary society illustrate an improvement in terms of attitudes towards 'the other'. This is portrayed through the development in several institutions, where a people-oriented approach is the core of a less totalitarian and suppressive treatment. The people-oriented approach serves the single individual in a beneficial way. The institution offers help to ease the individual's everyday life without attempting to change or to control the individual. In this case, Mark Haddon's *Curious Incident* is relevant to mention. The novel portrays an improved institution, the school, which works as a stable support system in Christopher's unstable life. The professional care that Christopher receives in school eases his understanding of the world. In addition, Christopher's 'otherness' is met with compassion and appreciation.

In contrast, *The Cuckoo's Nest* can be perfectly linked to Foucault's philosophical concepts of power, punishment and discipline. Foucault's concepts in the novel are embedded in several ways. For instance, power relations are strongly highlighted through the power resistance of the patients and the suppressing actions of the medical staff. McMurphy is a brilliant example of a resistant force that challenges Nurse Ratched's and society's authority. Power relations in the novel do also exist among the patients, where some patients influence McMurphy's subconsciousness in order to create an uprising against the institution. As a response to the uprising, the medical staff uses several forms of 'treatment' to punish and to tame the patients' 'animality' (*Madness and Civilization* 69). Foucault's disciplinary power is an element that is relevant in the novel, as it reflects the institutions intention to normalize each patient. This is exercised by Nurse Ratched's strict timetables, routines and rules, panoptical mechanisms, drugs and reward of good behavior. In other words, Nurse Ratched and the medical institution attempt to create 'docile bodies' (*Discipline and Punish* 135). In contrast to the medical staff, the patients mirror Foucault's idea of the 'Ship of Fools' by illustrating the exclusion, the stigma and the othering that the institution represents. Kesey has managed to write a novel that exemplifies the essence in Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, namely that society forces 'abnormal' groups into silence and exclusion. The many attempts on banning the book confirms such silencing and exclusion of not only different and exceptional people, but also the literature that present them.

## 2.1 'The Great Factory' and its Power to Normalize the 'Abnormal'

As the title of the novel suggests, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* investigates the displacement of individuals who are nurtured in an environment where they do not belong. The 'cuckoo's nest' portrays the mental institution where the 'outcasts' of society are confined. The incarcerating displacement of the 'outcasts' is a result of society's belief that these individuals are too dysfunctional to serve the norms of the outside world. The mental institution, which is a reflection of society, focuses on changing dysfunctional bodies in order to re-create highly productive bodies. Therefore, the ward in *Cuckoo's Nest* can be claimed to have the same purpose as a factory. Whereas a factory creates products that are useful for society, the ward produces 'docile bodies' that serve to maintain society's balance.

Interestingly, the novel's title reveals more than that. 'One flew over' hints to the escape of a patient who manages to break out of the cuckoo's nest (the ward). This might obviously refer to Chief Bromden, who manages to escape the ward in the end. However, it is questionable if the Chief actually gains total freedom. Although the Chief illustrates a physical escape, a further argument is that he is not the only character who escapes the suppressing system. On the contrary, most of the patients are in the ward out of their 'free will'. This is clearly interesting, as it highlights how society's powerful system contributes to self-fulfilling prophecies in terms of the patients' belief that they are mentally ill and depended on the institution. In order to explore why some of the patients feel the urge to break free and why some do not, it is necessary to investigate the ward's systematic modes of power.

In his science of power relations, Foucault states that "The perpetual penalty that traverses all point and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*" (*Discipline and Punish* 183). Normalization of the 'abnormal' is a crucial element in Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest*, as normalization is essential when creating 'docile bodies'. It is therefore possible to claim that normalization makes no room for individuality nor diversity. As it is argued in the theoretical framework, normalization of individuals contributes to keep things in order. In addition, it maintains the machinery in motion because it simplifies to control, to regulate and to observe individuals. In *Foucault and Critique of Institutions* (1993), Caputo and Yount add that: "Institutions will form and well-adjust the young into supple, happy subjects of normalization. Institutions will reform the abnormal who stray beyond the limits" (6). The medical staff in *Cuckoo's Nest* has a fixed focus on constantly normalizing abnormal

behavior. Nurse Ratched regularly points out that the patients are in the ward because they are unable to adjust to society.

Anne Waldschmidt argues in “Who is Normal? Who is Deviant?” that everything in society concentrates on the idea to make everyone and everything as normal as possible.

In the government of deviance, normality has become the decisive point of orientation. Professional discourses and social policies, rehabilitation programs and therapeutic practices, all with the aim of making normality possible for their clients and recipients, revolve around this central notion (191).

The possibility to normalize something ‘abnormal’ does, however, arise by pointing out an error that needs to be fixed. In *Cuckoo’s Nest*, the medical staff decides what is normal and what is abnormal. They use disciplinary power to amend someone’s flaws. In other words, they tame and correct behavior that falls outside the ward’s norms. Lennard J. Davis writes in his *Enforcing Normalcy – Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (1995) that

The concept of a norm, unlike that of an ideal, implies that the majority of the population must or should somehow be part of the norm. The norm pins down that majority of the population that falls under the arch of the standard bell-shaped curve (29).

Furthermore, Caputo and Yount argue that “...power is no longer repressive but productive, does not say no but yes; does not prevent but invent; does not prohibit but promote; does not negate but affirm; does not annihilate but create” (6). This is indeed the main concept when producing products in a factory – to invent, to promote, to affirm and to create. In *Cuckoo’s Nest*, the institution invents new and better bodies. The institution also promotes a false image to the outside world. They invite people from the outside world on open tours, led by the “...Public Relation man who’s always clapping his wet hands together and saying how overjoyed he is that mental hospitals have eliminated all the old-fashioned cruelty” (Kesey 10). The false image of the institution overpowers the truth of reality – that in fact nothing has changed to the better. The patients are held as prisoners, leaving their bodies to the authority. In a larger context, the patients are ghosts in society. How can the truth be published to the outside world, if the link between the ward and society (the ‘Public Relation man’) promotes a false truth? It is clear, then, that the patients have no chance to make a positive change because they are muted and silenced by the authority.

In the novel, Chief Bromden appears to be the only patient who is aware of the ongoing



normalization in the ward. He discusses the danger of the Combine, and how it confines and controls every character in the ward.

Yes. This is what I know. The ward is a factory for the Combine. It's for fixing up mistakes made in the neighborhoods and in the schools and in the churches, the hospital is. When a completed product goes back out into society, all fixed up good as new, *better* than new sometimes, it brings joy to the Big Nurse's heart; something that came in all twisted different is now functioning, adjusted component, a credit to the whole outfit and a marvel to behold (40).

For the Chief, the 'Combine' presents society and its manufacturing effects. Terence Martin describes the Combine as vague, but that it is a necessity "...since it is the Chief' protean metaphor for all that mechanizes, threshes, and levels – for all that packages human beings into "product"..." (12). He further argues that the Combine contributes "powerfully to the dramatic coherence of the novel" (12). Despite the fact that the description of the Combine is vague, it is an essential element for acknowledging the connection between the ward and society. The Chief is highly aware of what the Combine is capable of, which is to normalize and to mute resistance against it. One might argue that Kesey has chosen a Native American as a narrator for a reason. No other character in the novel would understand the function of the Combine better than Chief Bromden, considering his ethnic minority status. Amerindians, who are an obvious heteroclit in American history, stand close to the extreme nightmare of Foucault's theories. The Chief himself describes how the Combine stigmatized and suppressed his own father:

The Combine. It worked on him for years. He was big enough to fight it for a while. It wanted us to live in inspected houses. It wanted to take the falls. It was even in the tribe, and they worked on him. In the town they beat him up in the alleys and cut his hair short once. Oh, the Combine's big – big. He fought it a long time till my mother made him too little to fight anymore and he gave up (220).

Bromden's father was not only suppressed by the Combine, but his resistance was stopped by his wife – a white woman (220). In the ward, Chief Bromden has taken his father's place. He is suppressed and stigmatized by the Combine and overruled by a white woman – Nurse Ratched, also termed as the Big Nurse. Therefore, the Chief has learned to make himself invisible by acting dumb and deaf because of his belief that he is 'too little' to resist the powerful force. Lilja and Vinthagen argue that

Escape from discipline might still be possible through other means, such as the following: retreating into one's own mental world; by showing outward compliance while maintaining inner aggression towards the

values and norms of discipline; and by relocating to a physical retreat or some kind of non-society wilderness area or refuge, where a different life is possible... (115)

The Chief's withdrawal is also a result of the strong influence that self-fulfilling prophecies might have. The Chief has learned from his father that there is no point to fight the system. This might explain why the Chief is extremely engaged in McMurphy, because he admires McMurphy's courage to rebel against the Combine. Stephen Tanner argues that "...the Combine (Bromden's term for technologized society) diminished his size, and the loss of strength and self-respect that resulted for his son is a principal reason for Bromden's withdrawal from reality in a mental ward" (163). Furthermore, Michael Woolf suggests that Chief Bromden's awareness of the Combine results in his hopelessness of the struggle to fight against it. Woolf further suggests that the Chief realizes that the struggle is necessary to continue in order to "...re-assert individual humanity in defiance of the forces of anti-humanism" (263). Within this anti-humane environment, Kesey has managed to create Chief Bromden as the reflection of the Combine's victimization. The Combine's power relations "...clear the ways for human behavior (*conduire*) to be subtly conducted (*conduit*), so that human actions are led as surely and as effortlessly through their channels as water through a "duct" (*ducere*)" (Caputo and Yount 5). The Chief's muted and non-resistant behavior is the result of the Combine's practice of disciplinary power. He is a perfect illustration of a 'docile body' because he is productive by following the authority's rules and routines and by not making any resistance against the established modes of power in the ward.

The Combine's influence on the patients and the staff is not always easy to detect. If the novel would have been portrayed through a patient who does not understand the Combine, the victimization of the patients would presumably not be that obvious. Therefore, Chief Bromden's point of view is a central narrative strategy, as it highlights the Combine's power relations because he truly understands how it functions. The idea of the Combine would have lost its effect if other characters would have narrated the story, as no one else but the Chief is aware of the Combine's controlling power. Not even McMurphy seems to be aware of the Combine until the Chief tells him what it did to his father (220). Despite warning McMurphy of the danger to resist the system, McMurphy continues to underestimate how powerful the Combine actually is.

"That's why you shouldn't of broke that window. They see you're big now. Now they got to bust you".

"Like bustin' a mustang, huh?"

“No. No, listen. They don’t bust you that way; they work on you ways you can’t fight! They put things in! They *install* things. They start as quick as they see you’re gonna be big and go to working an installing their filthy machinery when you’re little, and keep on and on and on till you’re fixed!”

“Take’er easy, buddy; shhh.”

“And if you *fight* they lock you someplace and make you stop –”

“Easy, easy Chief. Just cool it for a while. They heard you.”<sup>6</sup>

The Chief functions as a caretaker and protector for McMurphy, but McMurphy’s ignorance leads to a serious consequence – him being lobotomized by the system. He is forever muted and silenced. Hence, his ignorance causes the opportunity for the Chief to escape and to be free. In other words, McMurphy’s ignorance and denial of how ‘little’ he is compared to the system is Chief’s way to freedom and McMurphy’s way to his own death. Whereas McMurphy is made into an eternal prisoner of the Combine, the Chief manages to break free. It is arguable that the Chief never can achieve total freedom, as he escapes to the outside world (the Combine). He will always be a Native American, and he will always be an ex-patient of a mental institution. These are two labels that are highly stigmatized in society, and it will most likely always be linked to the Chief. Goffman points out that

...once he has a record of having been in a mental hospital, the public at large, both formally, in terms of employment restrictions, and informally, in terms of day-to-day social treatment, considers him to be set apart: they place a stigma on him (*Asylums – Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates* 309-310).

When considering the stigmatizing consequences of labeling individuals, the Chief will always be a suppressed ‘prisoner’ within society. The Chief is in the ward for years. Goffman further argues that “Unlike much medical hospitalization, the patient’s stay in the mental hospital is too long and the effect too stigmatizing to allow the individual an easy return to the social place he came from” (*Asylums – Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates* 310). The Chief, including all other patients, will never be able to escape the ‘Ship of Fools’ because they are labeled as ‘the Other’. They need to be controlled and normalized in order to fit into the perfect mainstream of productive and well-adjusted bodies.

The next section will elaborate how the ward uses disciplinary power in order to normalize, to control, to regulate and to investigate the patients. Several elements of

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<sup>6</sup> Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 1962:221

Foucault's disciplinary power (such as 'the art of distribution', 'normalizing judgements', 'the control of activity' and 'panoptical mechanisms') have already been mentioned in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, I want to continue to elaborate these elements in terms of how the medical staff practices modes of power in order to produce 'docile bodies'.

## 2.2 'The Wolf and The Rabbits'

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"I'm a rabbit. The doctor is a rabbit. Cheswick there is a rabbit. Billy Bibbit is a rabbit. All of us in here are rabbits of varying ages and degrees, hippity-hopping through our Walt Disney world. Oh, don't misunderstand me, we're not in here *because* we are rabbits – we'd be rabbits wherever we were – we're all in here because we can't *adjust* to our rabbithood. We *need* a good strong wolf like the nurse to teach us our place."<sup>7</sup>

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The ironic statement of Mr. Harding comparing his fellow patients with rabbits and the Big Nurse with a wolf (64-65) in Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest* is of particular significance. It is significant because he gives an exact conclusion of how the ward functions. The superior 'wolf', the Big Nurse, has been assigned the great duty of adjusting the patients to the norms of society. Mr Harding is able to express the ridiculousness that lays upon their imprisonment, as he mocks their situation by comparing it with living in Walt Disney World – a fake world. As it is already mentioned, the 'Public Relation man', who is the link between the ward and the outside world, promotes this fake world to the public. He does not only promote a false image to the public, he does in fact promote it to grade school teachers. The danger of doing so lays within the fact that the teachers convey the wrong image by teaching the public false knowledge. The real truth is that the mentally ill have no voice in society because of their alienation. The public is blinded by the powerful system, which prevents the real image of the treatment of extraordinary individuals within institutions. This false knowledge creates the gap between the patients ('the abnormal') and the public ('the normal') that contributes to maintain the patients' 'animality' in society.

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<sup>7</sup> Ken Kesey, 1962:64

## 2.2.1 How does the Ward Practice Disciplinary Power in the *Cuckoo's Nest*?

What the public does not see, is how the authority practices modes of power on the patients' bodies. It comes to a positive advantage for the authority to lock up the mentally ill, especially those who 'cannot be fixed', so that they are unable to "...give the product a bad name" (Kesey 15). Whereas the public lives in a 'false truth' believing that the mentally ill are treated nicely within institutions, Foucault discloses the real truth.

Foucault's first principle of disciplinary power is 'the art of distribution' (*Discipline and Punish* 141) which employs several techniques. In a larger context, the patients are already divided from the normal group in society through their imprisonment in the ward. Foucault argues that it further requires 'enclosure' (141), which means to organize the individuals into subgroups in particular architectures. According to Foucault, 'enclosure' is crucial in order to draw a clear line between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal'. This clear division makes it possible for the 'normal' group to constantly observe the 'abnormal' group. In the novel, the architectural construction visualizes the division between the medical staff and the patients. This division gives a clear image of the incarceration of individuals in a separate and guarded institution like animals in a fenced compound. The most obvious example of this dehumanizing division is how the Nurses' Station is placed behind a glass window. The nurses are able to observe the patients and the patients are able to observe the nurses from their day room. The Nurses' Station allows, however, only access to the medical staff, whereas the medical staff always has access to the patients' day room. The patients are further categorized into the Acutes, the Chronics, the Wheelers, the Walkers and the Vegetables (Kesey 15-16). This may have a deterring effect on each patient. For instance, the staff made a mistake when treating some Chronic patients, who were transformed into dysfunctional Acutes when getting electro-shock therapy (16). The Chief enlightens that: "Now he's nailed against the wall in the same condition they lifted him off the table for the last time, in the same shape, arms out, palms cupped, with the same horror in his face. He's nailed like that on the wall, like a stuffed trophy" (16). The medical staff crucified this patient, Ellis, to remind the patients what can happen to them if they disobey the authority. The Chief notices that the Big Nurse otherwise "...points out to an Acute, whenever he goes into a sulk, that you boys be good boys and cooperate with the staff policy which is engineered for your *cure*, or you'll end up over on *that* side" (18). Ellis' crucifixion serves

also as a trophy for the staff, which reminds them that they have accomplished total control of his body. The trophy is an image of their powerful suppression.

Moreover, the classification of individuals is what Foucault terms ‘spatialization’ (143), where the particular space defines who and what the individual is. “In discipline, the elements are interchangeable, since each is defined by the place it occupies in a series, and by the gap that separates it from the others (*Discipline and Punish* 145). For instance, the physical distance between the nurses and the patients defines the nurses’ higher rank. In addition, the Nurses’ Station shows that they have a higher rank than the black boys, who mingle with the patients. Even the doctors have a lower rank than the Big Nurse. The Big Nurse is in charge to employ “...her ideal staff” (Kesey 29). She has the power of collecting educated individuals who obey her rules. Chief Bromden notices that she may use years in order to create her perfect staff.

Years of training, and all three black boys tune in closer and closer with the Big Nurse’s frequency. One by one they are able to disconnect the direct wires and operate on beams... They are in contact on a high-voltage wave length of hate, and the black boys are out there performing her bidding before she even thinks it (3).

The different ranks define each group’s duties which creates a hierarchical order, with the medical staff on the top and the patients on the bottom. The hierarchy further operates in a network where the categories, or ranks, analyze each other. ‘Spatialization’ does indeed ease the process to analyze and to observe individuals. Because the Big Nurse’s rank commands her to analyze and to observe the patients, she uses several spatial techniques. The black boys serve as a tool that the Big Nurse uses to observe the patients. She cannot exist within the rank of the patients, and that is why she uses the black boys as a link between her and the patients. Besley and Peters in *Subjectivity and Truth* (2007) stress that “Foucault was to maintain that space is inherently political and that it is fundamental to any exercise of power” (79). In other words, the classification of the individuals makes it more efficient to exercise power on each subject. It does further serve to maintain order and control within the hierarchy.

In the ward, the medical staff controls the patients by controlling each activity. Strict timetables, rules and routines create the general framework for every activity (*Discipline and Punish* 151). The Big Nurse practices this framework, which reminds of the system of a prison. The patients are indeed treated as prisoners who are refused to have a private space. Everything the patients do is planned, calculated, observed and controlled. For instance, the

Big Nurse has the power to control time, as she is "...able to set the wall clock at whatever speed she wants by just turning one of those dials in the steel door..." (71). She does further determine the routines when to go to bed, when the group sessions take place, when to work, when there is medication time, etc. (32-37).

The Big Nurse wields the power to consign and to control these rules and routines, which indicates that she also has the power to change them because they are *her* rules and routines. This fact reveals how powerful the Big Nurse actually is, as she is the only character who *can* change the system of the ward. Whenever McMurphy resists against her routines, she uses the other patients as an excuse for not changing anything. This is made clear when McMurphy requests to watch the World Series in baseball. The Big Nurse refuses to allow the patients to watch it, blaming on several patients who cannot handle if one changes the routines. McMurphy's response to her attempt to control the situation is by challenging her authority. He uses other patient's trust to vote for changing the television schedule. As McMurphy amazingly enough is able to collect twenty votes (140), even from the Acutes, it illustrates that the patients vote against the Big Nurse's iron hand. In addition, McMurphy shows the Big Nurse that she is not the only one who has power in the ward. However, the Big Nurse re-gains her power and control as she highlights that McMurphy must have the majority in order to change the ward policy (140). This dehumanizing action reveals that the nurse's priorities are to enforce disciplinary power rather than to ease the patients' imprisonment. Once again, the patients are silenced and reminded that they have no power over their own bodies. Ironically enough, the theory of the Therapeutic Community in the ward has its goal to create a "...democratic ward, run completely by the patients and their votes..." (49). The doctor further highlights the importance of "...working toward making worthwhile citizens to turn back Outside onto the street" (49).

Creating a promising but false image of the ward, there is too much evidence that the ward is everything but democratic. McMurphy does everything in accordance to the Therapeutic Community's policy. He uses his democratic rights as a human being to maintain his 'normal self'. The things he is voting for are harmless suggestions that are not exactly abnormal in the outside world. Is it not 'normal' to watch the World Series, to go on fishing trips and to gamble? No one is punished for these things outside the walls of the institution, so why are his suggestions *made* into the belief that he is trying to overpower the system?

Maintaining a strict time schedule, routines and rules serve to keep the system intact. In the article "Mechanisms of Disciplinary Power in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*", Valinezhad and Abootalebi offer an explanation for why the nurse holds strictly on to

the ward's policy. They argue that "when an inmate does the work without any resistance, it will become habitual by its repetition more and more which leads to automatic docility of that inmate" (6). When rules and routines become a habit, the patients function as robots, where they do their duties automatically and disobey the system properly. It would be difficult to make rules and routines into a habit when changing them constantly. This is, of course, the ultimate way to normalize and to delete all individuality that is left in the patient. This process would smooth the machinery and at the same time feed the Big Nurse with more power. The fact that the medical staff creates their own norms for what is right and wrong is a perfect example of how they construct McMurphy's 'insanity'. In a critical perspective, McMurphy has done nothing wrong. He has, however, been transformed into something 'dangerous' by the institution in order to silence his voice. This is another example of the process that Foucault terms 'animality', which is the absolute result of an institution's dehumanizing effects. The system has extinguished McMurphy's passion to remain his desires as a 'normal' individual.

According to Foucault, "discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regard individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (*Discipline and Punish* 170). In order to produce 'docile bodies', it is not enough to shape them through 'enclosure', 'spatialization' and through 'the control of activities'. Foucault stresses that "The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination" (*Discipline and Punish* 170). These three elements are what Foucault terms as 'the means of correct training' (170). 'Hierarchical observation' (170) is a hierarchical organized observation. The highest rank observes a lower rank, which is made possible by the 'spatialization' and classification of groups. However, Valinezhad and Abootalebi illustrate an interesting point of 'hierarchical observation'. They argue that the observation sometimes is horizontal, "...so that an element observes the behavior of another element of the same rank. It may be called spying, although in Nurse Ratched's terms it is called "squealing someone's secrets" (7). The log book serves as a brilliant example, because it encourages the patients to spy on each other (Kesev 15). This further leads to a horizontal observation, which is indeed highly relevant as it illustrates how the patients observe each other. Chief Bromden observes McMurphy from the same rank, whereas McMurphy observes every patient. McMurphy is observed by all other patients, as he is in the center of attention. Because the Big Nurse triggers the patients to spy on each other, she gains even more control and knowledge that she can use against them.



‘Normalizing judgements’ (177) is another important element that serves to the normalization of individuals. The ward uses ‘normalizing judgements’ frequently by defining what is ‘abnormal’ and ‘normal’ behavior. ‘Abnormal’ behavior is punished, whereas ‘normal’ behavior is rewarded. This process contributes to regulate behavior, which is useful when controlling individuals. As it has already been mentioned, the institution’s dehumanizing effect arises from its power to establish its own norms, rules and routines. In addition, ‘normalizing judgements’ make room to punish. Goffman highlights that “Quiet, obedient behavior leads to the patient’s promotion in the ward system; obstreperous, untidy behavior to demotion” (*Asylums – Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates* 315). Whenever McMurphy tries to change a ward policy, he is met with resistance of a higher rank. Although McMurphy is a resistant force within the institutional gaze, he does never use punishment to regulate behavior. He simply demands his civil rights. In contrast, the medical staff frequently activates punishment to correct ‘abnormal behavior’, just because they are the most powerful rank. Foucault states that “Disciplinary punishment has the function of reducing gaps. It must therefore be essentially *corrective*” (*Discipline and Punish* 179). The Big Nurse uses disciplinary punishment not only to correct behavior, but she uses punishment to break the pattern of resistant behavior. Her goal is to prevent abnormal behavior in order to ease the process of docility.

One method of punishment that is practiced in the ward is the misuse of medication. Rather than to use drugs to improve the patients’ quality of life, there are several events that reveal that drugs are used to tame and to correct ‘abnormal’ behavior. For instance, Pete’s frustrated outcry for help is silenced and muted with drugs. It is obvious that Pete needs help to deal with his emotions, as he feels that he “...was born dead” (54). Pete tries to share his depressing emotions with the others, which they were encouraged to do by the Therapeutic Community: “Also you should feel at ease in your surroundings to the extent you can freely discuss emotional problems in front of the patients and staff” (50). In other words, Pete only follows the rules of the Therapeutic Community which the Big Nurse took advantage of.

The Big Nurse got him clear across the room, right through his greens. She jumped back without getting the needle pulled out after the shot and it hung there from his pants like a little tail of glass and steel, old Pete slumping farther and farther forward, not from the shot but from the effort; the last couple of minutes had worn him out finally and completely, once and for all... (54-55).

Foucault’s idea of ‘animality’ is brought into light by portraying this incidence as if the Big Nurse hunts and kills a wild and dangerous animal. Drugs are obviously used as another tool

to correct behavior. The Big Nurse achieved what she wanted: “Pete never tried anything like that again, and he never will. Now, when he starts acting up during a meeting and they try to hush him, he always hushes” (55). Pete is forever silenced, and he has achieved total docility. In addition, the Big Nurse has transformed Peter into a self-regulated subject who regulates his behavior automatically in fear of being punished again. In addition, the medical staff gives the patients drugs when they go to sleep (85) in order to gain full control when the staff is understaffed at night. The Chief stresses the strong effect of the pills: “When you take one of these red pills you don’t just go to sleep; you’re paralyzed with sleep, and all night long you can’t wake...” (85). By paralyzing the patients, the ward keeps things in order at any time.

Another method that is used to punish ‘abnormal’ behavior is electro-shock therapy (EST) and lobotomy. It is clear that McMurphy does not get EST or is lobotomized in order to help him. Because, what does he need help with? To mute his desire to be a free individual? The Big Nurse finally manages to delete every individuality and passion that is left in McMurphy by silencing him with a lobotomy. McMurphy has become another robot of the Big Nurse’s robot collection. Terence Martin argues that “...the Shock Therapy machine turns men docile and lobotomy converts even the most unruly into Fully Adjusted Products. These are weapons of terror, dedicated to the proposition that the best man is a good boy” (6). The Big Nurse’s murder of the patients’ personalities by the use of several forms of medication, EST and lobotomy, maintains to suppress integrity into ‘docile bodies’ in an institution of standardization. This dehumanizing treatment of the helpless patients is the result of Foucault’s treatise in *Discipline and Punish* and the heteroclit of ‘the other’ in *Madness and Civilization*.

The medical staff does not only use drugs to control and to correct the patients. According to Foucault, ‘panoptical mechanisms’ (*Discipline and Punish* 195) are essential when producing and maintaining self-regulating bodies. The central core of ‘panoptical mechanisms’ is surveillance – to see without being seen. The idea of ‘panoptical mechanisms’ is rooted in Bentham’s suggestion for how to construct modern prisons (*Discipline and Punish* 200). The point of constructing a prison shaped like a circle with a watchtower in the center is to constantly watch the inmates. However, the inmates cannot see the guards in the watchtower. The prisoners do, in other words, regulate their own behavior in case they are being watched. In the *Cuckoo’s Nest*, Kesey uses many ‘panoptical mechanisms’ which highlights who wants to control who. The ‘spatialization’ of the ward already reveals that the medical staff constantly observes the patients through their glass room. “The Big Nurse looks out through her special glass, always polished till you can’t tell it’s there, and nods at what

she sees, reaches up and tears a sheet off her calendar one day closer to the goal” (33). The black boys further serve as the Big Nurse’s ‘expanded eyes’, as they observe the patients by mingling with them. Everything that they observe goes back to the Big Nurse. By giving the patients sleeping pills at night that paralyzes them, the medical staff has total surveillance of the patients’ bodies.

Whereas the medical staff observes all patients, the Chief has his gaze fixed on the Big Nurse and McMurphy in particular. The Chief’s point of view reveals a detailed study of the nurse, where he has collected information over years about how she rules the ward. The Chief describes in detail how she runs her factory: “I see her sit in the center of this web of wires like a watchful robot, tend her network with mechanical insect skill, know every second which wire runs where and just what current to send up to get the results she wants” (29). Through Chief Bromden’s observation, he reveals the secret about the nurse. While many patients believe that she is doing everything that is the best for the patients’ development, the Chief sees that she only cares about practicing disciplinary power. However, I will elaborate this point further in the following section because the Chief’s point of view might give a limited representation of the nurse.

The surveillance does not only take place in the ward, where the medical staff and the patients observe each other. They are in fact observed from the outside as well, as they have regular visits of the Public Relation man. This creates of course a pressure on the medical staff and especially the Big Nurse, as they want to present their capability of running a highly functional ward. The surveillance from the outside leads to self-regulated individuals among the medical staff, as they need to run the ward perfectly in order to make a good impression to the outside world. Moreover, one can argue that the medical staff is made into ‘docile bodies’ because of the surveillance from the outside world, and that not only the patients are forced to become productive bodies. This is another illustration of how the Combine controls the patients *and* the medical staff.

The last element of Foucault’s idea of correct training is the ‘examination’ (184), which maintains and enforces disciplinary power. The ‘examination’ is a combination of ‘panoptical mechanisms’ and ‘normalizing judgements’. Foucault argues that “it is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish” (*Discipline and Punish* 184). He further points out that “...in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized” (184). One ritual that is practiced in the ward is the admission shower that is mandatory for all new patients. McMurphy refuses to take the shower, a symbolic act of not adjust to the pre-established power rituals of the ward. Making

the admission shower mandatory is the first attempt to classify the new individuals as ‘patients’. Interestingly, this ritual reminds of the standard procedure of a prison. Therefore, the individuals who arrive at the ward are not only patients, but they are also transformed into prisoners. The repetitive exercises of the ward’s rituals contribute to automatic reactions, which decrease any possible resistance because the patient does the ritual without critically reflecting upon it. The process helps obviously to create self-regulating individuals. It is another action of the dehumanizing process that robs every integrity and individuality that is left in the individual.

This section has elaborated how disciplinary power is practiced on the patients. Are only the patients being suppressed, or are everyone in the ward suppressed and made docile by society? In the following section, I will critically question if it is right to portray the Big Nurse as only evil when she is as imprisoned and controlled as the patients.

### 2.2.2 Is the Big Nurse Simply Another Victim of the Combine?

The Big Nurse is indeed a reflection of the suppressing authority. She enforces disciplinary power in order to create ‘docile bodies’, so that she can send a ‘better product’ back to the Combine. If she is unable to create ‘docile bodies’, she tries everything in her power to silence and to remote any resistant forces against her authority. This is seen on several occasions – when she uses electro-shock therapy (EST) and lobotomy in order to correct McMurphy’s ‘abnormal’ behavior. She uses drugs, treatment methods and surveillance to control the patients. She also uses her knowledge about the patients’ past in order to control them. A brilliant example of that is when she uses Billy Bibbit’s mother to make him feel guilty after the patients had a party with two prostitutes in the ward.

What worries me Billy”, she said – I could hear the change in her voice – “is how your poor mother is going to take this.” She got the response she was after. Billy flinched and put his hand to his cheek like he’d been burned with acid. “Mrs Bibbit’s always been so proud of your decisions. I know she has. This is going to disturb her terribly. You know how she is when she gets disturbed, Billy; you know how ill the poor woman can become. She’s very sensitive. Especially concerning her son... (315).

Unfortunately, the Big Nurse’s influence is too powerful to resist. Billy Bibbit takes his own life, and the Big Nurse has re-gained total control. Although the Chief is the only character who realizes the Combine’s existence, it is fascinating to grasp the fact that most of the

patients in the ward are volunteers. Despite being treated badly, they still want to be in the ward. Obviously, they do not feel the need to escape the institution, as the treatment is only 'good for them'. The Big Nurse always assures the patients that everything the medical staff does is of great value for them to be cured. That is at least what the Big Nurse is constantly telling them at the group sessions.

Please understand: We do not impose certain rules and restrictions on you without a great deal of thought about their therapeutic value. A good many of you are in here because you could not adjust to the rules of society in the Outside World, because you refused to face up to them, because you tried to circumvent them and avoid them. At some time – perhaps in your childhood – you may have been allowed to get away with flouting the rules of society... the foolish lenience on the part of your parents may have been the germ that grew into your present illness. I tell you this hoping you will understand that it is *entirely* for your own good that we enforce discipline and order (200).

The Big Nurse's dictatorship makes the patients believe that they are dependent on her authority. As she represents herself as the 'saving angel' that has come to save the men from their miseries, is as fake as the world they live in. The Big Nurse has not her best interest in the patients, but she rather lays her faith in the system. The only thing she cares about is to maintain discipline and order – not for the sake of the patients, but because of the authority's demands. According to Ruth Sullivan, the "...Big Nurse should be keeping those in her care warm and fed and healthy; she should be loving but is instead denying, destructive, and terrifying" (16). The Big Nurse is extremely influenced by the expectations of society to practice disciplinary power in order to control and to normalize. Sullivan further argues that "...she denies them warmth, autonomy, and manhood in order to keep her own world intact. Her biggest fear, and the sign of her defeat, is loss of control" (18).

The Big Nurse is indeed afraid of losing control. She is after all obligated to do what she is expected to do. In many ways, the Big Nurse and the patients have one thing in common: The nurse obeys the system just like the patients. She is trying to fulfill her duties as a nurse in terms of treating the patients. Although she might appear as the biggest scapegoat, one has to be reminded that she has not invented the techniques and the treatments that she practices. From a medical point of view, she is a brilliant nurse who is able to govern the institution. The patients are not the only victims of society – the Big Nurse is a victim of society too. She is obligated to follow the rules of the system, and she is obligated to do a satisfying job. The authority maintains to keep her in motion because she gets rewarded for good behavior. Although Kesey represents the Big Nurse as the root to all the evil in the ward, one should critically question the Combine instead. It is the Combine that labels the

patients as an ‘abnormal’ group that needs treatment in order to function in society. Therefore, the patients think that they have to be in the ward voluntarily based on their belief that they are dysfunctional. The Big Nurse has nothing to do with the fact that most of the patients choose to be in the ward. Moreover, it is the Combine and its norms that influence the way an institution should be ruled. The Big Nurse has most likely not invented disciplinary power, but she has adapted disciplinary power that she practices in the ward in order to fulfil her duties as a nurse.

Although she ‘animalizes’ and dehumanizes the patients by enforcing disciplinary power, one might argue that she also is ‘animalized’ and dehumanized from a patient’s perspective. In Chief Bromden’s eyes, she is a perfect product of the Combine:

Her face is smooth, calculated, and decision-made, like an expensive baby doll, skin like fresh-colored enamel, blend of white and cream and baby-blue eyes, small nose, pink little nostrils – everything working together except the color on her lips and fingernails, and the size of her bosom. A mistake was made somehow in manufacturing, putting those big, womanly breasts on what would if otherwise been a perfect work, and you can see how bitter she is about it (6).

On the one hand, the nurse is the Combine’s perfected product of a ‘docile body’. She is indeed as docile as her policy makers wants her to be. This is another feature that the Big Nurse and the patients have in common. Chief Bromden’s description of the nurse’s physical appearance is as if she is a life-less, non-human figure with no soul, produced to enforce the law of the Combine. On the other hand, the fact that the Chief constantly refers to her womanly features as a ‘mistake’ implies that he actually stigmatizes her for being a woman. By comparing her with a life-less doll, does he not dehumanize her? Is that right of him to do, when he knows how it feels to be dehumanized himself? The Big Nurse is in other words dehumanized by society *and* the male patients. Patricia Reis points out that it not only exists an ongoing dehumanization in the ward, but that the men in fact defeminize the Big Nurse. Reis argues that

In a bizarre (but not uncommon), and highly effective reversal, Kesey has taken all of the aspects of a totalitarian system, its controlling, brutalizing dehumanization (defeminization), and projected these onto matriarchy, and the devouring mother (81).

In a larger context, the nurse appears to be a victim as much as the patients. Chief Bromden’s point of view can therefore mislead the truth about the nurse. Is the Chief’s perception of the nurse too harsh? It is ironic, somehow, that the Chief focuses on how the Combine suppresses

the patients, but that he cannot acknowledge that the Combine suppresses *everyone*. She is, indeed, a heroin in the Combine, considering everything she has accomplished. She sacrifices her dignity as a woman, as a nurse and as an individual in order to enforce the system. She is stigmatized as a woman and a nurse, and her treatment methods and the way she rules the ward is frequently questioned by patients and doctors. And in the end, she risks her life when McMurphy strangles her. Is she not a good citizen who contributes to remain order in society? The novel can certainly be seen as a parallel to totalitarian powers and processes of stigmatization and exclusion in society. Within a historical framework, the ward's totalitarian system contradicts to the Beat and hippie generation's counter-culture to standard society at the same time. Considering the fact that Kesey was part of this resistant movement (De Crescenzo 7-9) that fought against a standard society, echoes in his harsh presentation of the Big Nurse's dictatorship.

If one sees the nurse through the eyes of the Combine, she is indeed a conscientious, skilled and 'docile body'. She is also a victim of the Combine because she is *made* conscientious, skilled and docile. However, from a patient's perspective, she is the suppressing and dehumanizing force behind the authority that constantly tries to enforce the rules of society. Nevertheless, she is a victim of the Combine as much as the patients. They have all been created, isolated, excluded, shaped, influenced, dehumanized and stigmatized during the process of creating 'docile bodies' that can serve the system. Whereas the Combine has created its heroic figure (the Big Nurse) that portrays the Combine's power in the ward, the patients have created their own hero and leader – McMurphy. On the one hand, McMurphy presents the resisting force of the patients and their uprising against the nurse and the system. On the other hand, like the Big Nurse, he is just another symbol of the victimization of society. In the following section, I will draw a line between McMurphy and the Big Nurse. I will argue that both have been glorified as heroes, but that it is just an illusory presentation which conceals the actual truth – that they are both victims of the Combine.

### 2.2.3 The Illusion of a Hero

Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest* highlights the fact that all patients are different individuals who have been consigned to an assembly line of normalization. However, McMurphy is in many ways an interesting character because he is the first patient who challenges the medical staff and the ward's systematic use of disciplinary power. As he arrives the ward, McMurphy is big, confident and strong: "He sounds big. I hear him coming down the hall, and he sounds big in the way he walks, and he sure don't slide; he's got iron on his heels and he rings it on the floor like horseshoes" (11). As we follow the journey of McMurphy through the eyes of the Chief, Kesey portrays a rather tragic story of McMurphy. Through the uprising against the Big Nurse, Kesey illustrates the struggle between McMurphy and the system, and how it destroys his individuality and independence. His big and strong appearance in the beginning compared with his muted and weak appearance after the lobotomy indicates that McMurphy has lost the game of defeating the system. The nurse is too big and the system too powerful.

In Lilja and Vinthagen's article "Sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower: resisting what power with what resistance?" they point out that power and resistance is always linked together. They further argue that

Since disciplinary power is about training, examination, functional organization of space, time tables, detailed surveillance and study – *resistance to discipline* will be about either openly refusing to participate in the construction of new subjectivity/capacities/skills/organizations, or the de facto transformation of such social construction into something else – something not useful for power interests. The power of discipline is met by forms of resistance that challenge through avoiding, rearticulating discourses and by destabilizing the institutional control of behavior (114).

McMurphy is already labeled as 'useless' and dysfunctional on his arrival since he did not function at the working farm (13). He tells the patients that he came to the ward out of his free will: "Nobody left in that Pendleton Work Farm to make my days interesting anymore, so I requested a *transfer*, ya see" (12). This is, however, a suspicious statement of McMurphy, as he later tells the patients that he was ruled as a psychopath by the court because he "got in a couple of hassles at the work farm..." (13). This clearly highlights the power of the system in the way the laws' jurisdiction labels individuals as mentally ill when the individual is difficult to transform into a docile and productive body. It illustrates the exploitation of a rigorous system that tackles unruly individuals' inadequateness.

In his attempt to destabilize the system in the ward, McMurphy is met with even a



stronger resistant force – the Big Nurse. McMurphy does not resist the ward’s rules and routines with a negative intention at first, as he only requires his civil rights as a ‘normal’ human being. The Big Nurse, who tries to maintain the systematic use of disciplinary power at any costs, does not allow the patients to have civil rights. The process of creating ‘docile bodies’ and the normalization of the patients prove merely impossible if the patients have a voice that can change the system. Every element of disciplinary power that the Big Nurse has established in the ward is challenged by McMurphy. He suggests creating a gambling room of the tub room (111) which blocks the nurses’ surveillance from their Nurses’ Station. In other words, McMurphy creates a private space for the patients which decreases the ward’s use of ‘panoptical mechanisms’. Further, McMurphy breaks the glass of the Nurses’ Station twice which illustrates that the Big Nurse is not fully protected behind her glass window. This action shows that McMurphy is able to cross the line between his low rank and the medical staff’s higher rank. He is able to break the clear architectural division between the medical staff and the patients. He does, in other words, challenge the ward’s ‘art of distribution’. In addition, McMurphy sabotages the group sessions by rearticulating discourses (Lilja and Vinthagen 114). By doing so, he disturbs the pre-established rules and routines. During the group sessions, McMurphy challenges and tests the Big Nurse’s limits:

I thought for a minute there I saw her whipped. Maybe I did. But I see now that it don’t make any difference. One by one the patients are sneaking looks at her to see how she’s taking the way McMurphy is dominating the meeting, and they see the same thing. She’s too big to be beaten... She’ll go on winning, just like the Combine, because she has all the power of the Combine behind her (113).

Although the Chief knows that opposing against the Big Nurse means to fight against the powerful system, McMurphy seems to believe that if he defeats the nurse he has won his victory.

A crucial shift in McMurphy’s innocent way of demanding his rights as a citizen occurs as he realizes the fact that he is committed (170). Carolyn Anne Anderson has an interesting point of view, where she explores in her “Real and Ideal Spaces of Disability in American Stadiums and Arenas” how the system of a prison transforms prisoners into self-regulated bodies.

For inmates of the prison, the microphysics of power in the prison do more than produce an obligation of prohibition: the prisoner has an obligation to behave in a certain way if he desires an early release. Therefore, the terms of power grip the prisoner on a deeper level than had earlier forms of punishment. Now the prisoner’s bodies are invested with a power that is transmitted by them and through them (256).

Because McMurphy knows that the chance for an early release is low, he has nothing to lose. In one way, McMurphy functions as a resisting force against the system. He is, however, the force behind the humanization of the dehumanized in the ward. He brings life to the institution by treating his fellow patients as ‘normal’ human beings, and not as ‘crazy animals’ (Kesey 67). According to the Chief, McMurphy made him feel good about life again. “McMurphy is teaching me. I was feeling better than I’d remembered feeling since I was a kid, when everything was good and the land was still singing kids’ poetry to me” (256). He re-establishes the men’s masculinity by inviting prostitutes to the ward and on their trip, and he offers the patients freedom when they set off on an adventurous journey on a boat. The prostitutes and the boat trip serve as an escape from the disciplinary power, where they are free from the rules, routines, the constant surveillance and the punishment.

The boat trip is an important event in the novel because it illustrates how the patients are met in the outside world. In addition, it shows that they are highly functional individuals who do not depend on the norms, rules and routines of the ward. Out on the sea, they are not patients, lunatics, fools, dumb, crazy, dangerous nor prostitutes. They are simply free individuals. Thus, before they start their fishing trip, Kesey portrays how the outside world stigmatizes the men as lunatics (235), and Candy as a prostitute (242-244). It visualizes Foucault’s idea in ‘*Stultifera Navis*’, where the ‘Ship of Fools’ illustrates ‘the other’ as a group of outcasts that is excluded in society because they deviate from the average of ‘normal individuals’. On the ship, they are free and independent individuals, where the harsh division between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ does not exist.

The fact that the doctor joins their trip is ambiguous. On the one hand, he is part of the medical staff. In other words, he is another ‘panoptical mechanism’ and is able to report ‘bad behavior’ to the ward. On the other hand, the doctor seems to protect the patients from the stigma that meets them in the outside world. The event at the gas station is an example, where the doctor uses the actual truth about the patients in order to reduce the dehumanizing attitude of the service-station man (235). The doctor namely refers to the patients as a work crew rather than inmates, which reduces the stigma that occurs through the communication with someone who is not fully accepted as human (*Stigma – Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* 15).

Whereas McMurphy believes that he finally has concurred disciplinary power with his heroic actions, the Big Nurse makes him believe that he is a hero. The cruelty lays within the false hope that the nurse actually gives to McMurphy. Although she knows that she decides when he gets discharged from the ward, she lets him believe that he controls the power

balance. The Big Nurse fools McMurphy by letting him believe that he has gained total freedom and control. McMurphy thinks that he is more powerful than her, but the truth is that the Big Nurse plans the right moment to destroy him.

She saw that McMurphy was growing bigger than ever while he was upstairs where the guys couldn't see the dent she was making on him, growing almost into a legend. A man out of sight can't be made to look weak, she decided, and started making plans to bring him back down to our ward. She figured the guys could see for themselves then that he could be as vulnerable as the next man. He couldn't continue in his hero role if he was sitting around the day room all the time in a shock stupor (291).

The question whether McMurphy is a hero is important to reflect upon. He might be a hero for some of the patients, as he sacrifices himself in order to make a positive change in the ward. He sacrifices himself for the Chief so that he can escape. Hence, it is interesting to notice that the image of McMurphy as a hero is only an illusion that controls his actions and behavior. In addition, the Chief not only observes the tense relationship between the medical staff and the patients, he also offers a critical perspective on power relations among the patients. It is highly debatable whether McMurphy drives himself into a resisting force against the system, or if it is a result of the powerful influence of group dynamics. The patients make him believe that he can resist the ward's system, and that he can make a change by rebelling against the nurse. However, the patients have been in the ward long enough to know how to take advantage of McMurphy's innocence and ignorance. Sullivan argues that "They all use him to fight their battles, egg him on to engage Big Nurse when they, but not McMurphy, know that he can be punished in the "Brain Murdering" room. Most significantly, they kill him. They are responsible for his lobotomy..." (24). All the patients, except McMurphy, know that "A successful Dismissal like this is a product that brings joy to the Big Nurse's heart and speaks good of her craft and the whole industry in general. Everybody's happy with a Dismissal" (Kesey 41). They use McMurphy's independence and ignorance to get the benefits out of his battles against the nurse. They do of course desire the gambling room, the fishing trip, the prostitutes etc., but everything is McMurphy's accomplishment. They enjoy it, but they do not contribute to go against the nurse. This is clear in the end when the nurse is the cause of Billy Bibbit's suicide. McMurphy is the only one who defends Billy Bibbit's death, whereas the other patients withdraw.

The only character who seems to care about McMurphy is Chief Bromden. He warns him about his dangerous actions and what the consequences will be. Although the nurse makes McMurphy believe that he can win the battles, another problem is his desire to gamble.

He does not only gamble in poker, he does in fact gamble with his life. For McMurphy, his battles with the nurse are always a question about who wins and who loses. His internal urge to gamble and to win is too strong to resist. This is something that the nurse knows, and she takes advantage of it so that she can re-gain total control of his body.

Another important detail that is worth mentioning in terms of McMurphy as an illusory hero, is the fact that he has not changed anything in the ward. He has indeed brought life into the ward, and he has humanized the ‘robots’. In addition, he helped the Chief to escape from the ward. However, he does not change the social conditions (Woolf 262) in the ward, and his death is just another reflection of the power that society possesses. He is part of the death of Chezwick and Billy Bibbit as it would not have happened without McMurphy’s uprising against the nurse. Most importantly, McMurphy is the cause of his own death. He is lobotomized and deprived from all individuality. It is the Chief who finally releases him from his eternal imprisonment and sets McMurphy free. Although McMurphy dies, it can be argued that he achieves freedom by escaping the system through death. This fact makes the novel a tragic story, which mirrors the treatment of the mentally ill in society. McMurphy’s death illustrates that he is not a hero, but that he is just another victim of a suppressive system of stigma that tends to be derived from a larger structure: a society of convention and normality.

## 2.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explores power relations in Ken Kesey’s *Cuckoo’s Nest* within the framework of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* and *Madness and Civilization*. The totalitarian system that the medical staff maintains through their use of disciplinary power, suppresses, dehumanizes, normalizes and stigmatizes the patients. Every element of Foucault’s understanding of disciplinary power is investigated through the power relations between the medical staff and the patients. Chief Bromden’s point of view gives a detailed description of how ‘the Combine’ works upon the patients and the medical staff, and how it suppresses and dehumanizes every single character. The ward’s creation of ‘docile bodies’ particularly illustrates the ward’s attempt to normalize the ‘abnormal’. This process is highlighted through the ward’s strict practice of ‘arts of distribution’, ‘the control of activity’, ‘normalizing judgements’ and ‘panoptical mechanisms’. The ward manages to mute every individuality and uniqueness of some patients. However, the Big Nurse’s dictatorship is challenged eventually.

The Big Nurse's desire to gain total control over McMurphy's body is met with his power resistance. A detailed interpretation of their relationship does, however, reveal that both are victims of the powerful system that creates productive and non-resistant bodies that obey the system's norms, rules and routines. The most important point that this chapter attempts to address, is that every character in the novel is a presentation of the victimization of the Combine. All characters are 'docile bodies', or at least tried to be made into 'docile bodies', where individuality, freedom and independence is non-existent. This is additionally a reflection of Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, as it illustrates how the system suppresses and alienates a group of individuals that deviate from the accepted average of normality. The novel portrays how the authority controls and regulates the individuals by grouping, categorizing and isolating them within a mental institution which silences their voices in public.

## Chapter 3 – Exploring Mark Haddon’s *Curious Incident* within a Foucaultian Framework

Mark Haddon’s bestselling novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) has been highly appreciated over the past decade. After it was published, *The Curious Incident* has been celebrated with several awards, for instance, the Whitbread Award that was assigned to *The Curious Incident* for being the “book of the year” in 2003. The novel also entered Broadway in 2012 as a play in London. Haddon uses the first-person narrator Christopher to tell his experiences of the world. It invites the reader into the mind of a fifteen-year-old boy who behaves and thinks quite different than other teenagers.

Interestingly, a tremendous amount of critical reviews, articles and dissertations have based their understanding of Christopher on a diagnose-driven approach. A substantial number of critics are unable to interpret the novel outside the structures of classifying an individual with a diagnosis<sup>8</sup>. Such an approach to the novel minimizes its complex content by categorizing and labeling Christopher as ‘the kid with Asperger Syndrome’. All critics seem to interpret Asperger Syndrome through their understanding of Christopher, which results in a fixed gaze on the diagnosis rather than on other important themes. James Berger, for instance, explores Christopher’s language in terms of autism (274-278). In *The New York Times*, Michiko Kakutani writes in the end of his review that Christopher “...never for a moment feels like a generic teenager or a composite portrait of someone with Asperger’s Syndrome (the form of autism that he presumably suffers from)”<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, Nadja Luckin has based

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<sup>8</sup> See Ruth Gilbert, “Watching the Detectives: Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* and Kevin Brook’s *Martyn Pig*”, *Children’s Literature In Education*, 241-253; Sabina Dosani, “Back on the autistic spectrum”, *British Medical Journal*, 33; Suellen Alfred and Linda Null, “A Mind with a View”, *The English Journal*, 105-107; Sonja Freeman Loftis, “The Autistic Child Narrator: Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*”, *Imagining Autism: Fiction and Stereotypes on the Spectrum*, 79-107; Ellen Y. Siegelman, “An Anti-Hero’s Journey”, *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, 47-57; Kathrine Kovac, “...And that means I can do anything: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nigh-time* and the changing definition of “disability”, *Ball State University*, 4-49; Kathrine Nyborg Johansen, “Representation of Asperger’s Syndrome in Contemporary Fiction”, *The Arctic University of Norway*, 7-65; John Freeman, “Autistic Boy Must Leave Safe House To Solve Mystery”, (*The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 2003), [http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2003-06-29/entertainment/0306270384\\_1\\_autistic-children-christopher-s-goal-dog](http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2003-06-29/entertainment/0306270384_1_autistic-children-christopher-s-goal-dog) Accessed April 2018; Nani Power, “Feeling His Way”, (*The Washington Post*, 2003), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/2003/08/10/feeling-his-way/1fa1e87f-582b-4b7f-a3fb-9202fae2c994/?utm\\_term=.a34626f3d063](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/2003/08/10/feeling-his-way/1fa1e87f-582b-4b7f-a3fb-9202fae2c994/?utm_term=.a34626f3d063) Accessed April 2018; Dan Cryer, “A journey through the world of an autistic savant”, (*Chicago Tribune*, 2003), [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-07-27/entertainment/0307260011\\_1\\_temple-grandin-autistic-real-people](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-07-27/entertainment/0307260011_1_temple-grandin-autistic-real-people) Accessed April 2018

<sup>9</sup> Michiko Kakutani, “Books of the times; *Math and Physics? A Cinch. People? Incomprehensible*”, (*The New York Times*, 2003), <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/13/books/books-of-the-times-math-and-physics-a-cinch-people-incomprehensible.html> Accessed April 2018

her entire thesis on investigating Christopher's mind style within an autistic framework. She states that "Christopher suffers from Asperger's Syndrome and is therefore not good at reading faces, cannot imagine things that have not happened and does not like social encounters because he often fails to understand the intentions of others" (1).

Although these statements are based on clear evidence in the novel, it is questionable if it is right to focus on Christopher's disabilities. Critics who narrow his personality by labeling him with a diagnosis, appear to be an equivalence to the Big Nurse in the Combine. In other words, critics and the Big Nurse assign the problem to the single individual and not the structure of society that suppresses and stigmatizes individuals. In many ways, Christopher is not that different than other teenagers. In an interview on [powells.com](http://powells.com), Haddon points out that

...All of us feel, to a certain extent, alienated from the stuff going on around us. And all of us at some point, rather like Christopher, have chaos entering our lives. We have these limited strategies we desperately use to try to put our lives back in order. So although in some senses he's a very odd and alien character, his situation is not that far removed from situations we've all been in at one time or another (*The Curiously Irresistible Literary Debut of Mark Haddon*).

Moreover, *The Curious Incident* is part of the curriculum aims in many schools, but interestingly, the novel has been met with resistance in several schools. In this case, parents believe that the novel will not contribute to empathy in the students. Nicole Galante, a high school English teacher in Long Island, New York, alerts in her article "The Audacity of Empathy: It's *Still* the Students, Stupid!" the difficulties she met as she decided to use the novel in the English classroom. Her intention was to teach the students "...respect for the uniqueness and potential of the individual..." (102). The response of several parents was that the novel is "trash" or that one does not "get anything out of the book" as it indicates that "if you're a little 'off' you split your parents' marriage up" (102). Despite Christopher's special features, the novel is important to acknowledge as Haddon portrays how society treats and maintains his uniqueness, especially in his school.

The novel serves for a deeper understanding of being able to recognize someone's individuality and abilities, and that it is possible to appreciate an individual's otherness without labeling the individual with a disability. In Haddon's very humane approach, he highlights that absolutely every human being is unique. Throughout the interview on [powells.com](http://powells.com), Haddon further argues that

For me, disability is a way of getting some extremity, some kind of very difficult situation, that throws an interesting light on people. But it's also something that's terribly, terribly ordinary. There are these extreme situations, but they're happening somewhere in your street at this very moment. And that's important to me, to find the extraordinary inside the ordinary (*The Curiously Irresistible Literary Debut of Mark Haddon*).

Christopher himself argues briefly that although he has special needs, he *is not* Special Needs (56). He states that everyone has special needs, such as “Mrs Peters who wears a beige-coloured hearing aid, or Siobhan who has glasses...” (56), and that it is quite ordinary. Special needs do not define an individual. Christopher has clearly special features – he cannot stand the colours yellow and brown, he cannot mix food, and he does not like to be touched. He has also trouble to understand facial expressions, and he does not understand irony, rhetorical questions or metaphors. He does however love mathematics, animals, maps, symbols, and things that are systematically ordered. In many ways, Christopher is a challenging teenager who often is misunderstood because of his inexpressive and monotone appearance. Despite the fact that Christopher is special, it is thus wrong to define him through his special needs. He is much more than just a portrait of a diagnosis.

The school is presented as an important institution in Christopher's life. The professionals in his school appreciate his ‘otherness’ by not trying to change his special needs. They do not try to normalize him just because he is different. Christopher is accepted for who he is, and it is crucial that he receives special education in school in order to ease his everyday life. The school is therefore obligated to label him as ‘the pupil with special needs’ in order to give him the education he needs. Because the professionals provide Christopher's ‘otherness’, he is able to evolve his special interests. It appears therefore impossible not to categorize Christopher. The school is important to explore because it mirrors an institution that supports an individuals' special needs, which stays in contrast to the institution in the *Cuckoo's Nest*. Critics seem to miss the point of the school's significance as an institution. In opposition to these critics, I would like to examine the school as an important support system that also, like Haddon's novel, tends to defy much of Foucault's system paranoia and Goffman's ideas of stigma.



### 3.1 Presenting an Improved Institution

Haddon illustrates a fundamental social institution that empowers and strengthens Christopher's self. It contradicts Foucault's aspects on institutions' suppressive effects and Goffman's ideas of a totally dehumanizing system. The school as an institution is of positive quality in Christopher's development and improvement as an active citizen. The school and its professionals are able to support his special needs, something that his parents are incapable of. His parents' broken marriage results in their distress towards Christopher's sometimes challenging behavior. Through his memory, the reader acknowledges that his parents' relationship is difficult and that their frustration often results in hitting or yelling at him. Although his special needs are not always preserved in his domestic home, the school fills the gaps in Christopher's everyday life. Haddon portrays a stable institution that helps him whenever his unstable family is incapable of giving him the care that he depends on. The school serves for stability in Christopher's unstable life.

When considering *The Curious Incident* from a Foucaultian perspective, the novel works as a response to Foucault's critical concepts of the institutionalization of individuals. As it is illustrated in the analysis of the *Cuckoo's Nest* in chapter two, Foucault's aspects on society's structure reveals the suppression, the stigmatization and the dehumanization that is worked upon the patients in the ward. The institution, which is always negative and suppressive according to Foucault, is an important platform for Christopher. The patients in the *Cuckoo's Nest* are totally isolated within an institution that practices a totalitarian system that controls and regulates each individual. In contrast, Christopher walks freely and is not isolated or fully controlled by the school. His presence stays in contrasts to Foucault's argument of a total isolation and suppression of 'the other' in his '*Stultifera Navis*'. In addition, Christopher is not animalized within a system in order to alienate him from the 'normal' individuals. He is not made into a 'docile' body in school, as he is not regulated through punishment. In terms of Goffman's ideas of stigma, Christopher's qualities as a human being are not minimized and made into something 'less human'. The professional caretakers in his school accept him for who he truly is, without controlling and regulating him. In other words, the school in *The Curious Incident* is rather the opposite of how Foucault defines an institution, and it challenges Goffman's statement that stigma often occurs within social relations.

Unlike the patients in the psychiatric ward, Christopher is fully integrated and accepted in society. Foucault's critical aspects, however, are still relevant for the novel because he

operates within a system with a certain structure that establishes society's rules, norms and beliefs. Because he is accepted in society and in school, he can evolve his otherness rather than suppressing it. The reason why Christopher can unfold his personality is because of the school's people-oriented system which focuses on developing his abilities rather than his disabilities. A central element in this novel, which contributes to make it significant, is the way Haddon focuses on the single individual and the uniqueness that is linked to otherness. Although Haddon represents a different protagonist that might deviate from the average, Haddon does not try to change him throughout the story. Christopher remains the same despite his development of becoming an independent individual. In other words, Haddon portrays an individual who is not totally controlled, regulated and changed by the system's modes of power. *The Curious Incident* is therefore an illustration of a character who is not influenced by the production of 'docile bodies' although Christopher operates within a system.

The novel focuses on a system that is much more improved than what Foucault was able to envision in his time. It illustrates that society has changed with the historical shifts because the institutionalization in terms of Christopher's education is beneficial for him as well as crucial in order to function better in society. Therefore, *The Curious Incident* discloses some of Foucault's intellectual flaws, as Foucault concentrates on the significance of the mass rather than on the single subject in his early works. However, some of Foucault's theoretical elements are present in *The Curious Incident*. Thus, these elements are not always that obvious in Christopher's environment.

Foucault's concept of 'animality' is present when Christopher reacts with physical violence and groaning in situations where he is misunderstood. This is made visual in the situation where a policeman finds Christopher with the murdered dog, Wellington. Christopher explains how he reacted to all the questions the policeman asked him: "I rolled back onto the lawn and pressed my forehead to the ground again and made the noise Father calls groaning" (8). Although the policeman accidentally 'forced' Christopher into this animalistic state, the policeman did not know that Christopher cannot comprehend many questions at once. In all his innocence, the policeman is the cause of Christopher's animalistic reaction, but his intentions were not bad. This is an important difference between 'animality' in the *Cuckoo's Nest* and in *The Curious Incident*. In the *Cuckoo's Nest*, the Big Nurse drives her patients into an animalistic state with the purpose to control, suppress and to dehumanize. In contrast, Christopher is never driven into an animalistic state based on the intention to control and to suppress him. Whenever Christopher physically reacts like he does to the

policeman, it is because the character he interacts with does not understand his special needs. Christopher is unable to express his emotions with words or facial expressions, which illustrates that his otherness is the reason of his imprisonment. This highlights the school's importance even more. The teachers are the only individuals in Christopher's life who truly understand him.

Nevertheless, Foucault's idea of the 'Ship of Fools' plays an important role, as Christopher's inability to communicate with other human beings isolates and distances him from other individuals. This leads to his opportunity to evolve his exceptional understanding of the world which he expresses through numbers, mathematical problems, emoticons and other visual illustrations. He is not affected by the ongoing normalization in society that controls, regulates and suppresses individuals. Christopher is not able to grasp the normalization of individuals because it is not obvious and visual. He has his own ways to control and to regulate himself, but independently from the governments' intrusive modes of power. His mind is not manipulated by society, which indicates that his point of view is honest, human, innocent and different.

In Haddon's interview on [powells.com](http://powells.com), he describes the significance of the narrator's point of view: "...Here's a character. Whom if you met him in real life you'd never, ever get inside his head. Yet something magical happens when you write a novel about him. You slip inside his head, and it seems like the most natural thing in the world" (*The Curiously Irresistible Literary Debut of Mark Haddon*). Not only does the reader understand how Christopher's mind works, but through the eyes of Christopher, the reader experiences how the outside world perceives his otherness. Whereas his teachers meet him with compassion and understanding, other characters are not capable of comprehending Christopher's inability to communicate. The characters that lack the knowledge to understand how Christopher functions often misunderstand him because his abilities are not always easy to grasp. He is not able to express his brilliant thoughts. Therefore, several characters do only perceive him as a 'disabled' or even a 'dumb' teenager.

The difference between the educated and the uneducated is clear on several occasions. For instance, Christopher tells that Mr Jeavons, his psychologist at school, says that he is a very clever boy (32). Already on the next page, Christopher tells about Terry, another pupil at his school, who always says that Christopher "...would only ever get a job collecting supermarket trollies or cleaning out donkey shit at an animal sanctuary and they didn't let spazzers drive rockets that cost billions of pounds" (33). Another example is the contrast between Siobhan, Christopher's teacher, and his father. Christopher recalls an incident when

his father finds out that he has continued his detective story about the neighbor's murdered dog. The truth about Wellington's murder reveals the fact that his father is the murderer, so he does obviously not want Christopher to know the truth. However, as his father finds out that Christopher has been doing a research in the neighborhood, he says to Christopher: "Holy fucking Jesus, Christopher. How stupid are you?" (102). Christopher further tells that "This is what Siobhan says is called a rhetorical question. It has a question mark in the end. But you are not meant to answer it because the person who is asking it already knows the answer. It is difficult to spot a rhetorical question" (102). He portrays that his father does not understand him whereas Siobhan does. If his father would recognize that Christopher has difficulties with rhetorical questions, he would presumably not have formulated his questions like this.

Siobhan on the other hand is aware of that Christopher has difficulties to understand rhetorical questions, so she teaches him. By making Christopher the first-person narrator, Haddon gives the silenced individuals in society a voice. In addition, Christopher's point of view reveals his isolation and alienation in situations where he is misunderstood. The distance between him and other characters can be linked to Foucault's 'Stultifera Navis', which illustrates the continuous gap between 'the other' and 'the regular'. In other words, the gap between Christopher and other characters will always portray him as 'the alienated other'. At the same time, it highlights the importance of the school as an institution and the educated professionals who try to smooth the gap by giving Christopher the tools he needs in order to communicate with other characters.

Not only is Foucault's understanding of the 'Ship of Fools' present in *The Curious Incident*, but Foucault's concept of 'normalizing judgements' can also be discussed in relation to the school. It is the school that decides that Christopher needs special education. Do they not contribute to maintain the gap between 'normal' and 'abnormal'? This is clearly criticized in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. It is thus obvious that Christopher depends on the special education. Is it therefore sometimes necessary to categorize individuals in order to help?

Although elements from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* occur in the novel, the overall importance is that the novel works in contrast to Foucault's philosophy. The beneficial function that the school as an institution has in Christopher's life contradicts the main principles of the suppression, isolation and the dehumanization that Foucault articulates in *Madness and Civilization*. In a larger context, the novel indicates that the school as an institution has improved their ideals and functions in accordance to Foucault's harsh critique in *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish*.

### 3.1.1 The Importance of Education and Professional Care

In 2017 the Policy Department of Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs (The European Parliament) published a study of inclusive education and its importance to practice it in schools and society. The study introduces inclusive education as a necessity:

Nowadays, it is seen as a response to increasingly complex and diverse societies. It treats diversity as an asset which helps prepare individuals for life and active citizenship in increasingly complex, demanding, multicultural and integrated societies (*Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities* 7).

In the novel, the school works as a solid foundation for Christopher's future as an independent and included citizen. An important element of inclusive education is that it

...ensures all members feel respected, valued and are enabled to fully participate in the school community. Instead of seeking to fix learners or provide 'compensatory' support to learners who are different to fit them into existing arrangements, schools are invited to develop inclusive learning environments that are both universally and adapted to each learner's needs (7).

Siobhan plays an important role in fulfilling psychological control mechanisms for inclusive education. She teaches him to decipher people's facial expressions, which Christopher often finds confusing (19). Moreover, she gives him the tools he needs to understand and to solve difficult situations. For instance, she tells him not to punch his peers although they punch him first. Siobhan does so by giving Christopher a detailed description of how to handle the situation: "...move more away from her and stand still and count from 1 to 50, then come and tell what she has done, or tell one of the other members of staff what she has done" (39). This eases Christopher's understanding for how to behave and to treat other human beings in difficult situations. Most importantly, Christopher says that he likes to know exactly what he is allowed to do and not to do in life (39), which indicates that Siobhan's teaching methods have a positive effect on Christopher.

Siobhan constantly attempts to find ways in which Christopher expresses himself, without normalizing him to make himself understood by conventional means. She gives him visual illustrations in form of emoticons (2-3) to make him understand the variation of facial expressions. In this case too, Siobhan makes a list of various facial expressions

that Christopher can make use of. She is able to help Christopher because she has the education that is needed to truly understand how *he* processes language to express himself and to comprehend the world. He uses prime numbers, maps, plans, drawings and other visual illustrations to control himself and to keep things in order in confusing or chaotic situations. One example is when Christopher is at the train station before he travels to London all by himself. He is clearly terrified: “And it was like standing on a cliff in a really strong wind because it made me feel giddy and sick because there were lots of people walking into and out of the tunnel...” (179-180). He then concentrates on solving a mathematical problem in order to gain control in an uncontrolled situation. Christopher uses numbers to make sense of the world. Siobhan knows that he relies on logical and visual thinking. Therefore, she practices the same method to communicate with him.

The diversity of language in *The Curious Incident* strives towards an understanding of the phenomena of the mind from a variety of linguistic differences manifested in language. Jacques Derrida criticizes Foucault in his “Cogito and the History of Madness” for trying to assume to understand madness and expressing unreason in a totally rationalized mindset. He strongly argues that “...madness, folly, dementia and insanity seem, I emphasize *seem*, dismissed, excluded, and ostracized from the circle of philosophical dignity...” (37). According to Derrida, ‘madness’ cannot be comprehended in Foucault’s rational and undestructed language. Haddon’s presentation of Christopher’s use of visuals, maps and emoticons approaches the complexity of his extraordinary mind more than what Kesey does in the *Cuckoo’s Nest*. Kesey’s use of a more rationalized language, recognizable plot, linear events and a conventional composition does not mirror the complexity of the novel. It does, however, reflect the unchangeable structure and the predictable and controlling system of the psychiatric institution. In other words, language in the *Cuckoo’s Nest* reflects the institution as a whole, whereas language in *The Curious Incident* reflects Christopher’s ability to think and to process the world as a free individual.

Furthermore, Siobhan triggers Christopher’s curiosity to find out the truth about Wellington’s death. She encourages him to write a detective story about the murder of Wellington, which discloses the truth about his parents. The detective story works as another mean of Christopher’s own communication with himself, his family, his teacher Siobhan and the reader. His research leads him to the letters of his mom, which reveals that she is still alive. In addition, his father admits that he killed Wellington and that his

mother left them for Roger Shears, their neighbor. The detective story contributes to Christopher's independence and his reflection about his place in the family. In order to write the detective story, Christopher is forced to communicate with his parents, his teachers and with strangers. His desire to find the answer of the mystery makes him transcend his comfort zone. Christopher explains that he likes "really little spaces, so long as there is no one else in them with me" (65). The detective story invites Christopher to the entire world. He also illustrates that he finds it difficult to talk to strangers: "Talking to strangers is not something I usually do. I do not like talking to strangers. This is not because of Stranger Danger which they tell us about in school...I do not like people I have never met before. They are hard to understand" (45). Despite of that, Christopher continues his research in the neighborhood. Through his research, the reader learns to know Christopher and his special needs, which offers a deeper understanding of his mind style. In addition, James Berger points out that "...the detective story is generally both an acute observer and a social outsider" (278). Knowledge creates insight and development, whereas enlightenment is always the *bête noir* in Foucault's philosophy and social institutions, such as school that always instruments for authoritarian and discursive control. The detective story does, however, serve as an advantage for Christopher's development of the self. By crossing his limits, he is able to become more independent. Most importantly, he is able to communicate with other individuals and the reader.

Siobhan encourages Christopher to write his detective story with a pedagogical purpose. She knows that he likes Sherlock Holmes: "I like Sherlock Holmes and I think that if I were a proper detective he is the kind of detective I would be" (92). This indicates that he receives inclusive education as it is adapted to his needs and interests. Not only does the detective story lead to his reflection of his environment, but it does also "support Christopher's desire for a highly delineated existence" (Gilbert 244). When writing the detective story, he is able to "read and shape the apparent random nature of the world around him" (Gilbert 244). Gilbert further explains that this is because a detective fiction

...provides the reader with stimulation of being presented with a riddle combined with the reassurance of knowing that there will always be a solution. In detective fiction, if not in life, Christopher can understand the rules of the game (244).

Christopher depends on the idea to find a resolution because he needs to re-establish order in a chaotic and inexplicable situation. It mirrors the significance of literature as an institution of psychological insight, creative arts and social critique.

Siobhan is not the only teacher who prepares Christopher for his future. Mr Jeavons makes him reflect upon his plans in life. A conversation between them illustrates that Mr Jeavons makes him aware that it is difficult to become an astronaut (32). Despite of Mr Jeavons enlightening statement, he does not say that it is impossible. This is an important point because it indicates that Mr Jeavons' intention is not to set limits for Christopher's dreams and opportunities in his future, but he makes sure that Christopher remains realistic. Because the school is future-oriented, Christopher seems to appreciate the importance of education in a very mature way: "...even I won't become an astronaut I am going to university and study Mathematics, or Physics, or Physics and Mathematics..." (33). This might perhaps seem like an unrealistic plan for a fifteen-year-old, but it is realistic and highly possible for him. Christopher not only shows that he is way more mature than most teenagers, but he is also aware of the fact that he is different.

Then, when I've got a degree in Maths, pr Physics, or Maths and Physics, I will be able to get e job and earn lots of money and I will be able to pay someone who can look after me and cook my meals and wash my clothes, or I will get a lady to marry me and be my wife and she can look after me so I can have company and not be on my own (Haddon 58).

He also shows that his otherness sets no limits in his life. Mr Jeavons manages to practice an important element of inclusive learning: "...it includes skills enabling learners to envision a future, be self-determined, to self-advocate, to live independently and to take and assume responsibilities that are associated with one's rights (*Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities* 9). Perhaps his expertise in math will contribute to astro-science in a future profession?

Haddon highlights on several occasions that the school's intention is not to change him, but rather to use adapted learning strategies to develop his individuality. This is especially made obvious by Mrs Peters, his art teacher. When she gives Christopher the task to make a get-well card for his mother, she encourages him to draw red cars on the cover (35). This is because she knows that red cars symbolize a good day for Christopher (35). It shows that Mrs Peters has the knowledge to understand him



and to appreciate and respect him. She offers inclusive education where Christopher can express his creative mind. Art is also in this case illustrated as a significant institution for individual development, social critique and corrective to philosophical discourses, such as it is portrayed in Foucault's '*Stultifera Navis*'. In its exploration of a wide range of means of communication, its focus on individual empowerment, its presentation of compassionate carers and an institution that provides opportunities for an exceptional individual, Haddon's *Curious Incident* indicates that Foucault's critique on institutional suppression, isolation and dehumanization has to a large extent been incorporated in school institutions and structures of education.

In the following section, the importance of inclusive education will be further elaborated. The section will additionally focus on the difference between integration and inclusion, and the advantages and disadvantages of practicing inclusive education in schools.

### 3.1.2 Inclusive Education

In Julie Allan's "Inclusion as an Ethical Project" she highlights the important difference between integration and inclusion. The idea of integration in school was argued to be not satisfactory enough, as it only referred to children with 'special educational needs' (282). Inclusion, which

...emerged in the educational discourses of the early 1990s...starts with the premise that an individual has a *right* to belong to society and its institutions, which therefore implies that others have obligations to ensure that this happens. In particular, inclusion necessitates the removal of barriers that may prevent individuals from belonging (282).

Gary Thomas adds in his article "Inclusive schools for an inclusive society" that the term 'special educational needs' excludes other children (103). He justifies this by arguing that

Children's difficulties at school may arise from a multiplicity of factors related to disability, language, family income, cultural background, gender or ethnic origin and it is, therefore, inappropriate to differentiate these factors (103).

The school gives Christopher the opportunity to take the A-level exam in mathematics. Thus, Mrs Gascoyne refuses to let Christopher take the exam at first because they “didn’t want to treat him differently from everyone else in the school because then everyone would want to be treated differently and it would set a precedent” (57). This strongly indicates that the school values the inclusion of *all* pupils and that they are against special treatment of only some individuals.

Regardless of the special education that Christopher receives, the A-level exam is not necessary for Christopher to function in life. The differentiation within inclusive schools has been critically questioned based on the argument that *all* individuals are unique. When giving only some students special education, the school distinguishes between the ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ which further categorizes a certain group of individuals. The danger in this is that other children who need help might be ignored. Moreover, the differentiation makes room for labeling an individual as something ‘different’ or ‘deviate’ from the rest of the students, which is always negative in Foucault’s philosophy. Stainback and Stainback argue that

The designation of arbitrary cutoffs does not make students any more different between the special and the regular groups than within these groups... In short, there are not – as implied by a dual system – two distinctly different types of students, that is, those who are special and those who are regular. Rather, all students are unique individuals, each with his/her own set of physical, intellectual, and psychological characteristics (103).

The fact that Mrs Gascoyne is careful to organize a special exam for Christopher points out that the school does not wish to practice differentiation. This might seem contradictory to the fact that Christopher actually receives special education at school, which illustrates that differentiation is present. However, it is arguable that the school gives him special treatment because it is truly necessary for increasing his quality of life. The school tries to avoid differentiation at any costs. In addition, the education of other pupils at Christopher’s school is not portrayed in the novel.

Because the school tries to avoid differentiation and values inclusion of all pupils, it indicates that the school is based on the appreciation of individual heterogeneity. Nevertheless, Christopher’s father demands that he takes the A-level exam, and the school arranges it eventually. Although it stays in contrast to the fact that the school seems to avoid differentiation, it also shows that the school is flexible towards the single individual’s desires. The school’s flexibility mirrors a less totalitarian system and a less

suppressive authority.

The school's authority differs from the authority in the *Cuckoo's Nest*. In the *Cuckoo's Nest* the Big Nurse rules alone whereas the teachers in *The Curious Incident* function as a team where all parts ease Christopher's understanding of the world. They contribute to shape him to become an independent citizen. The Big Nurse's intention, however, is to control and to change the patients into 'docile bodies', and she suppresses every resistance that threatens her dictatorship. In *The Curious Incident*, the school appreciates Christopher's individuality and they do not attempt to change him. Another important point that is worth to mention is that the authority in Christopher's school gives him and his father a voice. Bearing this in mind, the school portrays a democratic system which stays in contrast to the totalitarian system in the *Cuckoo's Nest*. Christopher's teachers empower his otherness by focusing on his abilities. Siobhan in particular is supportive and compassionate which is something the Big Nurse is not. This is probably the most obvious contrast between these two authoritarian figures because the Big Nurse lacks the humanist approach to other human beings whereas Siobhan highly values and practices a humanist approach in her teaching.

It is thus important to point out that the school is influenced by the structures of an institution. The school divides between 'normal' and 'abnormal' by deciding that Christopher needs to receive special education. In one way it is arguable that the school practices 'normalizing judgements' as they define what is 'normal' and 'abnormal'. It is necessary to have a realistic point of view on Christopher's special education. According to Foucault, education will always be influenced by modes of power. The practice of modes of power within schools is caused by the educational system's structures (*Discipline and Punish* 160). Education is centered around time tables, routines, rules, differentiation, rank etc. These elements are present in Christopher's education as well. Therefore, disciplinary power is difficult to avoid in schools. For instance, in a study done by Jennifer M. Gore, it clarifies the fact that the use of power techniques is always present in teaching although the teachers and students are not aware of it (231-251). However, not all elements of Foucault's disciplinary power are present in *The Curious Incident*. Christopher's 'abnormality' is not punished in order to change or to regulate his behavior. This is because the teachers have the education that is needed in order to teach Christopher how to control an uncontrollable situation. It implicates that not all institutions lead to negative consequences for the single individual, as Foucault argues in his philosophy, but that it sometimes is necessary to

categorize an individual in order to offer help. The school works as an institution where Christopher can evolve and develop his abilities. The professionals at his school are able to give him the care he needs without practicing a totalitarian form of power in order to control, to regulate and to change him. Christopher is not stigmatized nor suppressed and dehumanized. He is simply accepted and treated as a ‘normal’ individual within the framework of inclusive education.

## 3.2 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter offers a response to Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish*, using Haddon’s presentation of a highly functional, people-oriented and beneficial institution – the school. Within the framework of Foucault’s philosophy, it is argued that several critics of *The Curious Incident* miss the point to understand Christopher without categorizing and labeling him within the structures of a neurological disorder. By labeling Christopher as ‘the kid with Asperger Syndrome’, critics focus on Christopher’s disabilities rather than on his abilities and qualities beyond a diagnosis. The categorization of Christopher additionally minimizes the novel’s complex content, where other important themes are set aside. In opposition to other critics, this chapter examines the school as an important support system in Christopher’s life. Haddon portrays an improved school system that practices inclusive education that is beneficial for the single individual. The school in *The Curious Incident* stands in contrast to the totalitarian, suppressing, dehumanizing, controlling and stigmatizing system that is represented in Kesey’s *Cuckoo’s Nest*. This contrast in particular highlights that society has developed in a positive direction, where the system serves and supports the single individual and not *vice versa*. Christopher’s positive experience of the professional care in school indicates a change in social compassion within an important democratic institution.

## Thesis Conclusion

This thesis set out to analyze how ‘otherness’ is treated in society, with a particular focus on institutional medical care and education in Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Within the framework of Michel Foucault’s philosophy, the thesis explores the dangers of dividing individuals as ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’. Foucault argues that this division is always negative because the ‘normal’ group is unconditionally superior and more powerful than the ‘abnormal’ group. The division and the categorization of individuals is created through the system’s structure, where there is no room for diversity. Everything that deviates from the normal standards in society must be normalized. Foucault’s philosophy elaborates the consequences of the process of normalization. In his *Madness and Civilization*, he focuses on the mentally ill as a specific group of individuals that have always been alienated, imprisoned, suppressed, isolated, dehumanized and stigmatized in society. Foucault examines how the treatment of ‘otherness’ has changed through historical shifts, where he especially criticizes the institutionalization of the mentally ill that were observed, controlled, regulated and stigmatized within the medical gaze. He further argues that mental illness is a social construction that arises through a wide diversity of individuals that challenge an authoritarian and monological concept of normality.

In order to understand *why* ‘otherness’ is always perceived as negative, the thesis investigates Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, which serves to place this issue in a larger context. It explores how the system and the authority creates productive bodies that help to stabilize the system’s social norms. All individuals that are unable to serve the system in a beneficial way are locked up and isolated within institutions. The institutions’ purpose is to normalize an individual’s flaws so that the individual can be re-produced as a functional and productive body. When considering psychiatric hospitals in contemporary society, several treatment methods have improved in terms of a more ethical approach to mental disorders. However, Foucault strongly argues that the process of normalization, which minimizes individuality, is still present. It is further argued that stigma is a dangerous consequence of normalizing ‘otherness’, using Erving Goffman’s aspects on the stigmatization of ‘abnormal’ individuals. Normalization and standardization of ‘abnormal’ individuals result in the stigma which decreases a person’s quality of life and self-esteem.

The thesis critically interprets Kesey’s *Cuckoo’s Nest* and Haddon’s *Curious Incident*

in light of Foucault's philosophy with a particular focus on the structure of two institutions: the psychiatric ward in the *Cuckoo's Nest* and the school in *The Curious Incident*. The interpretation of these institutions and how they affect the individuals discloses an important difference. Kesey presents an institution that mirrors Foucault's critique of a totalitarian system perfectly. The authority of the psychiatric ward practices all elements of Foucault's disciplinary power, which dehumanizes, suppresses, isolates, alienates and stigmatizes all patients. Narrative point of view is important in this representation as it gives the reader a detailed analysis of the powerful system and how it operates on the single individual. The analysis of the *Cuckoo's Nest* explores Chief Bromden's understanding of the Combine, the Big Nurse's dictatorship and McMurphy's powerful but fatal resistance to the ward's well-established structure. In the analysis it is argued that every single character is a victim of the controlling and suppressing system. The medical staff is portrayed as a perfected docile body of a totalitarian structure of social disciplining of 'otherness'. The Big Nurse in particular illustrates a perfect docile body that enforces all rules and social norms of the system that are further practiced in the ward. The medical staff in the Combine and the suppressive structures of the institution reproduce the social stigma and exclusion that Foucault visualizes so vividly in his '*Stultifera Navis*'. Thus, the medical staff's total docility indicates that they are as victimized as the patients.

In contrast, Haddon's presentation of the school as an institution illustrates a less controlling and regulating system. The institution in the *Cuckoo's Nest* is a deconstructive system that attempts to break Foucaultian structures of stigmatization, exclusion and the normalization of individuals. On the contrary, the school in *The Curious Incident* supports and appreciates Christopher's otherness. The professionals in Christopher's school do not attempt to normalize or to change him, but they help him to deal with his special needs in order to ease his everyday life. The school shows a much more improved institution that Foucault was unable to envision in his time. Kesey and Haddon have written two novels that give a voice to the silenced individuals that represent 'otherness', which enlightens society that labeling extraordinary individuals as 'abnormal' is a tremendous problem.

Foucault's philosophy, Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest* and Haddon's *Curious Incident* invite to a critical discussion of the treatment of 'otherness' and the powerful impact that the authority has in democratic societies. We are all somehow controlled and regulated in terms of what we do, what we believe in, how we behave and how we perceive other people. Foucault and the novels contribute to change radically instrumentalist thinking and positivist limitations for the

sake of cognitive acceptance of human diversity and social reform of the important democratic institutions of individual thinking, arts, social care and education.





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