

## Chapter One

### Madness and Its Reconstruction

This is a short research on Ken Kesey's novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. It tries to analyze Kesey's attitude towards the discourse of madness and its subversion and reconstruction.

Ken Kesey, the younger of two sons, was born in on September 17, 1935 in La Junta, Colorado. During his high school career, Kesey was an unlikely candidate to become one of the most controversial figures of his age and one of the leading figures of the counterculture.

After high school, Kesey eloped with Faye Haxby, his high school sweetheart. Kesey attended the University of Oregon with a degree in Speech and Communications. He also received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to enroll in the Creative Writing program at Stanford. While at Stanford, Kesey participated in experience involving chemicals at the psychology department to earn extra money. These chemicals included psilocybin, mescaline, and LSD, which are the amide of lysergic acid, used in the study of schizophrenia and other mental disorders and as a psychedelic drug, which produces hallucinations and delusions.

He was admitted to the mental hospital when he experiments these drugs at himself. And there he receives mental torture instead of proper treatment. Kesey writes about this incident in the Sketches of the novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*:

Eight o'clock every Tuesday morning I showed up at the vets' hospital in Menlo Park, ready to roll. The doctor deposited me in a little room on his ward, dealt me a couple of pills or a shot or a little glass of bitter juice, then locked the door. He checked back every forty minutes to see

if I was still alive, took some tests, asked some questions, left again... Sometimes the nurse came by and checked on me. Her face was different. It was painful business, but not naked. This was not a person you could allow yourself to be naked in front of. (VII)

It was this experience that fundamentally altered Kesey, personally and professionally. When he finds himself recovered, he goes on searching for a job. He further writes:

Six months or so later I had finished the drug experiments and applied for a job. I was taken on as a nurse's aide, in the same word, with the same doctor, under the same nurse—and you must understand we're talking about a huge hospital here! It was weird... But as I said, this was the sixties. (Kesey VIII)

While working there as an orderly, Kesey began to have hallucinations about an Indian sweeping the floors. This formed the basis for "Chief Broom" in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, his writing project at Stanford.

While at Stanford, Kesey lived at Persy Lane, bohemian community in Palo Alto where he became notorious for throwing parties in which certain chemicals mysterious found their way into the punch; Kesey published *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in 1962. The novel was an immediate critical and popular success. In 1962, Kesey and his friends, who had become known as the Merry Pranksters, bought a 1939 International Harvest school bus and drove to New York to see the World's Fair. Kesey recruited Neal Cassady to drive the bus, and filmed a significant portion of the journey; Kesey would later show clips from the trip to chemically-induced audiences at his parties. Kesey became the proponent of a local band known as "Warlocks," which later became the Grateful Dead.

Kesey and his Merry Pranksters became notorious for their “Acid Tests” and use of LSD and other drugs. Kesey’s exploits with the Merry Pranksters during this period formed the basis for a best-selling book by Tom Wolfe called *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. When the government made LSD illegal, Kesey and Pranksters fled to Mexico. When he returned to the United States for a final performance, he was arrested on a marijuana charge. Upon his release from jail, Kesey moved to a farm in Pleasant Hill. Kesey died on November 10, 2001 following cancer surgery on his liver.

Now this short introduction to Kesey is followed by an outline of the novel proper, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. The novel is the product of both the personal experiences of Kesey, and the specific culture in which it was written. Kesey developed the novel while he attended Stanford University as a graduate student in their Creative Writing program. The novel was partially inspired by Kesey’s part-time job as an Orderly in a Palo Alto Veterans’ hospital.

Despite the novel’s great critical and commercial success, a reader finds the factual information that Kesey included from his experience at the Veteran’s hospital problematic. Both Kesey and his publisher, Viking Press, were sued by plaintiff who claimed that a minor character in the novel, a Red Cross nurse was changed to the nameless character, Public Relation. The plaintiff in the case later became a novelist herself, and wrote a novel set in a California spa. In an ironic twist, she was the subject of a lawsuit from a doctor who claimed that a character in her novel defamed him.

The novel in some sense forms a bridge between the bohemian beatnik movements of the 1950s and the 1960s counterculture movement. Kesey was significantly inspired by the beatnik culture around Stanford, and in the novel, Kesey

deals with a number of themes that would be significant in the counterculture movement, including notions of freedom from repressive authority and more liberated view of sexuality. Kesey himself became a highly influential counterculture figure as part of Merry Pranksters. Despite such themes, the novel was a popular and critical success. Dale Wasserman adopted the novel into a two act play in 1974, while Milos Forman directed a successful film adaptation of the novel the following year. This film, recently named as one of the twenty greatest films by the American Film Institute, featured Jack Nicholson as R. P. McMurphy and Louise Fletcher as Nurse Ratched.

The portrayal of the constructive nature of madness in the novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, does not only subvert the boundary of insane and sane, but also foregrounds the nexus of the discourse of madness with power. By exposing the constructive nature of the discourse of madness, the novel revises the prevailing notion of madness. The characters such as R. P. McMurphy, the protagonist, and Chief Bromden, the narrator, are defined as 'mad' and put into mental asylum simply because they do not fall into the criteria of 'sane' people constructed by the hospital exercised by Nurse Ratched.

The novel is based largely on Kesey's experiences with mental patients. Through the conflict between Nurse Ratched and McMurphy, the novel explores the individual identity and rebellion against conformity, ideas that were widely discussed at a time when United States was committed to opposing communism and totalitarian regimes around the world. However, Kesey's approach, directing criticism at American institutions themselves, was revolutionary in a way that would find greater expression during the sixties.

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* may have had more influence on society than society had on Kesey. The book was widely read by college students just as the baby boomers began to challenge authority. It is considered a masterpiece.

The novel's secondary characters were based on real-life individuals whom Kesey met while working at the Veterans' Administration Hospital. As a result for the novel, he worked the graveyard shift in the psychiatric ward and actually subjected himself to a real-life shock treatment.

The setting of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* takes place at the end of the 1950s, when many of the nation's younger generation began to challenge conformity. Nurse Ratched personified the power and control exhibited by large government and businesses. The Beat Culture began at this time and continued with other countercultures and finally to the hippies of the 1960s.

Young Americans began to question those in power. They formed a subgroup in American society that historians termed the counterculture. This band of political protesters gave rise to the hippies, a collection of mostly young people dedicated to peace, love and the search for beauty of life. Kesey was one of those hooked on a new mind-altering drug, LSD. LSD was considered both a blessing (medical treatment for mental disorders) and a curse (unpleasant reactions and addiction) for American society. LSD served as a unifying vehicle that would later define the entire counterculture of the 1960s.

Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* elicited a host of criticisms since its publication. Critics have tried to analyze the novel from different perspectives. Some critics review the novel from a biblical point of view, some critics, after reviewing the text, regard Kesey as a misogynist. Other critics analyze the text from a psychological perspective. Since it is impossible to include almost all the responses to the novel in

such a short research, an attempt will be made to present some representative responses selected from the huge pile of criticisms.

Harold Bloom compares the novel with Virgil's *Aeneid* finding some comic aspects in it. Bloom writes:

Rereading *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the comic strip genre begins to contaminate me, and I start to tell myself the tale from the stance of Big Nurse, the nightmare projection of the male fear of female authority. Nurse Ratched should be compared, in her function, to Virgil's Juno, not a comparison that writers far stronger than Kesey could sustain. I entertain myself with the wild notion of rewriting the *Aeneid* from Juno's perspective, but the prospect becomes phantasmagoric, and so I cease. (1)

Similarly, Stephen L. Tanner analyzes the novel from very different point of view. He, after rereading some feminist criticism about the novel, talks about the narrow feminism and author's freedom. He writes:

*Cuckoo's Nest* puts into sharp relief some important issues concerning feminism and literature, serving as a special case in this regard. Many feminists concede that the novel is artistically successful but are outraged by the sexism they see in it. This raises questions about whether the problem lies with Kesey or with narrow feminism. And these questions lead to considerations about the author's freedom: to what extent does programmatic feminism infringe upon artistic freedom? (136)

The anti-feminist charges have naturally generated counterarguments. Tanner further says, "Roland Wallace argues that such charges are based upon two faulty

assumptions: ‘first, that the novel is a romance, and second, that McMurphy is its hero, fully embodying its values.’ He says Cuckoo’s Nest is not a romance but a comedy” (136).

Stanley Gold believes that Kesey has not written something new in this novel.

According to Gold:

What Kesey is writing about is not unfamiliar. The excesses and inadequacies of the early 1960s were, I believe, universal in the western world and continue today, not only in Third World countries but also in sophisticated and educated environments. (116)

David Skinner presents Ken Kesey as an iconoclast for romanticizing the individual and defying the so-called American identity. He comments that “as the creator of Randle Patrick ‘R. P.’ McMurphy and Nurse Ratched, the young writer already had done much to romanticize the individual and defy an American identity seemingly based on little more than affluence and social conformity” (26).

Bruce E. Wallis compares this novel with bible. He says that the novel is expressly formulated as nothing less than the bible for a twentieth century religion of self-assertive action, with a message of salvation modulated to the needs of repressed individuals in a constrictively conformist society. According to his words:

The novel is replete with specific comparisons of McMurphy to Christ, references designed to elevate the protagonist’s martyrdom to a high level of significance. But the novel is also integrated by a sustained Biblical analogy, of which these comparisons are only a part, that begins as a series of unobtrusive allusions in the early chapters, intensifies in the novel’s third section (the Fishing trip), and completely dominates its conclusion. The analogy compares

McMurphy to Christ not merely in terms of their martyrdoms, but more extensively in terms of some of the principle figures and events in the life of each. (52-53)

M. Gilbert Porter sees “musical messages” in the novel. He writes that the novel “...focuses on two important matters: One is the enigmatic way that we all participate in the mysterious deterministic forces that shape our lives, a recurrent theme in Kesey’s work. The other is the prominence that Kesey assigns to music in his text and in his experience” (13).

Benjamin Goluboff analyzes the novel with Bakhtin’s notion of carnivalesque. He comments:

Readers familiar with the work of Russian formalist critic Mikhail Bakhtin will discover in Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* plentiful material to illustrate Bakhtin’s theory of carnivalesque. Bakhtin’s ‘carnivalization’ has been applied with profit in Medieval and Renaissance studies; only recently has it been brought to bear upon American texts...virtually nothing has been said in the abundant critical work on Cuckoo’s Nest about the carnival imagery which pervades the novel at its simplest level. It is this imagery which most clearly invites readers to a reappraisal of Cuckoo’s Nest in the light of Bakhtin’s ideas. (109)

These multifarious responses from various sources well display the richness of the novel. A novel can have multiple interpretations. However, the present study aims to analyze how Kesey reconstructs the madness by rupturing the boundary of insane and sane prevalent in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*.

Now a brief outline of chapter division of the present study will be presented.

The present work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction to Kesey, a brief outline of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, a critical review of literature, and an introductory outline of the present research.

The second chapter presents the brief history of madness; Nietzschean and especially, Foucauldian perspectives on madness and civilization. The specific terms such as genealogy, discourse, truth, power etc. that require definition for the present study have also been described in this chapter. It also shows the changing attitude of the society towards madness.

The third chapter will analyze the text thoroughly on the basis of theoretical modality outlined in the second chapter. Some of the extracts from the text will be sort out as an evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study—subverting the then prevailing boundary of insane and sane, Kesey reconstructs the discourse of madness. The third chapter serves as the core of the present research.

The fourth chapter presents the conclusion of this research. The conclusion will be drawn on the basis of textual analysis in chapter three.

## Chapter Two

### The Genealogical Study of Madness

The then prevailing concept of madness before 1960s is subverted with the publication of *Madness and Civilization* (1961) by Michel Foucault. In this book, Foucault goes toward the historical roots from where the construction of the concept of madness emerged. In his preface of *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault clarifies the concept of madness in this way:

In the Middle Ages and until the Renaissance, man's dispute with madness was a dramatic debate in which he confronted the secret powers of the world; the experience of madness was clouded by images of the Fall and the Will of God, of the Beast and the Metamorphosis, and of all the marvelous secrets of Knowledge. In our era, the experience of madness remains silent in the composure of a knowledge which, knowing too much about madness, forgets it. But from one of these experiences to the other, the sift has been made by a world without images, without positive character, in a kind of silent transparency which reveals—as mute institution, act without commentary, immediate knowledge—a great motionless structure; this structure is one of neither drama nor knowledge; it is the point where

history is immobilized in the tragic category which both establishes and impugns it. (XXV)

Michel Foucault has demonstrated in his *Madness and Civilization* that by examining closely the discourse that have defined reason against unreason, we can see how the construction of madness has served various social and political functions. Foucault's study refers primarily to early modern Europe, but the historical paradigm that he identifies continues to express itself today. In the ideological state apparatuses to this century, we still see how the discourse of reason and order work to denounce and confine those who refuse to conform to reason.

However, before entering in to the main subject matter, we have to be familiar with some of Foucault's tools such as the concept of genealogy and the genealogical notion of discourse, truth, and power.

### **Genealogy**

The term, genealogy, is at first used by nineteenth century philosopher, Fredric Nietzsche, and later elaborated and refined by Foucault. Dictionary definition of genealogy is "the study of family history, including the study of who the Ancestors of a particular person were" (*Oxford* 644). From the above definition, it is clear that genealogy demands thorough knowledge about the thing which is to be studied. Now, we should not focus on the particular aspects of the thing and make conclusion out of that, rather we have to examine each and every aspect which requires very depth knowledge about that thing.

Nietzsche does not demand that we see a matter in one particular way, as would the traditional historians, and he does not claim that he sees a matter in completely objective and neutral terms, as would the scholars like Kant, Schopenhauer etc. Instead, he urges both himself and us to look at any matter from as

many different perspectives as possible. In that way, we get the roundest picture of the “truth,” one not dominated by any one particular interpretation. With the genealogical definition, Nietzsche’s “perspectivism” doggedly attacks the idea that there is any such thing as an “absolute truth” or a “correct perspective” from which to view a matter. “Absolute truth,” to Nietzsche, means only that a certain interpretation has become suspiciously compelling.

Central to Nietzsche’s critique, then is an attempt at genealogy that will show the winding and undirected route our different moral concepts have taken to arrive in their present shape. Morality is generally treated as sacred because we assume that there is some transcendental ground for our morals, be it god, reason, tradition, or something else. Yet contrary to our assumption that ‘good’, ‘bad’, or ‘evil’ have always had the same meanings, Nietzsche’s genealogical method shows how these terms have evolved, shattering any illusion as to the continuity or absolute truth of our moral concepts.

Nietzsche’s main project in the genealogy is to question the value of our morality. Ultimately, he argues that our present morality is born out of a resentment and hatred that was felt toward anything that was powerful, strong, or healthy. As such, he sees our present morality as harmful to the future health and prosperity of our species. While the ‘blonde beasts’ and barbarians of primitive master morality are animalistic brutes, at least they are strong and healthy. On the other hand, our present ascetic morality has deepened us by turning our aggressive instincts inward and seeing ourselves as a new wilderness to struggle. Nietzsche’s ideal is to maintain this depth and yet not be ashamed of our animal instincts or of the life that glows within us.

Foucault in his essay, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History” has neatly identified and contrasted the understandings of ‘origin’ or historical root. The kind of ‘origin’ that Nietzsche criticizes sees origins as moments of creation, when things spring into being. This is the kind of origin we get in the story of Adam and Eve, where humans are spontaneously created. Nietzsche prefers a genealogical kind of origin story, where things have a long and tangled history, slowly developing their present form and meaning. We see this in the evolutionary account of the origin of humans, where a slow chain of mutations leads to our present state. Nietzsche dislikes the former interpretation because it sees the ‘thing’ as being absolute in some way. For instance, in the Adam and Eve myth, humanity is seen as a constant: we were created in precisely the shape of we have now, and we have always had the same purposes, drives, and wills. Nietzsche argues that one thing can have countless different meanings, and be dominated by countless different drives and wills during its existence. These different meanings and wills promote a gradual genealogy rather than an instantaneous creation.

Foucault wished to “...probe beneath such abstract system on which discursive practices are interwoven with social practices by the circulation of power” (Adams 1134). Foucault called it as genealogical investigation, adopting the term from Nietzsche’s one of most important works *The Genealogy of Morals*.

Foucault further elaborates this Nietzsche’s concept genealogy as he says that the genealogy consists of two separate bodies of knowledge: First, the dissenting options and theories that did not become the established and widely recognized and, second, the locale beliefs and understandings, for example, think of what nurses know about medicine that does not achieve power and general recognition. The genealogy is concerned with bringing these two knowledge, and their struggles to pass on to others,

out into the light of the day. Foucault in his essay, *Nietzsche, Genealogy and History*, writes:

Genealogy, consequently, requires patience and knowledge of details and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material. Its “cyclopean monuments” are constructed from “discreet and apparently insignificant truths and according to a rigorous method”; they cannot be the product of large and well-meaning errors. In short, genealogy demands relentless erudition. (qtd in Pandey 81)

Genealogy does not claim to be truer than institutionalized knowledge, but merely to be the missing part of the puzzle. It works by isolating the central components of some current day political mechanism, such as maintaining the power structure that diagnoses mental illness, and then traces it back to its historical roots. These historical roots are visible to us only through the two separate bodies of genealogical knowledge as described above.

The genealogical side of analysis tries to grasp the power of constituting a domain of objects. If a society were to institute the role of medicine man, for example, and give him special privileges, we would thereby constitute the object of medicine man. Until we established and institutionalized this practice, nothing could be called a “medicine man.” The genealogy explores what was not evident because of the institutionalization of knowledge by those in power.

Foucault further extends this Nietzsche’s concept of genealogy by adding some terms such as discourse, truth and power with it. Now we will discuss about them in separate topics.

## **Discourse**

For Foucault, the term ‘discourse’ refers not to language or social interaction but to relatively well-bound areas of social knowledge. McHoul and Grace also talk about the Foucauldian concept of discourse in their book *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and Subject*. They write:

*Discourse, Power and Subject*. They write:

... In any given historical period, we can write, speak or think about a given social object or practice (madness, for example) only in certain specific ways and not others. ‘A discourse’ would then be whatever constrains—but also enables—writing, speaking and thinking within such specific historical limits. And we deliberately speak of ‘a discourse’ in the singular: for even though Foucault very frequently uses the mass noun ‘discourse’, he is typically keen to point out that this is something of a theoretician’s shorthand, a way of signaling some common and general properties of discourses. Historically specific discourses (for example, medicine in the nineteenth century) are quite distinct from one another as well as from earlier and late forms of ‘themselves’ which may or may not have same names...they are discontinuous. (31)

Foucault emphasizes that discourse is not a linguistic understanding, for example, not an attempt to understand the ‘meaning’ of terms like ‘madness.’ Discourse is not a matter of words, and neither does it lie in the meeting of words and things, lexical and experience. Discourses are not groups of signs that refer to contents or to dumb reality, but are rather practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.

Discourse is central concept for Foucault, which is first introduced in *Madness and Civilization* but developed in his later works. A discourse is essentially a total

system of knowledge that makes true or false statements possible. Certain statements become possible within certain discourses. The discourse of madness is particularly powerful. The mad man believes unreal things to be true because the delirious discourse that structures his belief dictates it.

### **Truth and Power**

In his later works, Foucault principally interested in how power diffuses itself in the system of authority and how “effects of truth are produced within the discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false” (qtd. in Adams 1134). According to Foucault:

Truth, then is itself a product of relations of power and of the systems in which it flows, and it changes as systems change. By the same token, the old epistemological subject is no longer of importance (except, of course, as a historical product). Such a subject was constituted historically itself and cannot be presumed as “truth” in any genealogical account. (Adams 1134)

In this sense, truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produces and sustains it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it.

Michel Foucault has demystified power. Foucault’s analysis states that power is situated among a cacophony of social practices and situations. The discourse within these social formations is manifested in an economy of discourse. For Foucault then, power is directly tied into the economy of discourse itself.

Foucault, in his later work, *Power/Knowledge* (1980), talks about the relationship between the power and discourse. He says:

... In a society such as ours... there are manifold relations of power that permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. (15)

According to Foucault, the constructive and creative nature of discourse, truth and power helps to form a “discourse” which further gain the power and finally regarded as “truth.” This can only be noticed through genealogical study. Now, we can also study “madness” genealogically by taking it as a discourse created by power; therefore, the definition made by those who hold the power is regarded as “true.”

Thus the idea about genealogy, its notion of discourse, truth and power, and relationship among them further the analysis of the construction of the then prevailing concept of madness.

### **Madness within the Discourse**

Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* is a deep and complex treatment of the discourse of madness in Western society. The book begins by describing the end of leprosy in Europe and the emergence of madness as a replacement for leprosy at the end of the Middle Ages. The “Ship of Fools” in the 15th century is a literary aversion of the exclusionary practice, the practice of sending mad people away in ships. Great uneasiness arose about madmen. Fantastic images of madness that associated it with dark secrets and apocalyptic visions became important. A change occurred in the seventeenth century. Madness became tamed and existed at the center of the world.

Madness did not exactly replace leprosy, but the shift between the two conditions represented a move from a concern with diseased bodies to a concern with abnormal behavior, and diseased minds.

In 17th century Europe, in a movement, which Foucault famously describes as the “great confinement”, “unreasonable” members of the population were locked away and institutionalized. In the eighteenth century, madness came to be seen as the obverse of reason, and, finally in the nineteenth century as mental illness.

Foucault writes about the birth of the classical experience of madness in the following way:

Madness has ceased to be—at the limits of the world, of man and death—an eschatological figure; the darkness has dispersed and out of which the forms of the impossible were born. Oblivion falls upon the world navigated by the free slaves of the “Ship of Fools.” Madness will no longer proceed from a point within the world to a point beyond, on its strange voyage; it will never again be that fugitive and absolute limit. Behold it moored now, made fast among things and men. Retained and maintained. No longer a ship but a hospital. (*Madness* 31)

Now, the classical idea of madness associated with the end of the world, and was no longer the absolute limit. The “Ship of Fools” became moored and became the hospital. Madness was tamed. A new pleasure was taken in it. The world of seventeenth century was strangely hospitable to madness. Madness was at the heart of things, but few memories of its former disturbing incarnation survive.

Foucault also argues that madness lost its power to signify the limits of social order and to point to the truth and was silenced by reason. He examines the rise of scientific and humanitarian treatments of the insane, notably at the hands of Philippe Pinel and Samuel Tuke. He claims that these new treatments were in fact no less controlling than previous methods. Tuke’s country retreat for the consisted of

punishing the madmen until they learned to act reasonably. Similarly, Pinel's treatment of the mad amounted to an extended "aversion therapy," including such treatments as freezing showers and use of a straitjacket. In Foucault's view, this treatment amounted to repeated brutality until the pattern of judgment and punishment was internalized by the patient.

The passions were also important in classical madness; because they unite body and soul, they allow madness to occur. Foucault analyzes the concept of delirium, which is a discourse that essentially defines madness. Classical madness is a discourse that departs from the path of reason. The link between madness and dreams was also an important part of the classical conception of madness.

Foucault further elaborates this idea as he says:

Madness in the classical sense, does not designate so much a specific change in the mind or in the body, as the existence, under the body's alterations, under the oddity of conduct and conversation, of a delirious discourse. The simplest and most general definition we can give of classical madness is indeed delirium; this word is derived from *lira*, a furrow, so that, *deliro* actually means to move out of the furrow away from the proper path of reason. Hence, it is not surprising to find the eighteenth century nosographers often classifying vertigo as a madness, and more rarely hysterical convulsions; this is because it is often impossible to find in hysterical convulsions the unity of a language, while vertigo affords the delirious affirmation that the world is a necessary and sufficient reason for a disease to called madness.

*(ibid 94)*

There were four key themes within the classical conception of madness: melancholia/mania and hysteria/hypochondria. They were located within medical and moral debates, and were eventually seen as mental disease as the time progressed.

Then cures and treatments for various aspects of madness emerged. For the first time, society attempted to cure and purify the madman. This change in the techniques of confinement occurred at the same time as a shift in epistemology, exemplified by Descartes' formula of doubt; a further evolution in the status of confinement occurred. The madman appeared as a figure with social presence. Madness altered human relations and sentiments. However, public fear developed around confinement.

A shift occurred in the nineteenth century. Confinement was condemned and attempts were made to free the confined. Confinement was represented as an economic error as much as a humanitarian issue. A need developed to separate madness from other deviants. The place of madness became insecure. The asylum replaced the house of confinement. In an asylum, the madman became a moral outcast, and his keepers tried to act upon his conscience and feelings of guilt. The model of the family now structured. At the end of the nineteenth century, madness became moral degeneracy. From the asylum, a new relationship between the doctors and patient developed, culminating in Freud's psychoanalysis.

The classical perception of madness is reduced to the moral perception of madness, which is the core of nineteenth century positive, scientific, and experimental concepts. This change began in the techniques of cure but spread generally, recognizing the experience of madness. Psychology was born as a sign that madness was detached from its truth (unreason) and was adrift. What Freud belonged to disease became organic and what pertained to unreason became psychological.

Freud studied madness at the level of its language. He restored the possibility of dialogue with unreason. Psychology was not involved with psychoanalysis; rather, it was the experience of unreason that psychology was supposed to mask.

Now, by reversing the fifteenth century literary meaning of madness, the discourses of reason interpret madness as error and moral fault. The cultural practice of confinement intends to eradicate this error and cure this vice. Confinement seeks to silence madness as a danger to be sure, but a danger that can be cured because it is based upon an error or a moral fault. Where the practice of confinement denies any contrary to reason, embarkation displays awareness of an excess for which rational discourse cannot account.

### **Rewriting the Discourse of Madness**

Foucault examines and analyzes the history of madness “genealogically” as Nietzsche analyzes the history of “morality.” Foucault exposes different aspects of madness which were hidden of which were let hidden earlier on. Madness for Foucault is a term with many meanings. It has a complex relationship to unreason; it is both part of unreason and separate from it. It is essentially constructed and controlled by the intellectual and cultural forces that operate within society. The treatment of the mad depends fundamentally on how they are perceived, madness in the middle ages was associated with dark secrets and visions of the end of the world; in the classical period, however, it was confined along with other forms of social deviance and lost its exclusive status. The modern idea of madness as a treatable mental disease developed from nineteenth century idea of madness as a kind of moral evil. Brian Anderson in his review of the book, *Madness and Civilization*, writes about madness in the following way:

In his highly influential book, *Madness and Civilization*, Michel Foucault indicted the modern West for its treatment of the “insane.” According to Foucault, Western societies, bowing before the Enlightenment idol of Reason, built a theoretical and institutional quarantine against madness. The Cartesian rational mind must not suffer from exposure to irrationality; the madman must not roam freely through town and country as he did during the Middle Ages, a mocking reminder of human mortality and God’s infinite wisdom. Instead, Foucault claimed, the insane were thrown into cells with other dissidents from the rising bourgeois moral order—the poor, the criminal, and the licentious. The supposed liberation of mad during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by “alienists” Philippe Pinel in France and William Tuke in England, he argued, only furthered their exclusion. These reformers herded the mad into asylums, where an arid “science” of psychiatry silenced their Dionysian voices. Enlightenment, Foucault held, was bought at the cost of excluding the mad: such was the heavy price of Reason’s “progress.” (104)

Anderson writes mockingly that the door of Enlightenment was opened by the exclusion of mad.

*Madness and Civilization* also explores the changing relationship between madness and unreason. The true nature of both terms is rarely expressed or allowed to speak, and frequently one forms part of the other. Unreason is defined as “reason dazzled” or confused in the period of confinement. In the modern period, however, unreason is pushed further beneath the surface of society, and is understandable only

through certain artists; madness on the other hand, becomes mental illness, and is treated and controlled by medical and psychiatric practices. Unreason is somehow lost after the eighteenth century, a situation which Foucault laments.

Throughout *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault insists that madness is not natural, unchanging thing, but rather depends on the society in which it exists. Various cultural, intellectual and economic structures determine how madness is known and experienced within a given society in such a way; history of madness cannot be an account of changing attitudes to a particular disease or state of being that remains constant. Madness in the Renaissance was an experience that was integrated into the rest of the world, whereas by the nineteenth century, it had become known as a moral and mental disease. In a sense, they are two very different types of madness. Ultimately, Foucault sees madness as being located in a certain cultural space within society; the shape of this space, and its effects on the madman, depend on society itself.

Classical madness has two levels: a perfectly organized surface discourse, which is a kind of reason in action, and a second, delirium of pure reason which makes it truly madness. In the classical conception of madness, there are two forms of delirium. The first is a special form that is linked to certain diseases of the mind such as melancholia, which is a part of the signs of madness. The second is implicit delirium, which exists in all alterations of mind. Discourse understood in this way covers the entire range of madness. Classical madness is essentially the existence of delirious discourse, not a change in mind or body. Foucault says that madness exists when someone believes that fantastic images are true. Madness involves a distortion of the truth as the mad person experiences it. Foucault stresses the coherence and logic of madness. It has its own language, and the delusion of the madman makes

sense within his distorted world. While delirium is a symptom of certain kinds of mental disease, Foucault identifies a different form of delirium, which he calls a discourse. He emphasizes the unreal but powerful nature of delirium. Delirium structures perception and truth and makes “unreal” beliefs possible. Foucault further adds:

It is in this delirium, which is of both body and soul, of both language and image, of both grammar and physiology that all the cycles of madness conclude and begin. It is this delirium whose rigorous meaning organized them from the start. It is madness itself, and also beyond each of its phenomena, its silent transcendence, which constitute the truth of madness. (*Madness* 95)

Delirious discourse is a phenomenon of language and belief, but it affects the body and mind. Foucault is clear that delirious discourse does not originate in mind or body. The idea of discourse and truth underlies all the different types of madness that the classical period identified. Deliria, dementia and hallucinations were seen as different types of madness, but in fact, they all relate to truth and to a distorted discourse.

Foucault discusses the various aspects and conditions that form madness. He analyzes two sets of ideas that were held in opposition to each other. Both involve body and mind in different ways. Foucault explores the way in which doctors and theorists of madness describe the causes and effects of mental illness. In doing so, he delves into the history of medicine.

Foucault’s definition of melancholia is unique, and does not refer to depression. A melancholic person could have a range of delirious symptoms,

including unreal or false beliefs, combined with an otherwise normal personality.

Foucault adds:

For a long time—until the beginning of the seventeenth century—the discussion of melancholia remained fixed within the tradition of the four humors and their essential qualities: stable qualities actually inherent in a substance, which alone could be considered as their cause... The melancholic humor, related to earth and to autumn, is a juice thick in consistency, cold and dry in temperament. (*ibid* 113)

The tradition of humors that Foucault discusses was a central part of early modern medicine. Doctors believed that there were four humors—blood, phlegm, cholera and black bile—which correspond to the four elements of fire, water, air and earth. Different personality types had a different balance of humors. The melancholic personality had too much black bile. The doctor's task was to balance out the humors.

The shift that Foucault describes is a subtle one. Instead of believing that melancholia was caused by an imbalance of physical substances (humors) within the body, classical doctors now believed that melancholia could be caused by the patient's mental state. Foucault describes the narrowing down of a condition and the establishment of firm definition.

A similar process occurred with the concept of mania. Whereas melancholic could have a range of symptoms, maniacs were highly excitable, wild and uncontrollable. Doctors came to realize that mania was the exact opposite of melancholia. Foucault charts a change in medical thought, from the emphasis on animal spirits to an emphasis on tension within the nervous system. Another key shift was the idea that the two conditions alternated within one person. As medical understanding developed, they became more closely linked.

Then, the discussion of hysteria and hypochondria centers on the idea of madness as a mental disease. Mental disease is a condition affecting the mind that is treated by doctors and that has recognized symptoms. Madness, on the other hand, is a state of being linked to unreason that has a complex relationship with reason itself.

Foucault writes:

Moreover, during the classical period, hysteria and hypochondria slowly joined the domain of mental diseases... [Hypochondria] is an illness of the whole body. And we must restore its true value to...  
 text[s] on hysteria: among the diseases of women, hysterical affection is of such bad repute that like the “semi-damnati” it must bear the faults of numerous other affections. (*ibid* 130)

Hypochondria is falsely believing yourself to be ill; hysteria is essentially a disease of spasm, convulsion and over-excitement. Hysteria is particularly common in women. From ancient medicine onwards, it was seen as relating to the uncontrolled movement of the womb within the body. The word hysteria is derived from the Greek word for “womb.”

Foucault describes the transition of the discourse of madness from focusing on the movement of spirits through the space of the body, focusing on a moral judgment of the sensibility or emotional state of the patient. The idea of movement in the space of the body is derived from the ancient explanation of hysteria. The penetration of the body by various spirits assumed that the body was essentially opened inside.

The shift from idea of movement and space to that of moral judgment comes through the notion of sympathy. Sympathy implies a certain sensitivity of the nervous system. By over-stimulating the emotions and nerves, a drastic response could ensue.

For the first time, outside influences on the body became important. Rather than an imbalance of the interior parts of the body, hysteria and hypochondria were diseases resulting from life-style. The fact that they had a clear external cause was important in the labeling of these conditions as mental disease. However, they were also a kind of madness. Hysterical people were blinded by experiencing too much. This blindness left the way open for madness.

By a complicated route, hysteria and hypochondria offer a new way for medicine to pass moral judgment on madness. The development of certain ideas about the relationship between mental disease and life-style was the beginning. Because disease was created by life-style, medicine can disapprove of that way of life. When that disease becomes associated with madness, madness can be seen as something of which to disapprove. Morality has a new power over madness, which became a punishment for a “bad” life-style. This helped to create confinement because it was linked to medicine and idea about the body. Psychiatry, which Foucault views with some suspicion, rests upon this idea of applying morality to madness.

After his discussion of the various aspects and conditions that form madness, Foucault examines their treatments. He analyzes a central part of the process of confinement, and the development of the idea of curing or treating madness. Initially, madness was not seen as an illness or something that could be treated. But Foucault suggests that even when the idea of cure developed; it was not a medical development. Madness was still seen in terms of morality and links between body and soul that come from a theory of the passions.

Foucault also discusses Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis to support his argument about madness. He sees psychoanalysis, which involves the idea of deciphering the symbols and language of madness and mental disease in a dialogue

with the patient as a way of restoring contact with unreason. The absence of moral judgment and punishment in psychoanalysis means that it can access areas closed to nineteenth century psychology.

Then, the “new division” that Foucault discusses in the split that emerges between madness and other forms of confinement in the late eighteenth century. The nineteenth century division between madmen and criminals puts considerable value on the madman. But it does not do so simply because society feels that the madman deserves sympathy. Foucault always denies such humanitarian motives. Instead, he sees structural changes in the nature of confinement, madness muted into something different.

Foucault emphasizes that the voices of the mad are silenced in confinement, but that these changes show how powerful their voice can be. Foucault is generally concerned to allow the voices of the confined, prisoners and the mad to be heard.

Problems with madness and confinement arose from social uncertainty. As society changed, the role of the madman had to change too.

The economic and social explanations for these changes in confinement may surprise some people. Foucault’s critics generally accuse him of imposing general, abstract theories and ignoring more practical detail. However, he is interested in the systems of knowledge and culture that define and create certain terms and structures; for him, these systems can be economic, political or intellectual. Foucault does not ignore economic and social explanations, even if he views them in different ways to other historians.

After this, Foucault talks about Pinel’s and Tuke’s attitude toward madness in the following way:

The legends of Pinel and Tuke transmit mythical values, which nineteenth-century psychiatry would accept as obvious in nature. But beneath the myths themselves, there was an operation, or rather a series of operations, which silently organized the world of the asylum, the methods of cure, and at the same time, the concrete experience of madness. (*ibid* 231)

The system of judgment and observation was supported by the appearance of the doctor-figure. Madness now becomes a medical complaint, in the sense that the authority of science and medicine justifies the treatment of madmen in asylums. The doctor is a wise man because he has the authority (power) of science behind him. He guarantees the value and correctness of what goes on in the asylum. The doctor's power does not end with this validation, however. He also develops a great power over his patients. He gets this power from structures developed by Pinel and other asylum-builders. The development of science covers up the source of this power of this father-figure. Doctors no longer examine the origins of their power and its moral character.

In a way, Foucault reduces the complexity of asylum to the unequal and misunderstood relationship between doctor and patient. Neither side has any clear idea of how it develops, or works. The doctor's power is almost magical, because the patient has great faith in it without any understanding. Foucault returns to psychoanalysis. He almost sees it as the ultimate form of psychiatry or medicine, because it centers on a dialogue with the therapist. It is separate from the kind of judgment and morality that medicine involves. However, Foucault is not sure that psychoanalysis can really engage with unreason. That kind of engagement is possible

only through art. But the paradox is that, in freeing madmen from physical constraint, prisoners of their own conscience. Foucault argues that this is not real freedom.

At last, Foucault analyzes the modern experience of madness and unreason. He believes that the only way to do this is by looking at the work of certain writers and artists. He cites artists who express madness in their work of art as a way of counteracting the medical and psychiatric appropriation of madness. This is his way of showing that unreason can be expressed in the modern world, despite the various medical structures created to hide it.

Foucault, however, does not examine the work of any artist in great depth. In fact, he uses names alone as symbols representing a certain attitude to unreason.

Foucault suggests that madness can create art. Foucault sees art as a way for madness to fight back against the world. Madness is measured against a moral scale by psychiatrists and psychologists, but art asks the world disturbing questions and requires answers. The very fact that it does not support the way that society represents and treats madness calls society itself into question. Art attempts to redress the balance between madness and civilization. Foucault clarifies this concept in this way:

... Where there is work of art, there is not madness... The world that thought to measure and justify madness through [discourse of] psychology must justify itself before madness, since in its struggles and agonies it measures itself by the excess of works like those of Nietzsche, of Van Gough, of Artaud. And nothing in itself, especially not what it can know of madness, assures the world that it is justified by such works of madness. (*ibid* 274)

Madness as unreason breaks free from its prison and confronts the world with its terrifying truth through art by forcing rational society to question the very

legitimacy of its drive for absolute knowledge and the ethical norms it supports. The world must face the possibility of unreason, of meaningless suffering, and of course, of Nietzsche. Art does not annihilate rational discourse and the mechanisms of power anchored in it; rather, it defeats the world in its drive to eliminate the visibility of unreason's truth. It is through madness that the work of art ceases to convey meaning, instead of revealing the lack of meaning that humanity either cannot see or cannot bear to see. The 'civilization' that becomes culpable in relation to the work of art, through the mediation of madness. The world is obliged to order itself by its language, the task of restoring reason from that unreason and to that unreason.

Now, the contest between both sides, whether it be 'madness' or 'civilization', to justify their "discourses" about each other, can lead both of them to the point of equilibrium; if such event occurs, then art is to be given the full credit. In this sense, by representing madness directly and non-being indirectly, the work of art displays the limit and contour of the void.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Reconstruction of Madness in Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest***

##### **Going Through the Novel**

Kesey's first novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, has been enormously popular at every level of academics for almost two decades. Close critical analysis illuminates the depth of Kesey's technical mastery of such aspects of novelistic form as symbolism and structure, which help to expose the treatment of madness by such society which holds the power of authority.

Within a highly disciplined form, Kesey has dealt with issues which loom prominently in the minds of those whose primary criterion for any idea or pursuit is its relevance. The questioning of a monolithic bureaucratic order, the rejection of stereotyped sexual roles, the simultaneous awareness that healthy sexuality and clear sense of sexual identity are pre-requisites for human emotional survival, the recognition and rejection of hypocrisy, the devotion to the expression of individual identity: all these leap into sharp focus through a keen observation of the novel.

Randle Patrick McMurphy, the protagonist of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, is a man who has consistently resisted the strictures of society. Having decided that life on a psychiatric ward will be preferable to hard labor on the country work farm where he has been a sentence for assault and battery, McMurphy feigns insanity. This brings him into dramatic confrontation with Nurse Ratched, the "Big Nurse," a representative of the most repressive aspects of American society, or we can say the human society as a whole. Big Nurse is backed by the power of a mechanistic "Combine," a central agency for that society's suppression of individuality.

During his stay on her ward, McMurphy fights a constant guerrilla action against Big Nurse and her aides. He rallies the other patients behind him as he introduces gambling, laughter, and human vitality to the ward. He leads the patients on a therapeutically rejuvenating deep-sea fishing trip. In a penultimate rebellion, he smuggles whores and liquor onto the ward for a hilarious party.

Against this humorous backdrop, the struggle between McMurphy and Big Nurse continues to escalate. In the climatic final scenes, she is able to provoke him into outbursts of violence which provide the excuse to "treat" McMurphy with electroshock therapy and ultimately with a lobotomy. In the moving conclusion, McMurphy's friend Chief Bromden mercifully smothers him to death and makes his own escape. Although McMurphy is ultimately destroyed, he is not defeated. His courage and humor are never broken. Even after his death, his spirit pervades the ward; it is clear that he has beaten Big Nurse and damaged the Combine.

It is not only McMurphy's own struggle which is at issue in this novel. For one thing, McMurphy comes to represent the only hope for salvation open to his fellow inmates, a salvation which he brings about through the tutelage of example, making them aware of their own manhood in the dual senses of masculinity and

humanity. Also, the novel's first-person narrator, Chief Bromden, assumes during the course of the novel a rebel role similar to that of McMurphy.

Chief Bromden is an American Indian, a 280 pound, 6 foot 8 inch former high school football player and combat veteran of World War II who has been robbed of identity and sanity by the combination of pressures brought to bear on him by twentieth-century American society. At the outset of the novel, he is literally cut off from even the most rudimentary communication. He is so fearful of the dangers of dealing with people that he has learned to feign total deafness and has maintained absolute silence for years. Considered incurable by the medical staff, he is forced to perform menial janitorial work by the orderlies, who ridicule him with the title "Chief Broom." Defined by his menial function, Bromden is no more than an object to the staff, a tool. McMurphy, Bromden, and other patients, who are defined as mad by the Hospital, not only give great contribution to reveal the real identity of mad people, but also help to expose the domination of the so-called sane people over the insane.

### **Treatment of Power in the Novel**

Power is predominant in the novel: who holds power, who doesn't, who wants it, who loses it, how it is used to intimidate and manipulate and for what purposes, and, most especially, how it is disrupted and subverted, challenged, denied and assumed. On a deeper level, the novel reveals the ways in which an individual in pursuit of power will reduce any others who threaten that pursuit to the level of disposable commodities, and this dichotomy is, in turn, embodied in the chaotic relationship shared between Nurse Ratched and her adversary, Randle Patrick McMurphy.

Before McMurphy arrives at the hospital, Nurse Ratched's routine works efficiently in maintaining a simple sense of order. Chief Bromden notes in his narration:

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... When a completed product goes back out into society, all fixed up goods as new, better than new sometimes, it brings joy to the Big Nurse's heart; something that came in all twisted and different is now a functioning, adjusted component, a credit to the whole outfit and a marvel to behold. (15)

However, this efficiency exists not in the hospital as a whole, but only within the walls of Nurse Ratched's ward. Harding later tells McMurphy that "you may sometimes get the impression...having lived only on our ward, that the hospital is a vast efficient mechanism that would function quite well if the patient were not imposed on it" (37). Certainly the routine described by Bromden is evidence enough of this claim: each inmate is assigned a job and is to abide by Nurse Ratched's strict schedule, and each inmate fulfils his duties without question and with hardly an upset in that schedule until McMurphy arrives: "[He has] a marked disregard for discipline and authority," (21) the hospital staffs are told. "Time and again he has acted out his hostilities against authority figures—in school, in the service, in jail" (52)! And with McMurphy's disruptive presence entering the machine of the hospital, the conflict begins.

It is clear from the outset that Nurse Ratched holds power over the ward: Harding tells McMurphy that they are the victims of matriarchy, shortly after McMurphy arrives. That they are living under a strict regime is evident in the way

each inmate in the ward is labeled as either an 'Acute' or a 'Chronic' and, likewise, in the way Nurse Ratched is referred to simply as the 'Big Nurse.' As such, she holds her power not necessarily for any one characteristic reason and not only because of the things she does, but more importantly she holds power for a functional reason, because of the role she plays. She is the nurse, and she is in charge, and the inmates are simply objects in the machine, Acutes and Chronics, and she does not treat them as individual people, perhaps because none of them particularly stands out as an individual. But that cannot be said of McMurphy, and so he quickly sets to work on undermining Nurse Ratched's power and her regime, resulting in a re-establishment of her power on a characteristic level rather than a functional one. That is, she is forced to re-establish power by way of deeds she carries out rather than by the role she plays, and McMurphy necessitates this change by reinstating into the ward the one thing she has removed that is in possession of a power comparable to her own: laughter.

McMurphy tells the inmates:

I never saw a scarer-looking bunch in my life than you guys. [You're] even scared to open up and laugh. You know, that's the first thing that got me about this place, that there wasn't anybody laughing... Man, when you lose your laugh, you lose your footing... A man go around letting a woman whup him down till he can't laugh any more, and he loses one of the biggest edges he's got on his side. First thing you know, he'll begin to think she's tougher than he is. (129)

And he succeeds in bringing laughter back to the ward. Chief Bromden also appreciates McMurphy's ways of bringing laughter to the ward. Later he remarks on McMurphy's use of humor as a weapon against the routine of the ward. He says:

I forget sometimes what laughter can do...he begins to see how funny the whole thing is—the rules, the disapproving looks they use to enforce the rules... [And] he goes to laughing, and this aggravates them no end. He's safe as long as he can laugh, he thinks, and it works pretty fair. (165)

Of course, Nurse Ratched cannot play McMurphy's game. McMurphy's laughter is a result of increasing familiarity with the machine of the ward, so, to regain her diminished power over him, she sets about disrupting his role within that machine. A suggestion goes around the ward that she will send him up to Disturbed—but she changes the rules to reassert her power over the ward as a whole, and she leaves him be. Bromden says:

I've seen [Nurse Ratched] send men half the size of McMurphy up to Disturbed for no more reason than there was a chance they might spit on somebody... [And] now she's got this bull of a man who's bucked her and everybody else on the staff, a guy she all but said was on his way off the ward earlier this afternoon, and says no. (138)

She says no because she understands that the mechanics of power play would removing him undo the harm that has been done to her ward. In fact, she believes that if he were sent to Disturbed, then it would be exactly what the patients expect. McMurphy would be a martyr to them.

What she does not count on is that McMurphy understands the rules of power play as well. He, too, refutes her expectations, and begins to play obediently by her rules. He surprised everybody on the ward by getting up early and polishing that latrine till it sparkled, but in retaliation, she refutes his expectations of recognizing this change in his behavior. She acted like it was nothing surprising at all. In this

instance there is a power structure at work that is of a more moral nature than the power structure that was in place when McMurphy arrived in the ward—it is the power of a character and his or her characteristic tendencies rather than the power of a person who fulfills a function. Here, we have a structure in which McMurphy sets the rules of disruption, which are then built upon by Nurse Ratched when she chooses not to fulfill her responsibilities in terms of resolving that disruption, built upon again by McMurphy choosing to voluntarily resolve the disruption he caused, built upon once more by Nurse Ratched not acknowledging this resolution. McMurphy gains the upper hand as a result of this structure: he puts Nurse Ratched in a position where she can either turn down the opportunity to acknowledge his voluntary resolution of his own disruption and, in so doing, acknowledge his power to wound or heal the ward as he seen fit, or she cannot acknowledge his voluntary resolution and, as a result, become a more antagonistic figure than she was before the conflict even began; either way, she loses.

But this is not the end. Then McMurphy is going to spring something new on her, something wilder and more ornery than ever. This is certainly his tactic; he plays Nurse Ratched the way he plays his poker games. He dealt and talked and roped the men in and led them smack up to the point where they were just about to quit, then he backed down his hand to give them confidence and bring them along again. The power belongs to McMurphy, and Nurse Ratched is his pawn no matter what she does.

However, although the battle between them is rooted in their deeds, the heart of their conflict is rooted in their principles. Nurse Ratched does not care why certain rules have been established. Indeed, she is excused for every rule is that it is simply for the therapeutic benefit of the patients, but instead, she cares only that certain rules

have been established, and must be abided by. Likewise, in the incident with the re-arrangement of the television schedule to accommodate the World Series, McMurphy ultimately does not care what he watches on television, but instead cares only that he watches television. It is a matter of principle—as long as he can change the rules she has established, even if he does not succeed in changing them as much as he had hoped, he wins the power. When the pressure becomes too intense for her to handle it, she responds in the only way she can: she relents, and she sends McMurphy up to Disturbed for electroshock therapy. But once again, even though she holds the power over him physically, he is still superior to her: by forcing her to resort to sending him to Disturbed, he has made her break the vow she earlier made, and even then he still withstands the treatment she inflicts upon him and, initially at least, he laughs in the face of it; laughter is still his weapon of subversion.

But he stands alone against Nurse Ratched until he can bring the other inmates over to his side. This is next step in McMurphy's methods of subverting Nurse Ratched's power. If laughter is the only truly successful method of subverting that power and thus rendering the strictness of Nurse Ratched impotent, McMurphy is faced with the task of making the other men laugh, which proves difficult for him to do within the confines of the ward; hence the necessity of the outdoors fishing trip. "Maybe [McMurphy] couldn't understand why we weren't able to laugh yet," says Bromden, "but he knew you can't really be strong until you can see funny side to things" (173). However, McMurphy's ability to make the men loosen up and laugh comes before they even reach the boat: "Never before did I realize that mental illness could have the aspect of power, power," says Harding after the incident at the gas station enroute to the fishing trip, "Think of it: perhaps the more insane the man is, the more powerful he could become" (148).

Later still speaking of McMurphy, Bromden says, “He knows you have to laugh at the things that you hurt just to keep yourself in balance, just to keep from running you plumb crazy” (190). The fishing trip is the perfect remedy for helping the inmates to unwind, and on their return journey to the hospital the fisherman who insulted them earlier in the day could sense the change that most of them were only suspecting; these were not the same bunch of weak-knees from a nuthouse that they had watched take their insults on the dock that morning. McMurphy gives them the means to laugh, but it is not until later that he gives them the motive—after the two prostitutes arrive at the hospital in secret.

When the secret is revealed, Nurse Ratched’s power over the men is completely eliminated: her rules have been disregarded to the point of obliteration, and her routine and regime have both been interrupted by the events of the previous night. Bromden says, “When the nurse found the pile of pills Harding had sprinkled on Sefelt and the girl, we started to pop and snort to keep from laughing” (221). This take a turn for the worse for Nurse Ratched when one of her own staff is found embroiled in the disruptive activities. Still Bromden says, “By the time they found Mr. Turkle in the linen room and led him out blinking and groaning...we were roaring” (223). Ultimately, the laughter brought about by McMurphy reaches the point where Nurse Ratched cannot longer tolerate it with the same kind of stoicism with which she earlier tolerated his abrupt change in behavior. Then Bromden very humorously describes the anger of Nurse Ratched. He says:

The Big Nurse took our good humor without so much as a trace of her little pasted smile; every laugh was being forced right down her throat till it looked as if any minute she’d blow up like a bladder... The men

were immune to her poison. Their eyes met hers; their grins mocked the old confident smile she had lost. (224)

Later, after McMurphy's attack on Nurse Ratched, Bromden notes the accomplishment of the very goal McMurphy was working toward all along: she could not rule with her old power any more.

Although Nurse Ratched does eventually destroy McMurphy, his methods of doing so have less to do with characteristic power and more to do with functional power; she beats him by way of an unfair advantage, and the superiority she achieves over him is only achieved by utilizing resources far beyond McMurphy's grasp. As such, he still retains his power over her, even in his absence, because she was unable to beat him at his own game. If power is the theme of the novel, and laughter is the currency in which it is dealt, then McMurphy leaves Nurse Ratched utterly bankrupt: though she removes him from her ward, he removes the perpetual smile from her face and allows the other inmates to wear one on theirs instead. Despite his absence, his presence still lingers and holds some influence over the men in the ward, that power of longevity and perhaps even martyrdom is of a variety altogether more compelling and more enduring than anything Nurse Ratched is ever able to hold.

Thus, it is clear from the above analysis that the definition of madness is, to some extent, based on power. People or institution, which holds power, creates the discourse about madness which is supposed to be the truth. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, until Nurse Ratched holds the absolute power, all the patients were treated mercilessly regarding the principle that the mad people do not have their own identity, and they should be guided and handled by so-called civilized people. But when the power of Nurse Ratched is snatched slowly and gradually by McMurphy, the patients start realizing about their own-self, start realizing that they can also speak,

laugh, play, amuse like normal people. In this way, Kesey cleverly alters the prevailing concepts and attitudes toward mental patient by establishing new relationship of madness with power.

### **False Diagnoses of Insanity**

While going through *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, it becomes clear that one loses their sanity if they accept tyranny. So the term tyranny and sanity are contradictory to each other. As head nurse in a mental institution, Nurse Ratched should be promoting her patients' sanity, but instead her tyranny directly subverts their mental health. She keeps the patients docile, medicated, dependent, and childlike. Billy Bibbit commits suicide because she snatches his remaining sanity by blackmailing him. When Billy is caught by Nurse Ratched after having his first sexual intercourse, she threatens him and says:

What worries me, Billy...is how your poor mother is going to take this... Mrs. Bibbit's always been so proud of your discretion. 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. She always spoke so proudly of you she al— (247)

What we know from the above passage is that Nurse Ratched wants to retain her lost power and position by hook or by crook. She always wants to rule over the ward. So she can also debase herself at the cost of that. Or in other words, we can say that she has lost her sanity while trying to prove her patients' insanity only to maintain the tyranny in the ward.

But McMurphy somehow tries to keep the patients in balance. He tells the patients that they are not loonies but men, and he encourages their manhood through

fishing and basketball. The men then begin to ask reasonable questions about Nurse Ratched's authority. Scanlon wants to know why the dormitory is locked during the day. Big Nurse explains insidiously that time spent in the company of others is therapeutic. Cheswick demands cigarettes she has confiscated and informs her that he is not a little child. Now it seems that there is sanity within the patients' madness, and Nurse Ratched deserves to be an insane. Nurse Ratched's oppression, however, causes Cheswick to lose control, and she keeps him in place with electroshock therapy. The men do not improve under her domination but rather disintegrate like Billy Bibbit. Nurse Ratched's reason for keeping McMurphy on the ward, she tells the doctor, is to help him. Instead, she robs him of his vivacity and his sanity.

Unlike Nurse Ratched, McMurphy honors and loves the sanctity of human beings. He always takes side of the other patients. When Billy Bibbit commits suicide, McMurphy reproaches Nurse Ratched very sharply. He says, "First Charles Cheswick and now William Bibbit! I hope you're finally satisfied. Playing with human lives—gambling with human lives—as if you thought yourself to be a God" (249). The message is very clear, he compares her with god; symbolically he puts her into the category of 'vampires' who shock human blood for their survival. McMurphy is a man full of humanism. He talks to the Chief, even though he thinks that the Chief is deaf. He helps Taber catch a fish and teaches Cheswick to drive a boat. He encourages Chief to grow through playing basketball. He intervenes on behalf of Cheswick by breaking the glass of the nurse's station to get his cigarettes. Though he is supposed to be a mad, he blurs his madness and proves his sanity by showing his affection for all the men, particularly Billy Bibbit, as he gives Billy the gift of his first sexual encounter, even as McMurphy realizes it will cost him his chance at freedom. In all these ways, McMurphy shows love for the unique, individual nature of each

man. When his lobotomy robs him of the traits that made him individual, the Chief returns his love through an act of death and resurrection. The Chief frees him, affirming that the spirit lives on after the body's death in the minds and behaviors of the living.

McMurphy's sanity, symbolized by his free laughter, open sexuality, strength, size, and confidence, stands in contrast to what Kesey implies, ironically and tragically, is an insane institution. Nurse Ratched tells another nurse that McMurphy seems to be a manipulator just like a former patient, Maxwell Taber. Taber, Bromden explains, was a "big, griping Acute" who once asked a nurse what kind of medication he was being given. He was subjected to electroshock treatments and possibly brain work, which left him docile and unable to think. The insanity of the institution is foregrounded when a man who asks a simple question is tortured and rendered inhuman; only a sane man would question an irrational system, but the act of questioning means their sanity will inevitably be compromised.

Throughout the novel, the sane actions of men contrast with the insane actions of the institution. At the end of part II, when McMurphy and the patients stage a protest against Nurse Ratched for not letting them watch the World Series, a sensible request for which McMurphy generates a sensible solution, she loses control and, as Bromden notes, looks as crazy as they do:

The Big Nurse's eyes swelled out white as he got close. She hadn't reckoned on him doing anything. This was supposed to be her final victory over him, supposed to establish her rule once and for all. But here he comes and he's big as a house... She started popping her mouth and looking for her black boys, scared to death, but he stopped before he got to her, he stopped in front of her window and said in his

slowest, deepest drawl how he figured he could use one of the smokes he brought this mornin', then ran his hand through the glass. (155)

Moreover, Kesey encourages the reader to consider the value of alternative states of perception, which some people also might consider crazy. For instance, Bromden's hallucinations about hidden machinery may seem crazy, but in actuality they reveal his insight into the hospital's insidious power over the patients.

In addition to that, when the patients go on the fishing excursion, they discover that mental illness can have an aspect of power in that they can intimidate the station attendants with their insanity. Harding gives Hitler as an example in discussing Ratched, suggesting that she, like Hitler, is a psychopath who has discovered how to use her insanity to her advantage. Bromden, at one point, thinks to himself, "You're making sense, old man, a sense of your own. You're not crazy the way they think" (12). "Crazy the way they think," however, is all that matters in this hospital. The authority figures decide who is sane and who is insane, and by deciding it, they make it as a truth.

### **Impartiality of Madness**

Kesey tactfully blurs the prevalent concept about madness that it is only related to the 'insane' people. With the dénouement of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the readers get confused whether the term 'madness' is actually related to the insane or sane. Of course, Kesey has also shown the madness of the mental patients; and the most interesting part of the novel is that how the people who call themselves 'sane' can also be 'mad' out of their over-superiority over the 'insane'.

Nurse Ratched is the perfect example of the new kind of 'mad' people. She goes on mad because she constantly shows abnormal behavior as she cannot control

the ward; and she frequently breaks the rules which were created by herself as the rules did not get sufficient to dominate and control the patients in the Combine.

But what is to be noted here is that the novel is very much impartial about the true meaning of madness. It simply disrupts the previous meanings. So, one should search for the new meanings which suit them as per their convenience, and so is doing from the each characters of the novel whether they are insane or sane.

Since the novel is narrated by Bromden, an accepted mad person, obviously he tells the story favoring his own side, i.e. favoring the mad people. And, here we are not trying to search or analyze that what Bromden is presenting us is reliable or not. We simply try to research about the multiple facets of madness. In doing so, it is suitable to quote some lines from the novel uttered by Bromden. He says:

It's gonna burn me just that way, finally telling about all this, about the hospital, and her, and the guys—and about McMurphy. I been silent so long now it's gonna roar out of me like flood waters and you think the guy telling this is ranting and raving my God; you think this is too horrible to have really happened, this is too awful to be the truth! But please. It's still hard for me to have a clear mind thinking on it. But it's the truth even if it didn't happen. (12-13)

We do not have any give and take with the truthfulness of this statement; but we are more interested about the sentiment hidden behind it which creates new dimension to review the madness; that the insane people can also deliver the same grammar which sane people can. The readers have already gotten a glimpse of Bromden's paranoia, from the novel's opening lines, as well a sense that he is not seeing things from an everyday perspective. For example, Bromden describes Nurse Ratched transforming into a huge machine, and he has to be sedated when the aides

try to shave him and he starts screaming “Air Raid.” Up until this point, he has not addressed the reader directly; it is as though we are overhearing his private thoughts. But in this passage, he asserts himself as not only the narrator, but the author of the story. The readers learn here that he has an important story to tell, even though it is going to be difficult. The ugly and violent images that he has already shown us, he warns us, are just a taste of what is to come.

The last line of the quote is Bromden’s request that the reader keep an open mind. His hallucinations provide metaphorical insight into the hidden realities of the hospital and should not be overlooked simply because they did not actually happen. Although over the course of the novel, Bromden regains his sanity, he still witnesses many of the events while in a semi-catatonic, hallucinatory state; we have to trust in the truth of his sharp perceptions, no matter what form they take.

Of course, by doing so, Kesey makes the reader question the accepted definitions of ‘sane,’ ‘insane,’ ‘sick,’ and ‘healthy.’ Bromden sees modern society as an oppressive, mechanizing force, and he views the hospital as a repair shop for the people who do not fit into their roles as cogs in the machine. His way of interpreting the world emphasizes the social pressure to conform. Those who do not conform to the rules and conventions of society are considered defective products of the “schools, churches, and neighborhoods.” Such products are labeled mentally ill and sent for treatment. The hospital is normally defined as the place where ill go to be cured. However, in the cases of Ellis, Ruckly, and Taber, the cure—being in the psychiatric hospital—is obviously worse than the disease. Ellis and Ruckly are considered failures, but Taber is considered a success. However, it is hard to tell the difference between the cured and sick patients. Taber, the cured patient, functions like a robot

incapable of independent thought after he leaves the hospital; as such, he fits perfectly into society.

Here, both sides, either Nurse Ratched or R. P. McMurphy try to prove their superiority to other. And this sort of drive to feel oneself superior shows their madness in a new style. However, Nurse Ratched's madness is in increasing order, and McMurphy's madness is in decreasing order. McMurphy's play of words raises Nurse Ratched's anger. She always wants to dominate the patients by exposing their weaknesses in front of all the members in the hospital, but McMurphy always defends them by twisting the subject matter. For example, when Nurse Ratched talked about the ample bosom of Harding's wife, Harding becomes speechless. Then her confidence increases more and more, and she further asks everybody, "Does anyone care to touch upon this subject further" (39)? Then McMurphy makes fun of her by saying "...oh I thought you mean to touch upon her—something else" (39). After that, she remains speechless. Anger aroused in her soul in such a way that she didn't know that she was becoming the victim of madness due to her own attitude.

On the other hand, McMurphy is becoming more and more normal as he exposes the incapability of Nurse Ratched for handling the Combine. After his first Group Meeting, McMurphy explains to Harding:

The flock gets sight of a spot of blood on some chicken and they all go to peckin' at it, see, till they rip the chicken to shreds, blood and bones and feathers. But usually a couple of the flock gets spotted in the fracas, then it's their turn. And a few more gets spots and gets pecked to death, and more and more. Oh, a peckin' party can wipe out the whole flock in a matter of a few hours, buddy, I seen it. A mighty

awesome sight. The only way to prevent it—with chickens—is to clip blinders on them. So's they can't see. (46)

The entire group had been tearing into Harding, adhering to Doctor Spivey's theory of the 'Therapeutic Community,' where the patients are encouraged to bring "old sins out into the open" (32). Afterward, McMurphy tells the other patients that they were like "a bunch of chickens at a peckin' party" (46), attacking the weakest one with such blind fury that they all put themselves in danger.

McMurphy is immediately shocked by the behavior of the patients and staff. It is clear to him that Nurse Ratched maintains her power through such strategies as 'divide and conquer'. He points out that she 'pecks the first peck,' or points out the first weakness, and then just sits back and watches as the patients start to attack each other. He does not understand why the patients fall for this strategy, especially since they might be next in line as the object of ridicule. The patients do seem to have blinders on; they are so blinded by their own shame that they are unable to see Nurse Ratched's true nature and the way she manipulates and controls them so effortlessly.

However, it is not only the Combine that generates the evil Kesey observes, but also the evil that generates the Combine. The flaws in the system result from anterior flaws in the people who created and maintained it. The philosophy of the novel, in attacking the system, is attacking the madness as a symptom instead as a disease.

And, if the message of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is that the reconstruction of madness is to be achieved simply through vulgar and anarchic rebellion against authority, then the novel has questionable worth despite its humor and its engaging battle between freedom and oppression. If its saving laughter is nothing more than defiant ridicule or irresponsible escape, then it has little to

contribute to solving the puzzling but all-important question of proper relationship between society and the individual. If Kesey believes that the answer to the dehumanizing abuse of technology is to give reign to sensual impulse, then getting back in touch with the natural world can mean little more than being close to nature the way an animal is. There is a disturbing adolescent tendency persistent in Kesey to equate the scatological with freedom, vitality, manliness, and naturalness. Perhaps it partly originated in his exposure during an impressionable period to Beat literature and the nascent counterculture. It undoubtedly results partly from Kesey's rural background, the coarser elements of which he may have exaggerated as a stance toward the attractive but rather intimidating intellectual and cultural sophistication he encountered in coming to California. Whatever its source, it is apparent in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. It is possible, however to interpret the novel by viewing the madness and obscenity as a means rather than an end. McMurphy is a coarse and vulgar personality, but the victory wrought by him is not merely a triumph of coarseness and vulgarity. His crude strength and cocky self-centeredness are manifestations in caricature of an underlying moral strength and a salutary self-respect. His example should not be taken at face value; it is symbolic on an unconventional, almost cartoon level of values that are conventional in the most positive and universal sense: self-reliance, compassion for the weak, hope, perseverance, self-sacrifice, and harmony with nature. Thus, clear sense of neutrality is maintained throughout the novel while explaining madness on the one hand, and on the other hand, some new meanings are established about madness while maintaining this neutrality.

**Changing Conventions: Versatility in Attitude towards Madness**

While exploring the meanings of madness in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, we find that the conventions of both sides, the sane and insane, change as the plot develops. Initially, there was fixed opinion and attitude toward madness. The rules and regulations made by Nurse Ratched were accepted by the staffs and patients of the Combine. The patients behaved according to what they were assigned to behave. So, there was fixed definition until the arrival of McMurphy. But after his arrival, McMurphy tries to subvert the discourse about madness, created by Nurse Ratched, by violating the rules and regulations of the Combine. In this task, other patients also help McMurphy later on since they were fading up from the cruel system of that hospital. In this regard, the patients try to define them by themselves.

On the other side, since the prevalent discourse about the patients which was created by Nurse Ratched does not function anymore, she has to search for other discourses. So she frequently creates new rules to torture and dominate the patients. We can notice one thing that the conventions change and versatility occurs as the demand of the situation, because all the people in this world try to establish their identity and existence whether they are 'insane' or 'sane.'

If we minutely observe this process of changing conventions, then we can notice that Kesey is not merely focusing on the novel only, rather he is equally interested toward the history of madness. History also tells us that there is a deep and complex treatment of the discourse of madness in Western society. First change occurred in the seventeenth century. As it is tamed in the novel, madness became tamed and existed at the center of the world. A new pleasure was taken in it. The world of madness was surprisingly hospitable. Madness was at the heart of things, but few memories of its former disturbing incarnation survive.

To this point, Foucault argues that madness lost its power to signify the limits of social order and was silenced by reason. He examines the scientific and humanitarian treatments of the insane. Like Foucault, Kesey also disbelieves the humanitarian purpose behind any particular treatment. The new treatments, as Foucault claims, were in fact no less controlling than previous methods. Foucault gives the example of Phillippe Pinel and Samuel Tuke. Tuke's country retreat for the consisted of punishing the madmen until they learned to act reasonably. Similarly, Pinel's treatment of the mad amounted to an extended "aversion therapy," including such treatments as freezing showers and use of straitjacket. In Foucault's view, this treatment amounted to repeated brutality until the pattern of judgment and punishment was internalized by the patient.

And Kesey has sketched such inhuman treatment very keenly in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Like Pinel and Tuke, Nurse Ratched also gives Electroshock Therapy (EST) to keep control over the patients. Chief Bromden was very much scared of such treatment. He was so exhausted that he tried to hide himself in a closet to get rid of EST, but in vain. Bromden narrates:

I hide in the mop closet and listen, my heart beating in the dark, and I try to keep getting scared, try to get my thoughts off someplace else—try to think back and remember things about the village and the Columbia River, think about ah one time Papa and me were hunting birds in a stand of cedar trees near The Dalles... But like always when I try to place my thoughts I the past and hide there, the fear close at hand seeps in through the memory. I can feel that least black boy out there coming up the hall, smelling out of my fear. He opens out his nostrils like black funnels, his outsized head bobbing this way and that

as he sniffs, and he sucks in fear from all over the ward. He's smelling me now, I can hear him snort. He don't know where I'm hid, but he's smelling and he is hunting around. I try to keep still... The least black boy and one of the bigger ones catch me before I get ten steps out of the mop closet, and drag me back to the shaving (EST) room. I don't fight or make any noise. If u yell it's just tougher on you. I hold back the yelling. I hold back till they get to my temples. I'Madness and Civilization not sure it's one of those substitute machines and not a shaver till it gets to my temples... [The machine] turns me on so loud it's like no sound, everybody yelling at me hands over their ears from behind a glass wall, faces working around in talk circles but no sound from the mouths. My sound soaks up all other sound. (11-12)

Kesey has done a great job while putting such amalgamation of fear, pain, and imagination together which Chief Bromden handles perfectly. Bromden tries to remember his bygone days with his father simply because to forget the upcoming pain of EST. Exactly what is said above, the treatment amounted to repeated brutality until the pattern of judgment and punishment was internalized by Chief Bromden and other patients. To bring in this stage, Bromden was given more than two hundreds of such type of treatments. The effect of EST can clearly be seen upon Chief Bromden. He often talks about the fog around him which is only his hallucination; and such hallucination not only helps Nurse Ratched to prove Bromden's madness, but also opens the path for further harsh treatments.

When the book starts, it is clear to us that Nurse Ratched keeps complete control over the whole ward. Before McMurphy ever arrived, Nurse Ratched was completely dominant over all the patients; she gave orders to everyone without any

form of defiance, and no person would complain. When McMurphy arrives at the ward, Harding informs him that the patients are the victims of matriarchy. These patients are being controlled by this regime that in a way works like a machine, a machine where they are the pieces that make it up.

And from the moment McMurphy arrives, we can clearly see that there will be conflict between him and the nurse. The reason for this is because he is not like the other patients, because he doesn't seem to be crazy, he is just lazy and does not want to do work as his punishment. This is the beginning of defying the earlier constructed rules. After about a week at the ward, we see McMurphy beginning to take control of the patients. He begins to take the role of leader, a leader that was unexpected. And as the novel goes on, he at the same time as us finds out that he has the power to overturn this powerful regime. He begins to create his own machine, and Nurse Ratched knows that she will have to do anything she can to destroy it. But just as she knows the rules in destroying power, McMurphy is also aware of what is needed to be done to destroy her powerful machine.

Even Bromden is very much aware of Nurse Ratched that how she uses her power to take control over the ward as he describes:

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 is too big to be beaten. She covers one whole side of the room like a Jap Statue. There is no moving her and not help against her... She don't lose on her losses, but she wins on ours. To beat her you don't have to whip her two out of three or three out of five, but every time you meet. As

soon as you let down your guard, as soon as you lose once, she's won for good. And eventually we all got to lose. Nobody can help that. (92)

Now her ruling strategy has been publicized and everybody is aware of that. So she has to use her power in a new way to create newer discourses of madness of the patients; newer punishments for such madness. Nurse Ratched, before, had always sent disobeyers to the Disturbed section of the ward, but on this occasion she chose to maintain McMurphy. Everyone asked her why, but she knew that he had already done enough damage to affect the minds of the patients therefore as if she were to send him to the Disturbed they would treat him as their savior who sacrificed himself for them. As McMurphy sees that she is not folding he knew it has his turn to show his power, when he chose to get up early and clean around and actually follow orders he knew exactly what he was doing. When the nurse saw that he was cooperating, she did not praise him nor did she seem surprised at what he was doing. But McMurphy had put her in a situation where she could not win. Because she could both commend him and basically bow to him for his help, or she could pretend as if it was nothing and lose respect from the rest of the patients for not appreciating him; either way she would have lost.

As McMurphy's stay grows longer Nurse Ratched becomes more and more motivated to completely destroy him. She believed that by lobotomizing him and in the end making McMurphy crazy and by taking away a man who was like a god to the Acutes, she would regain all of her control and put fear back into the men. What she did not realize was all of McMurphy's strength, courage and spirit would stay with the men. McMurphy, even after he was gone, still gave the men the strength to stand up for themselves and not let the Big Nurse regain her control of the ward.

But Nurse Ratched's effort of defining and controlling the patients clearly resembles the nineteenth century idea of madness, i.e., by reversing the fifteenth century literary meaning of madness, the discourses of reason interpret madness as error and moral fault. The cultural practice of confinement intends to eradicate this error and cure this vice not realizing that they are, by doing this, creating another error and vice. Confinement seeks to silence madness as a danger to be sure as Nurse Ratched believed, but a danger that can be cured because it is based upon an error or a moral fault. Where the practice of confinement denies any contrary to reason, embarkation displays awareness of an excess for which rational discourse cannot account. And McMurphy, at the cost of his life displays such awareness by making fun of Nurse Ratched who is supposed to be guided by reason.

In fact, McMurphy's unreasonable and extreme antics bring about many changes concerning ward policy and also help the men to actually become men, overcoming their fear of the Big Nurse. Bromden's observation about McMurphy on the fishing trip is very significant here to quote:

While McMurphy laughs. Rocking farther and farther backward against the cabin top, spreading his laugh out across the water— laughing at the girl, at the guys, at George, at me sucking my bleeding thumb, at the captain back at the pier and the bicycle-rider and the service-station guys and the five thousand houses and the Big Nurse and all of it. Because he knows you have to laugh at the things that hurt you just to keep yourself in balance, just to keep the world from running you plumb crazy. He knows there's a painful side; he knows my thumb smarts and his girlfriend has a bruised breast and the doctor

is losing his glasses, but he won't let the pain blot out the humor no more'n he'll let the humor blot out the pain. (194-95)

While on the fishing expedition, the patients are able to laugh freely and feel like whole humans again. As usual, this happens with McMurphy's guidance—he is an example for all the patients to follow. Here, Bromden shows how McMurphy's booming laughter in the face of chaos, which could be seen as the mark of a psychopath, is the one thing that keeps McMurphy sane.

Bromden implies that it is the pressures of society—the captain, the five thousand houses, the Big Nurse, “the things that hurt you”—that drive people insane. To maintain sanity in such an oppressive and cruel world, people cannot allow these external forces to exert too much power. When a person succumbs to seeing and experiencing all the sadness and sufferings of humanity, as Bromden has done for ten years, it naturally makes him or her unable, or unwilling to cope with reality—in other words, it can make that person “plumb crazy.”

Initially, McMurphy's arrival is very strange to the existing patients of the ward. He seems loud and out of place compared to the conservative and restrained personalities of the rest of the patients. The patients begin to warm up to him though, as they realize his ability to bring about much needed change to the Big Nurse's strict and harsh rules. He tells the men not to be “rabbits” that conform and allow Nurse Ratched to manipulate them, but to stand up and make things happen. He continuously uses his irrational behavior as a method to infuriate Nurse Ratched along with the rest of the staff, allowing him to get his way. He is constantly acting up by singing or walking around half naked. In the group meetings he goes on and on trying to get benefits for the patients such as a game room for them to play cards. His witty attitude and keen sense of humor slowly begins to liven up the patients, allowing them

to see that there is more to life than just what Nurse Ratched allows. But as hard as McMurphy tries, Nurse Ratched counteracts just as hard. One thing is sure that the other patients are being unable to gain confidence and courage as McMurphy does.

Billy Bibbit says to McMurphy:

You think I wuh-wuh-wuh-want to stay in here? You think I wouldn't like a con-convertible and a guh-guh-girl friend? But did you ever have people l-l-laughing at you? No, because you're so b-big and so tough! Well I'Madness and Civilization not big and tough. Neither is Harding. Neither is F-Fredrickson. Neither is Suh-Sefelt. Oh-oh, you—you t-talk like we stayed in here because we liked it! Oh it's n-no use...

(151)

So, McMurphy tries to build up their confidence level. But Big Nurse soon finds a way to influence her patients again, turning them against each other and lulling them back into their doormat states. By limiting her patients and treating them so harshly, she isn't helping their psychological states, but making them remain weak, meek, and invalid. Vast improvements are shown though, as McMurphy convinces the patients to follow his lead once again.

This causes the Big Nurse to once again find another method to sway the men. It seems that the more trouble he causes the more independence and mental strength the patients find. McMurphy asks if he can take the patients out on a boat trip. They are then given the opportunity to finally stand up for themselves. They use their mental disability to their advantage, scaring a few rude gas station attendants. He even goes the extreme of punching through the Nurse's Station's large glass window twice. Then McMurphy gets into a fight with the orderlies one night, which causes him to be sent to the Shock Shop for Electro Shock Therapy (EST). McMurphy's behavior and

willingness to put himself in danger stands out among the patients and they further praise him as their hero.

Because of McMurphy's bravery and leadership, the Acutes are speaking even more during the meetings, voicing their opinions and demanding what they want. After a tawdry night of drinking and partying in the secrecy of the ward's darkness, the patients are caught in the act and much grief follows. Billy Bibbit kills himself after Nurse Ratched says she will tell his mother of his disappointing actions. The Big Nurse is very flustered by her loss of control and goes to very drastic matters to prove she's in charge. She is given the opportunity when McMurphy, as a last straw, rips the front of her nurse's outfit off. She sends him to have a lobotomy and when he returns, he is just a vegetable. The night McMurphy returns, Chief Bromden (whom McMurphy taught to be strong once again) mercifully kills him and then the Chief escapes from the hospital.

McMurphy, though a manipulator and a con man, uses his irrational and maddening behavior to yield reasonable and drastic results. Many of the Acutes check themselves out of the hospital, transformed and now ready for the outside world because of McMurphy. His way of looking at life, and his persistent attitude towards being a non-conformist definitely brought life and happiness into the ward, if only for a short time. McMurphy dies a martyr for such a very significant and meaningful reason.

Ken Kesey, in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, shows that problems with madness and confinement arose from social and institutional uncertainty. As society changed, for example, as Nurse Ratched became the authoritative figure, the role of the madman had to change too. Kesey emphasizes, as Foucault does, that the voices of the mad are silenced in the Combine, i.e., in confinement, but that these changes

show how powerful their voice can be. Kesey is generally concerned to allow the voices of the confined and the mad to be heard.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Conclusion**

Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* subverts the boundary of insane and sane. Kesey views that the discourse of madness is a human construction. So, in the novel, he foregrounds the nexus of the discourse of madness with power. As Nurse Ratched holds the power in the hospital, she constructs the discourse about the patients; she creates the rules and regulations of the patients. But as soon as the power sifted from Nurse Ratched to McMurphy, McMurphy reconstructs the discourse of madness which was created by the hospital exercised by Nurse Ratched. He also violates the rules and regulations, which Nurse Ratched created in order to establish the new one, and also in order to prove the identity and existence of the mad people.

Until Nurse Ratched holds the absolute power, all the patients were treated brutally regarding the principle that the mad people do not have their own identity and they should be guided and handled by the so-called sane people. But, when the power of Nurse Ratched is snatched slowly by McMurphy, the patients start realizing that they can also speak, laugh, play, and amuse like normal people. In fact, Kesey very cleverly alters our prevalent concept and attitude toward mental patients by creating new truths about madness and by giving new identity to the abnormal.

Now we can say that the novel revise the prevailing notion of madness by foregrounding the constructive nature of the discourse. The characters such as McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Billy Bibbit are defined as mad and put into mental asylum simply because they do not fall into the criteria of the sane which is constructed by Nurse Ratched.

Moreover, Kesey's novel provided us with many truths of life, the first being that a single person can make a difference in other people's lives. We are also able to learn that things aren't always what they seem, and finally, that a person's spirit can live on and stay with people causing them to change in seemingly impossible situations. It is a situation that is common in many novels where there is a rebel against society. Except, in this novel the rebel becomes a true hero who gives up himself for the good of others. McMurphy was not saintly good man who was liked by everyone; in fact, he was very much nuisance at times. But he had well in his heart and was determined to save the patients of the ward.

In addition to that, we see that with every protest and dispute, McMurphy becomes more and more emotionally tied to the patients of the psychiatric ward. Although, there are several occasions where McMurphy can certainly escape, he chooses not to utilize them, fully aware of his responsibility towards the group. After

all, he is their savior. No doubt they were incredibly unhappy under the authority of Nurse Ratched, an uncaring woman who seems to only want to humiliate and strip the group of the emotions and desires that make them human. It is only when McMurphy enters into his predicament that the group finally begins to feel alive to the first time in years. In the end, McMurphy makes the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the patients. Though it seems that the authority of Nurse Ratched wins out at the end, this is not true. By having Chief Bromden suffocate McMurphy, the nurse loses her power. Also, by the time Nurse Ratched comes back, she finds that she has ultimately lost the control she once had upon the ward.

Kesey uses mechanical imagery to represent modern society and institution and biological imagery to represent nature and madness. By means of mechanisms and machines, society gains control of and suppresses individuality and natural impulses. The hospital, representative of society at large, is decidedly unnatural: the aides and Nurse Ratched are described as being made of motley machine parts. In Chief Bromden's dream, when Blastic is disemboweled, rust, not blood, spills out, revealing that the hospital destroyed not only his life but his humanity as well. Bromden's realization that the hospital treats human beings in an unnatural fashion, and his concomitant growing self-awareness, occur as a surrounding fog dissipates. It is not surprise that Bromden believes this fog is a construction of machines controlled by the hospital and by Nurse Ratched. Bromden, as the son of an Indian Chief, is a combination of pure, natural individuality and a spirit almost completely subverted by mechanized society. Earlier on, he had free will, and he can remember and describe going hunting in the woods with his relatives and the way they spear salmon. The government, however, eventually succeeds in paying off the tribe so their fishing area can be converted into a profitable hydroelectric dam. The tribe members are banished

into the technological workforce, where “half-life things” that Bromden witnesses coming out of the train while he is on fishing excursion. In the novel’s present time, Bromden himself ends up semi-catatonic and paranoid, a mechanical drone who is still able to think and conjecture to some extent on his own.

McMurphy represents unbridled individuality and free expression—both intellectual and sexual. One idea presented in this novel is that a man’s virility is equated with a state of nature, and the state of civilized society requires that he be desexualized. But McMurphy battles against letting the oppressive society make him into a machinelike drone, and he manages to maintain his individuality until his ultimate objective—bringing this individuality to the others—is complete.

To sum up, Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* allows the voices of the mad. Moreover, Kesey, through this novel, tries to convey the message that the identity and existence of the confined should be acknowledged by the society. He emphasizes that the process of silencing the voices of mad further emancipates their powerful voices. Such voices blur all the prevailing discourses about themselves and reconstruct such discourses with their multiple meanings of madness.

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