

## **MECHANISMS OF DISCIPLINARY POWER IN KEN KESEY'S *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST***

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**Abstract.** *This paper investigates the disciplinary power in Ken Kesey's One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, focusing on Michel Foucault's theories. Kesey, it will be argued, portrays a mental hospital which can be thought of as a microcosm of today's communities in which its bureaucracies, by virtue of strategies associated with its disciplinary power discussed in the subsequent sections, keep their subjects under control. Upon the arrival of a new patient named Randle Patrick McMurphy, however, conditions, appear to be less severe and more pleasing. McMurphy, one of the protagonists, is the only person who is aware of the way the authorities impose strictures on the psychopaths, and does his best to ameliorate the condition of the hospital. Though he effects some changes, he is finally terribly treated and jettisoned. Chief Bromden is the only character who is able to make an individual choice and escape from the hospital so as to prove the power of the individual against the dominant system. The manner the hospital officials exert their power upon their subjects exemplifies the sort of treatment people living in a given society receive so that any menace on the part of iconoclasts is preempted.*

**Key words:** *Disciplinary power, Michel Foucault, Ken Kesey, One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the concepts which has evolved through history and one which is quite at odds with what people assumed in the past is the concept of power, which has attracted the attention of many philosophers and critics of the twentieth century, for its mechanisms have especially in recent centuries undergone a great change.

Before the classical age, domination over subjects was achieved through suppression; but it cost much for the ruling class economically and politically to maintain its power over its subjects. From the classical age on, the way in which domination is carried out has undergone a metamorphosis so that suppression has been supplanted by disciplines.

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Disciplinary power costs less. It is employed nowadays in any society and any institution such as workshops, schools, prisons, asylums, etc. to produce useful and docile bodies.

Michel Foucault is one of the major philosophers of the 20th century whose polemical theories are widely read by scholars, and many of his ideas have had considerable effect in different domains. One of his seminal books, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, elaborates on the concept and mechanisms of discipline. Although this book deals primarily with prison and criminals, it is also applied to any human multiplicities. "Disciplines," according to him, "are the techniques for assuring the ordering of the human multiplicities . . . to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system" (1995: 218).

Disciplinary power operates systematically within a society, not from above; it is the result of the force-relations of all the elements of the multiplicity that produces power. "It is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power" (Foucault 1978: 93). Therefore power is not a possession of some persons, groups or classes, because power-relations are constantly changing on the condition of the tactics or strategies adopted by their elements. As Foucault points out:

Power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic possession - an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the possession of those who are dominated (1995: 26-7).

The ultimate outcome of disciplines is the 'docility-utility' of all the elements of the system. It means that disciplinary power demands all the elements of the system to be compliant, and obedient. In Foucault's terms, "discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body in economic terms of utility and diminishes the same forces in political terms of obedience" (138).

The success of disciplinary power is achieved through perpetual surveillance. "The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation", and by this coercion it makes the subjects clearly visible (170). There are some techniques that assure the exercise of power upon the subjects such as 'enclosure' and 'partitioning'. One of the purposes of these techniques is the separation of the subjects of the classified groups for the sake of observing and controlling them easily and constantly.

The disciplinary power is not going to select the subjects which are abnormal just to separate them from the normal, or to punish or torture them. "The chief function of disciplinary power," Foucault says, "is to train" (170). So it adopts strategies to normalize and homogenize the subjects so as to converge the forces, and accordingly to suppress the resistance. In any system of power some resistant forces will be seen, as Foucault believes, "where there is power, there is resistance" (1978: 93). To suppress the resistant forces, power can benefit from punishment; therefore there is a need for a penal mechanism in any discipline. The disciplinary penal mechanism is not universal, but specific to that particular discipline; it means that it is not identical in all disciplinary institutes, because the norms and rules of those disciplinary institutes are not identical although they may have some affinities. This penal mechanism "enjoys a kind of judicial privilege, with its own laws, its specific offences, its particular form of judgment" and according to it, any resistance to the power and any transgression of the rules are punished (Foucault 1995: 178). The modern punishment has a major difference with the former types of punishment as Lisa Downing calls it "a historical shift which may be described as the movement from the punishment of the body to the punishment of the soul" (2008: 76).

Foucault states that power is also a major source of social discipline and conformity. In shifting attention away from the 'sovereign' type of power, he points to a new kind of power, 'disciplinary power', that can be observed in the state institutions and social services that were created in 18th century Europe, such as prisons, schools, asylums and hospitals. Their systems of surveillance and assessment no longer requires force or violence, as people learn to discipline themselves and behave in the ways expected by the disciplinary institutions. This work contains Foucault's most famous and elaborate exposition of disciplinary power (1995: 55).

The concept of disciplinary power deals with individuals, as Foucault says, "we are never dealing with a mass, with a group, or even, to tell the truth, with a multiplicity: we are only ever dealing with individuals" (qtd. in Hoffman 2011: 28). Unlike previous political theories which assumed individuals as the bearers of sovereign power, Foucault (1995) called them the subjects of disciplinary power and, at the same time, as the instruments through which power is exercised. "Discipline makes individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (170).

Foucault states that Disciplinary power achieves its objectives by targeting the bodies. "What is essential in all power is that ultimately its point of application is always the body" (qtd. in Hoffman 2011: 28). It targets the bodies to control them meticulously, and to train them to perform the expected tasks and duties, and to transform them into docile and useful bodies. As mentioned, the ultimate outcomes of disciplines are the docility and the utility of all the subjects of power. These two forces are interrelated; any increase in one of them results in the other's increase; in Foucault's words, disciplinary power attempts at making the body "more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely" (1995: 138). It trains the bodies and augments their skills and aptitudes, and at the same time, uses techniques and instruments to prevent these skills and aptitudes from being a source of resistance against power. According to Foucault, it is the major function of any discipline to use available instruments to train its elements to be useful, and to deploy specific techniques, tactics and strategies to impose power on them to make them docile and subjected to power.

Discipline is the art "of composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine" and it is the whole of this machine that produces the power (Foucault 1995: 164). Therefore this is an economical means to rule over the subjects, because all these subjects are taking part in producing power. He extends the concept of power from sociology to other fields of social sciences and humanities. He believes that power is not located in determined locus or loci, and rejects the possession of power by certain persons or groups. He decentralizes the position of power, and states that power is omnipresent and comes from everywhere.

## 2. DISCUSSION

*One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* is set in a mental institution somewhere near Portland, Oregon. The novel is narrated by Chief Bromden, a half-Indian whom everybody thinks is deaf and dumb. He often suffers from hallucinations in which he feels that the room is filled with fog. The institution is run by Miss Ratched (the Big Nurse), a frigid, precise woman with a calm, mechanical manner. Here patients receive shock treatments which

forestall the prospect of any menace. When the story begins, a new patient, Randall Patrick McMurphy, arrives at the ward. He is a 'gambling fool' who has just come from a work farm at Pendleton. Upon his arrival, by showing no respect for the authorities and their regulations, he gives the patients the mettle to defy the rules imposed on them.

Kesey portrays discipline and disciplinary power in a mental asylum, a human multiplicity, in which power is going to achieve its aim, that is, to 'train' the inmates, and its outcome, that is the emergence of 'docility-utility', is forced from the inmates. Some strategies employed by the authorities so as to obtain their desired goal will be explicated in the subsequent sections.

### **2.1. Enclosure**

The quintessence of a disciplinary society is the establishment of the dividing line between normal and abnormal subjects. Normal subjects are those who are docile and useful. Abnormal subjects, on the other hand, such as criminals or the mad are those who cannot assimilate themselves to the norms of the bourgeois society. Therefore society separates them from the normal subjects to train them if they are trainable. The next step is to enclose them in particular architectures. A preliminary factor to train social norms of society is that inmates must be in a social multiplicity. In addition to the nurses and black boys, there are about forty patients in the ward, which makes it a small society. This small society is a multiplicity governed by a sort of power called disciplinary power. "Discipline," Foucault (1995) argues, "sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony" (1995: 141). The disciplinary society, Chief Bromden believes, is "the Combine which is a huge organization that aims to adjust the Outside" and assumes the Big Nurse as a part of the Combine "under her rule the ward Inside is almost completely adjusted to surroundings" (Kesey 1962: 28). The enclosure of the novel is "an institution for the insane," a mental asylum somewhere near Portland, Oregon (28).

The disciplinary society separates the abnormal guilds of population and encloses them in specific architectures to avoid them from mingling with other parts which are thought of as normal. This separation can ease the process of normalizing those who are abnormal. Enclosing the mad in an asylum which is "defined to correspond not only to the need to supervise, to break dangerous communications, but also to create a useful space" is the first step in exercising power on inmates, but it is not enough to make them docile (Foucault 1995: 22). Any discipline should have other instruments and techniques to facilitate the subjugation of the inmates and the exercise of power upon their bodies. "The advantage in power relation is on the side of those who possess an organizational advantage" (Sadan, 2004: 46). This organizational advantage is obtained by the use of some techniques and tactics which help the authorities to exercise power and make the inmates subjected to power.

### **2.2. Partitioning**

One of the techniques used by disciplinary power is 'the art of distribution' or 'partitioning' in which "each individual has his own place; and each place its individual" so that each individual has his hierarchical rank, and knows his duty (Foucault 1995: 143). He is present in his place to be observed at any moment. The elements of the system of the asylum in the selected work, are classified into 'the personnel' and 'the

patients'. The personnel are the nurses including the Big Nurse, the black boys and the night guards. Chief Bromden describes the patients who have been classified according to their particular characteristics. Half of the forty patients in the ward are "the younger patients, known as 'Acutes' because the doctors figure them still sick enough to be fixed" and the others are "the Combine's product, the Chronicles" (Kesey 1962: 15). The Chronicles have three sub-classes including 'Walkers,' 'Wheelers' and 'Vegetables.' He describes the Chronicles as "machines with flaws inside that can't be repaired, flaws born in, or flaws beat in over so many years of the guy running head-on into solid things" (16).

The disciplinary authorities classify them to know them better; it is not to cure them, but actually to control them more effectively. In other words classification is:

to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. (Foucault 1995: 143)

Disciplinary power, unlike other forms of power which concern the mass, concerns the individuals to build an ordered community in which no infringement of rules is permitted. It attempts at creating individuals by improving their forces; "it trains the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements" (170). Therefore the disciplinary authorities should be aware of even the minute characteristics of each individual to partition them according to that knowledge. Then they can adopt appropriate tactics and strategies to control them and exercise power upon them.

The profit obtained from partitioning is the order it can lead to in any discipline, because the subjects have to respect the rules and stay at their determined places. "The Chronicles and the Acutes don't generally mingle. Each stays on his own side of the day room the way the black boys want it. The black boys say it's more orderly that way and let everybody know that's the way they'd like it to stay" (Kesey 1962: 18). So one of the techniques to exercise power more effectively is classifying the elements of the system into as many groups and subgroups as it is possible, because disciplinary power aims at exercising power upon the individuals to order the human multiplicities, and partitioning makes them more orderly.

### **2.3. Time-table**

The mental asylum in the book is like a prison. As we can see, Miss Ratched unlocks its main door when she wants to come into it every morning; and the windows of the asylum are covered with hard screens of mesh which may not be broken by knocking them with a chair or a bed. McMurphy plans to lift the heavy control panel to smash one of those windows and escape the asylum; it is done, at the end of novel, by Chief Bromden. The inmates are entrapped in a prison-like asylum, and there is no way out. This imprisonment "covered both the deprivation of liberty and technical transformation of individuals" (Foucault 1995: 233). This deprivation of liberty means that the inmates' time is completely under the control of the disciplinary authorities. Chief Bromden states that "the Big Nurse is able to set the wall clock at whatever speed she wants" (Kesey 1962: 76).

The Big Nurse asserts that the discipline can use the inmates' time as a tactic to exercise power upon them to make them docile when, in a staff meeting dealing with McMurphy and the troubles he caused in the asylum, she says "we have weeks, or months, or even years if need be... The length of time he spends in this hospital is entirely up to us" (158). So they should manage the inmates' time in an organized way that can benefit the discipline.

One of the techniques beneficial to the discipline is to conduct a comprehensive time-table which covers each moment of the inmate's time. The asylum has a strict time-table which programs for the whole time from six-thirty in the morning when the "lights flash on in the ward" till the night medication, after which the patients go to the dormitory to sleep (31). This process is repeated everyday by which the discipline tries to use the time-table to "establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate the cycles of repetition" and make the exercise of power automatic (Foucault 1995: 149). The automatic exercise of power and the inmates' automatic docility imply each other, and the use of time-tables can lead the subjects in their unconscious subjection to power.

Any change in the order of the time-table may interrupt the automatic exercising of power seen when Nurse Ratched, telling McMurphy that "the Schedule had been set up for a delicately balanced reason that would be thrown into turmoil by the switch of routines," rejects his proposition to change the time of cleaning work so that the patients could watch the baseball world games on TV (Kesey 1962: 118). She rejects his proposition, because she knows "precision and application are, with regularity, the fundamental virtues of disciplinary time" (Foucault 1995: 151). A time-table which lacks any of these parameters may lead the discipline to turmoil and disorder. A comprehensive time-table can make the inmates' acts routine which "is an institutionalization process that serves the expansion of the power relations, because it makes certain acts automatic," and these automatic acts lead to automatic docility, the emergence of which from inmate's bodies is one of the 'ultimate outcomes' in any disciplinary institution (Sadan 2004: 65).

The disciplinary authorities contrive in the time-table some specific hours for the inmates to work in the asylum, to cooperate in cleaning the asylum for instance. In any penitentiary institution it is done not for its economic profit or to help the inmates learn a particular skill, but for "the constitution of a power relation", which is "a schema of individual submission" to the power imposed upon them (Foucault 1995: 243). 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.

#### **2.4. Surveillance**

"The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination" (Foucault 1995: 170). The major purpose of the architecture of the enclosure and the partitioning of the elements of any discipline is to make it capable of observing those elements constantly. The black boys, in the novel, walk between the patients, and watch them to make sure they do not try transgressing the rules or deviating from the norms. To put it succinctly, they are observing the inmates of the asylum to prevent any turmoil or disorder.

It is not quite proper to assume that the inmates are the only elements of the disciplinary system who are under surveillance. They are parts of power relations, and

power “entraps everyone who comes close to it: those who exercise power as well as those who are subjects to it” (Sadan 2004: 63). The black boys as well as the inmates are entrapped in the asylum of the novel. The inmates who seem to be the real objects of surveillance can observe the black boys who seem to be the real observers; in Foucault's words, “although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top” (1995: 176). It means that the observers are observed, too. When McMurphy finds the black boys watching TV till ten thirty, he warns them by asking “does Old Lady Ratched know you boys watch TV most of your shift? What do you reckon she'd do if she found out about that?” (Kesey 1962: 216). The black boys are under surveillance, too; because they are elements of the system whose docility-utility is one of the ultimate outcomes of the disciplinary institution.

The surveillance is not always hierarchical so that the elements of the higher ranks observe the behavior of the elements of the lower ranks and vice versa. Sometimes it 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 not called ‘squealing’ someone's secrets. It is, no matter what it is called, a technique which assists the Big Nurse to observe the inmates more effectively. She says “if you hear a friend say something during the course of everyday conversation, then list it in the log book for the staff to see” (50). It is the art of seeing without being seen which is the major characteristic of Bentham's Panopticon.

The lack of comprehensive and constant surveillance in any disciplinary institute leads to failure in imposing power upon the inmates, because “all power would be exercised solely through exact observation; each gaze would form a part of the overall functioning of power” (Foucault 1995: 171). Therefore the Big Nurse rejects McMurphy's proposition to have two day rooms. The new day room proposed by McMurphy is the former tub room which is a place that cannot be seen from the center of surveillance, the glass Nurses' Station. She wants the inmates to be under constant observation, because “it is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection” (Kesey 1962: 187).

The main place of surveillance, is the glass Nurses' Station, a room with a huge glass window, in which the Big Nurse will “spend the day sitting at her desk and looking out her window and making notes on what goes on out in front of her in the day room during the next eight hours” (4). The Nurses' Station is like Bentham's Panopticon tower whose major function is “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic function of power” (Foucault 1995: 201). The inmates in the day room look sneakily at the Nurses' Station whenever they want to do or say something illicit. This is the Panoptic effect that induces in their minds that they are continually observed; but, in fact, they “are not really always under surveillance, they think or imagine that they are” (Bozovic 1995: 16).

The Panoptic surveillance of the Nurses' Station is so inculcated in the minds of the inmates that McMurphy breaks its huge glass twice, and makes Scanlon break it once by bouncing the basketball through it, as a symbolic resistance against the comprehensive and perpetual surveillance imposed on the inmates through it.

The Panoptic surveillance is revealed more clearly when the Big Nurse addresses Sefelt and Fredrickson, saying that “it's been brought to my attention that you two have made some arrangement with your medication - you are letting Bruce have your medication”

(Kesey 1962: 100). She wants to show her omnipresence, her invisible omnipresence, so as to prevent them from transgressing the rules. She wants to induce in the minds of the inmates that she has “a perfect eye that nothing would escape” from its gaze, which is a major factor for the success of any discipline to exercise power upon its elements (Foucault 1995: 173). Chief Bromden asserts this omnipresence of the Big Nurse through the black boys who “never make any noise when they move. They materialize in different parts of the ward every time a patient figures to check himself in private or whisper some secret to another guy” (Kesey 1962: 31).

Surveillance “would make it possible to prevent crimes” which are deviations from the norms, “or if committed, to arrest their authors,” therefore lack of surveillance would increase the rate of crimes, deviations from the norms and transgressions of the rules (Foucault 1995: 96). The inmates of the asylum are under the strict surveillance of the Big Nurse and the black boys during the day when they are in the day room, but what should be done at night when the inmates are in the dormitory and the Big Nurse and the black boys are not in the asylum to observe the inmates? The lack of surveillance at night may throw the discipline into turmoil and disorder. This lack of surveillance is compensated for by the night Medication. In night Medication the inmates have to swallow some red 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, no matter what goes on around you” (Kesey 1962: 85).

### **2.5. Normalizing judgment**

Surveillance is a preliminary and, at the same time, an accompanying technique to ‘normalizing judgment.’ In a disciplinary institution, surveillance alone cannot exercise power completely; therefore there is a need for other techniques which can consummate the task of imposing power upon the elements. One of these techniques is ‘normalizing judgment’ which works side by side with surveillance. The acts and behavior of the elements that are constantly supervised should be judged by the disciplinary authorities according to the norms. Foucault “depicts the norm as a standard of behavior that allows for the measurement of forms of behavior as normal or abnormal;” and judging someone as normal or abnormal is determined by his docility and utility, and his respect for the laws and rules of the discipline (Hoffman 2011: 32).

In any discipline, such as the asylum in Kesey’s book, there are rules and laws in the form of imperatives for the subjects to do or not to do some specific acts. Any rule has been “made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum toward which one must move,” and any transgression of it must be punished (Foucault 1995: 183). When the Big Nurse, in a therapeutic meeting, addresses McMurphy saying that “one of the first things is that the patients remain seated during the course of the meeting,” or “patients aren’t allowed to enter the Nurses’ Station,” or “you can’t run around here - in a towel,” or “it’s against the policy to gamble for money on the ward,” she means that these are the rules of the asylum which all the inmates should respect without any exception (Kesey 1962: 48, 83, 96, 106). When the Big Nurse finds McMurphy in the dormitory during the working time, she tells him “you are supposed to be working during these hours. McMurphy I’m warning you” (144). She warns him against the imminent punishment; the punishment he deserves for his idleness, for his deviant behavior, and because he does not respect the rules of the discipline. She attempts, by



warning him, at compelling him to behave along the norms. By establishing the rules and also the punishment for any transgression of them or for any deviation from the norms in the asylum, the madmen “will be kept in a perpetual anxiety, ceaselessly threatened by Law and Transgression,” which places them in a perpetual subjection to power. (Foucault 1988: 245)

With the help of surveillance and penal mechanism, the authorities try to individualize the elements according to their specific characteristics and at the same time make them move to the optimal end, to the norm, which enables the disciplinary authorities to “hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate” (Foucault 1995: 223). The Big Nurse treats and judges Washington, one of the black boys, in relation to the other two. She warns him, for failing to fulfill his duty, that “you’ll do more than guess! You’ll get him a uniform this instant, Mr. Washington, or spend the next two weeks working on Geriatrics Ward” (Kesey 1962: 98). She does not warn him to the Shock-Shop or the Seclusion Room, which are the specific punishments for the inmates; she threatens that he may lose his comfortable job, which is a demotion of rank. It does not mean that the disciplinary power treats all the members of a class or a rank similarly. For instance whereas McMurphy and Harding are both Acutes, they are not treated alike in terms of disciplinary power, because they are different individuals with different characteristics, although they have some similar characteristics which bring them under the same class. Disciplinary power, according to Foucault, concerns individuals; it attempts at knowing each individual’s particular characteristics and capabilities and according to this knowledge it makes them move along the norms. Therefore disciplinary power “compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes” (Foucault 1995: 183).

## 2.6. Examination

Another technique, accompanying surveillance and normalizing judgment, is the ‘examination’ which is a combination of the other two. “It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish” (Foucault 1995: 184). Its function is to sustain the exercise of power by transforming the subjects in to the object of ‘knowledge’ which results in the production of knowledge about those subjects and how to control them. The classification of inmates in to the Acutes and the Chronics, and the Chronics to Walkers, Wheelers and Vegetables, with their specific characteristics is done through examination.

All the inmates of the asylum are under strict surveillance and examination; and power through examination “makes each individual a ‘case’: a case which at one and at the same time constitutes an object for a branch of knowledge and a hold for a branch of power” (191). For instance McMurphy arrives at the asylum and starts resisting against power from the first moment when he has difficulty with admission shower which is a ritual in any asylum and has to be done at admission. He knows that he must follow the rules like other inmates, but keeps resisting again and again. The Big Nurse, who is the main supervisor of the inmates, observes him constantly and writes in his file his actions and his behavior, his transgressions of the rules and his deviations from the norms. By warning him to respect the rules, the Big Nurse attempts at making him docile. With any transgression committed by McMurphy, she punishes him to find whether the punishment has corrective effects on him; but she finds it fruitless. He commits more serious transgressions, and she imposes on him

more harsh punishments such as shock therapy. All the time he has been under surveillance and, at the same time, an object of knowledge. By accumulation of knowledge about McMurphy and about other inmates who may follow him, the Big Nurse and the staff unanimously agree that he is not 'ordinary', but is a 'disturbing factor' which is dangerous for the discipline and the order of the asylum. They decide to impose on him an operation which is assumed to have therapeutic effects; but, in fact, it is the highest level of punishment; and that is a lobotomy. The operation takes place to make the resistant McMurphy docile forever, and save the discipline from disorder.

Disciplinary power, through examination, can also find which punishment fits a particular subject. It can choose from a wide range of punishments those that are more effective on a particular person. In this respect, the Big Nurse knows that sending Ruckly to the Seclusion Room is the best way to prevent him from making any riot. She chooses to send McMurphy or some other inmates to the Shock Shop, because she knows that the lenient punishments are not so effective to make them docile. In the case of Billy Bibbit, she is aware that threatening to report his bad behavior to his mother, who is her friend, is the most effective way to prevent him from committing any other transgressions.

### **2.7. Accumulation of knowledge**

In any disciplinary institution there is a relation between power and accumulation of knowledge in which they imply each other so that power leads to the production of disciplinary knowledge, and this new knowledge helps power to be exercised more effectively; this process is repeated, again and again, in a circular way.

Sitting at her desk, the Big Nurse, who is in charge of exercising power upon the inmates, looks at what goes on in the day room has the inmates under surveillance; at the same time she makes notes on each inmate's behavior, actions and reactions. Obtaining this knowledge makes her capable of deciding what to do and how to do in a particular situation to impose power upon the inmates in a way that leads to improving their behavior. The results are inscribed, and utilized in exercising power which results in the production of new knowledge to be utilized again; it means that "the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process" (Foucault 1995: 224). This kind of writing, which transforms the individual as an object of knowledge to track his development, is not done in special situations or at certain times; it is done continually and at any moment, because the power is exercised upon the inmates constantly. Chief Bromden states this reality when he says about the black boys that "everything the guys think and say and do is all worked out monthly in advance, based on the little notes the nurse makes during the day" (Kesey 1962: 31).

In the therapeutic meetings, the Big Nurse brings the files and reads from them whenever she should. Each of these files consists of specific knowledge about a specific inmate. In other words, any file makes any individual a 'case'. The files include important information about the inmates, not only during the period they are in the asylum but also before they were brought to the asylum. As mentioned before, the mad are guilty of offending the norms and laws of bourgeois society; and the disciplinary power attempts at organizing that guilt. Therefore the disciplinary authorities have to know the whole stories of their lives which help the discipline to control and to correct them. These stories are very important and helpful for the disciplinary power that knows "behind the offender, to whom the investigation of the facts may attribute responsibility for an

offence, stands the delinquent whose slow formation is shown in a biographical investigation” (Foucault 1995: 252). The Big Nurse, once at a therapeutic meeting, brings out McMurphy’s file and starts reading:

McMurphy, Randle Patrick. Committed by the state from the Pendleton Farm for Correction. For diagnosis and possible treatment. Thirty-five years old. Never married. Distinguished Service Cross in Korea, for leading an escape from a Communist prison camp. A dishonorable discharge, afterward, for insubordination. Followed by a history of street brawls and barroom fights and a series of arrests for Drunkenness, Assault and Battery, Disturbing the Peace, *repeated* gambling, and one arrest—for Rape. (Kesey 1962: 45)

By reading it she wants to show that she knows he has always been a resistant subject, even before his arrival at the asylum, and to warn him that continuing those types of behavior may have awful consequences for him. Knowing about the whole stories of the inmates’ lives helps the authorities to know how to deal with specific individuals in specific situations.

## 2.8. Punishment of the soul

The body was once the major target of punishment, but now it is not. In modern disciplinary institutions, the punishment is not imposed on the body, because the discipline is going to “train the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies” and make them useful forces (Foucault 1995: 170). Therefore the disciplinary power should find a substitute for the body to impose punishment upon it. Foucault says “the expiation that once rained down upon the body must be replaced by a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations” then he quotes from Mably that punishment “should strike the soul rather than the body” (16). The soul is a controversial identity; it is, in the viewpoint of theology, an illusion that inhabits, better say that is entrapped, in the prison of the body; but in Foucault’s words “it would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished” (29).

In the asylum there are patients who behave abnormally according to the norms of the society; and these abnormalities are called mental diseases. It means that the causes of these diseases inhabit in the mind, in the brain. “It is evident that the brain is the seat ... of all diseases of this nature. ... It is there that the Creator has fixed, although in a manner which is inconceivable, the lodging of the soul, the mind, genius, imagination, memory, and all sensations” (Foucault 1988: 123). Therefore the discipline eliminates the torture of punishment on the body, and imposes it on the brain, the soul. This type of punishment, in the asylum, is called medicine, because the authorities believe in its therapeutic effects on the patients. Harding asserts, ironically, that “everything done here is for the patient’s good. ... EST isn’t always used for punitive measures, as our nurse uses it, and it isn’t pure sadism on the staff’s part, either” (Kesey 1962: 199). The medicine in the asylum is also a modern type of punishment and its function, in Foucault’s words, is “to regulate and to punish” (Foucault 1988: 177). Harding explains the mechanism of shock therapy to McMurphy:

You are strapped to a table, shaped, ironically, like a cross, with a crown of electric sparks in place of thorns. You are touched on each side of the head with wires. Zap! Five cents' worth of electricity through the brain and you are jointly administered therapy and a punishment for your hostile go-to-hell behavior, on top of being put out of everyone's way for six hours to three days, depending on the individual. (Kesey 1962: 69)

He means to say that shock therapy is an economical means of punishment; it seems to be painless; at least, it is carried out in a few seconds. "Shock treatment has some advantages; it's cheap, quick, entirely painless" and it needs no 'gas' or 'needle' or 'sledgehammer' (189). The shock therapy is the apparent punishment; the real punishment is the effect that it arouses fear in the minds of the patients. Even the courageous McMurphy shows his fear when he asks why the public does not raise Cain about it. The aim of this type of punishment is not to impose pain on the body, but to create the sensation of pain in the minds of the subjects. In other words, "the pain at the heart of punishment is not the actual sensation of pain, but the idea of pain, displeasure, inconvenience- the pain of the idea of pain" (Foucault 1995: 94).

Although the punishment of the soul does not impose pain on the body, it has an unbearable pressure on the mind of the subject. Charles Chezwick, a patient in Kesey's, commits suicide by drowning himself in the pool after finding out that the Big Nurse has made McMurphy into someone not capable of supporting the patients any longer. Another instance is Billy Bibbit who sleeps with a girl in the asylum at night; a girl who is a friend of McMurphy and brought into the asylum by him. When the Big Nurse finds him with the girl in the morning, she says to Billy "what worries me, Billy, is how your poor mother is going to take this" (Kesey 1962: 314). She knows Billy well, and also knows how to punish him effectively so as to make him repent. Although this threatening is not painful to his body, it imposes on his soul a tremendous pressure that makes him commit suicide by cutting his throat.

The punishment will be more influential if it is capable of arousing terror in the minds of its subject; and if so, it will be an essential means of exercising power in any discipline. "The principle of fear, which is rarely decreased by insanity, is considered as of great importance in the management of the patients" (Foucault 1988: 245). The Acutes do not generally mingle with the Chronics, because they are scared of being transformed into them someday. "The Big Nurse recognizes this fear and knows how to put it to use; she'll point 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*" (Kesey 1962: 18). This fear helps the authorities in exercising power and makes the patients more obedient and docile to the power imposed upon them.

## 2.9. Individual choice

Notwithstanding the exercise of power upon the patients, Chief Bromden is the only character who is able to make an individual decision and escape from the place where he had been kept for years. He, having seen McMurphy's pitiable situation, decides to smother him to death so as to end the life of the one who once taught him to disentangle himself from his execrable status. He thinks that the lobotomized McMurphy is not the real McMurphy and that the Big Nurse will seize the opportunity to make other inmates conform to the system. After killing his friend, he absconds from the hospital to

disseminate McMurphy's perspective towards conformity and his emphasis on non-conformity. The author thus at the conclusion of the novel highlights the rebellious minorities who are able to challenge and flout the rules which many people deem to be inviolable. The chief is unlike any other character who is capable of making his own choice. This choice reflects, as Madden puts it, "a growing self-reliance that comes out of a matrix of attitudes in opposition to those producing conformity" (qtd. in Bloom: 111). All except the Chief either conform to the authorities or like McMurphy rebel against the system, but it is HE who makes an individual choice. He comes to realize the power of the individual to resist social rules and this awareness makes him escape from the hospital and leads to his freedom, a freedom from social control.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Ken Kesey in his novel depicts a mental hospital in which the Big Nurse and the staff attempt to exercise power upon the inmates and maintain it by the tactics and techniques which are adopted to transform the patients into docile and obedient subjects.

With the help of techniques and instruments associated with power, the Big Nurse, as the disciplinary authority, exercises power upon the inmates, and is able to maintain it. Except for some occasional resistance which is overcome by the discipline, all the inmates, with their potential resistance, are malleable and subjected to power until McMurphy comes into the asylum and changes the power relations and converges the inmates' forces against the disciplinary power and the Big Nurse. A change in the power relation occurs so that the exercise of disciplinary power is disrupted; and the inmates, instead of performing their appointed duties, follow McMurphy to regain their freedom.

The Big Nurse has been appointed by the disciplinary society as one of the authorities of the asylum, so there are many instruments available for her to overcome the problem of McMurphy. But deploying any technique or instrument does not work out to be beneficial in improving McMurphy's behavior and in transforming him into a docile subject who looks subjected to power. Even the harsh punishments, such as shock therapy, are fruitless.

McMurphy turns the order of the asylum into an uncontrollable chaos, and it is the discipline's duty to save the order. At last and after his attempt to strangle the Big Nurse, there remains no way for the authorities to control the situation except lobotomizing McMurphy and making him docile mechanically. The docility of all the elements of the system is one of the major aims of any discipline which should be achieved at any price. Lobotomizing McMurphy has two main functions for the discipline. First, it makes a resistant element docile forever; and second, it has great exemplary effects on the minds of other inmates to prevent them from resistance and rebellion.

By the end of the novel Kesey, however, accentuates the power an individual could have for resisting the authorities and extricating himself from a situation which he has been inured to, and which seemed impossible to change. Chief Bromden, having observed how his friend McMurphy has become a disgusting vegetable, saves himself and absconds the asylum.

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## MEHANIZMI DISCIPLINARNE MOĆI U KEN KIZIJEVOM LETU IZNAD KUKAVIČJEG GNEZDA

*U radu se istražuje disciplinarna moć u Ken Kizijevom Letu iznad kukavičjeg gnezda, fokusirajući se pritom na teorije Mišela Fukoa. Kizi, kao što je predstavljeno u radu, oslikava duševnu bolnicu koju možemo da vidimo kao mikrokosmos današnjeg društva u kom birokratija, uz pomoć strategija koje se vezuju za disciplinarnu moć, a o kojoj je bilo govora u nekim delovima rada, drži svoje podanike pod kontrolom. Međutim, po dolasku novog pacijenta, Randla Patrika Mekmarfija, uslovi postaju blaži i prijatniji. Mekmarfi, jedan od glavnih likova, jedina je osoba koja je svesna načina na koji uprava nameće ograničenja psihopatama i daje sve od sebe da poboljša stanje u bolnici. Iako uspeva da izdejstvuje neke promene, naposljetku ipak loše postupaju s njim i otarase ga se. Poglavica Bromden je jedini lik koji može da načini izbor i pobjegne iz bolnice kako bi dokazao moć pojedinca nad dominantnim sistemom. Način na koji zvaničnici bolnice vrše moć nad svojim pacijentima predstavlja primer toga kako se postupa sa ljudima u društvu ne bi li se tako bilo kakva pretnja od strane ikonoboraca unapred osujetila.*

Ključne reči: *disciplinarna moć, Mišel Fuko, Ken Kizi, Let iznad kukavičjeg gnezda*