



Journal of Social and Political Sciences

Uğur, A. G. (2025). Approach to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 8(3), 1-9.

ISSN 2615-3718

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1991.08.03.578

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

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Approach to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*

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Abstract

This research will examine the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey in relation to Michel Foucault's discourses on *discipline* and *punish*. How people living in that period obeyed to exist in society will be shown to the reader through the people in the mental hospital in the novel. In this regard, Nurse Ratched's ability to establish authority over the patients to maintain order and her efforts to eliminate those who do not comply with this order will be elaborated within the framework of Foucauldian analysis. The study highlights this categorization by providing examples from the novel, differentiating between 'recoverable' and 'non-recoverable' patients, representing individuals who can adapt to society and those who cannot. The surveillance and power dynamics of the nurse in the novel, as they relate to the patients, will be examined in detail. The concepts of how those who disobey the rules are punished by authority and the resulting resistance and rebellion will be emphasized. The panopticon metaphor, which plays a crucial role in Foucault's analyses of *discipline* and *punish*, is exemplified in Kesey's novel, where the patients in the mental hospital are kept under constant surveillance by Ratched. The study will provide an in-depth understanding to the reader, supported by primary and secondary sources throughout the research phase. The novel aims to provide literary examples that reflect the realities of the period in which it was written by questioning social punishment through Foucault's concepts of *power* and *resistance*.

Keywords: Authority, Discipline, Panopticism, Resistance, Surveillance

1. Introduction

Ken Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which was published in 1962, is one of the most well-known literary works. The novel, published in 1962, not only critiques psychiatric institutions but also highlights the inner world of individuals who defy authority and struggle against the system, social norms, and human rights. It is known that significant social and cultural changes were taking place in the USA at the time the novel was written. The Vietnam War and the civil rights movement in the 1960s are the most well-known events of the period. When examined from this perspective, the novel completely reflects the period when social order and authority were dominant. In this context, the novel's critical attitude can be read as a criticism of social norms, rules, and authority.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, considered one of the most important works of American literature, was later adapted for the theatre and cinema. McMurphy's character development significantly impacts the flow of the novel. Hence, he plays a vital role in it. McMurphy is known in the book as a figure of resistance against the system.

The novel, set in a mental hospital, has been evaluated in the context of many criticisms and theories. By and large, this novel, which prompts the reader to think critically about society, also conveys hidden and political messages about the period. The problem of patients in the mental hospital complying with the order and submitting shows the necessity of people in that period to conform to society. People who do not keep up with society are brought into order by smaller communities such as mental hospitals, schools, or factories, or they lose their sanity through various tortures such as electroshock, shaving and likewise. Chief Bromden, who is often portrayed as an Indian man, serves as the narrator in the novel. Bromden presents himself as deaf and dumb, yet he knows and observes every event in the mental hospital. At the beginning of the novel, his aim is not to escape from there. Like other patients, he knows that there is no escape and that he must adapt to this order.

This novel by Ken Kesey provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the Foucauldian discourse within the framework of *discipline* and *punish*, illustrating examples of group therapies, electroshock treatments, and various behavioral patterns applied to patients in the mental hospital to maintain the hospital's system through surveillance and power dynamics. In this regard, people who rebel and riot against the system are often punished and eliminated. Another pattern used to conceal the essence of being and atmosphere can be likened to fog. This element symbolizes escape and eliminates the potential components of the related issue. Foucault's discourse on *discipline* and *punish* is rich in content, featuring symbols, settings, characters, and more.

2. Literature Review

Examining *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* within the framework of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* provides a critical review that helps readers understand the novel's essential themes, including social control, normalization, and power dynamics. Focusing on discipline and power relations, Foucault's work, along with other works, addresses how institutions control individuals. In this context, it shares common ground with the novel. When reading the novel within the scope of discipline as outlined by Foucault, the reader gains a deeper understanding of the social events of society at that time, particularly regarding *discipline* and *punish*. This novel has previously been examined within the framework of Foucault's studies on the Panopticon; however, as the number of studies on the work of *Discipline and Punish* increases, the reader will have the opportunity to gain different perspectives on the novel. While examining this study, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* serves as the primary source, which is reconciled with the authority and rules in the novel. In addition, as primary sources, Foucault's works, such as *Madness and Civilization* and *Society Must Be Defended*, contributed to the social context of the novel and the events in the mental hospital. Moreover, David Garland's *Frameworks of Inquiry in the Sociology of Punishment*, Fred Madden's article on *Sanity And Responsibility: Big Chief as Narrator and Executioner*, Roger Paden's *Surveillance and Torture: Foucault and Orwell on the Methods of Discipline*, Ashley E. Reis's *The Wounds of Dispossession*, Janet R. Sutherland's *A Defence of Ken Kesey's "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest"*, Stephen L. Tanner's *Salvation through Laughter: Ken Kesey & the Cuckoo's Nest*, are the articles which contribute to this study as secondary sources. In light of this information, this research can serve as a valuable foundation for future researchers to build upon and enhance existing studies in this field.

3. Symbols Containing Text

Fog is known as a literary metaphor that carries different meanings in the novel. In this context, it is a critical symbol that needs to be examined to understand the context the narrator wants to convey in the book. The movie version of the book does not include fog details, as they cannot be visually represented to the audience. Hence, when a reader examines a literary work, it creates the opportunity to delve into the inner world of the characters in the novel. The audience cannot get the same opportunity. When it comes to *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, fog is a changing symbol. At the very beginning of the novel, Chief Bromden cannot figure out why the fog

machines in the hospital are switched on and systematically used for various purposes. Patients are given electroshocks for therapeutic purposes. They are convinced that it is a way of psychological treatment. When he is taken to shave or given electroshocks by force, the fog machines are on. From time to time, these machines make him invisible. In this way, doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff cannot see him using fog, and he somehow escapes from torture. Although Chief Bromden considers this as a symbol of escape, on the other hand, the hospital staff's purpose is to create a mind game. "You had a choice: you could either strain and look at things that appeared in front of you in the fog, painful as it might be, or you could relax and lose yourself" (Kesey, n.d., p.131). The concept of fog in this quote is considered a metaphor. While fog represents understanding difficulties and struggling in the face of a situation and not giving up, it can also be interpreted as escaping from reality. It is a system that they create to confuse patients' minds, exclude them from seeing the truth, and make it difficult for them to act. For this purpose, patients are prevented from revolting and are expected to comply with the systematic orders of the authority.

There is an excerpt related to self-care, such as shaving and showering, among others. The concept of shaving in the novel is crucial for readers to understand the society depicted. Forcing patients in a mental hospital to shave not only their physical appearance but also their inner world. Hence, the patient loses his self-identity in the small society he tries to exist in. It makes the person lose themselves because they cannot see their old physical appearance when they look in the mirror. They primarily apply this to patients who cannot recover, that is, those considered a burden to society. It is a method they use for treatment purposes so that they do not repeat the mistakes they made before. In this way, they encourage patients to alter their physical appearance to maintain social order. Throughout our daily routines, people often become accustomed to distancing themselves from reality by following established patterns. Although practices such as fog machines, showering and shaving are used as treatment, the primary purpose within the scope of psychological pressure is to establish authority and destroy people who rebel in society.

4. The Concept of Authority

There are recoverable or non-recoverable patients in the mental hospital. Patients categorized as recoverable are defined as those who adhere to the hospital's and nursing staff's rules. According to doctors, these patients can regain their health with treatment. Patients who are categorized as non-recoverable are kept in mental hospitals to be monitored because they do not abide by the rules of society and rebel against the system. They are collected from the streets and brought to the hospital so that they do not disrupt the order.

In particular, the concept of authority established by Nurse Ratched robotized the patients and dehumanized them from essential human emotions. The patients in the mental hospital do not laugh; the hospital is known as a ward where even laughing is forbidden. "There is no place for laughter in the Big Nurse's smooth-running machinery of manipulation, and the patients have been conditioned to the point where they are afraid of laughter" (Tanner, 1973, p.128). Even though all the patients obey this rule, the rebellious McMurphy never stops laughing since the day he arrives. "Man, when you lose your laugh, you lose your footing" (Kesey, n.d., p.70). In this regard, McMurphy suggests that when you lose your sense of humour, you struggle to cope with life's difficulties. The monotonous life of the patients in the mental hospital and their inability to enjoy life are also indicators of their situation. Their lack of reaction to every event they experience stems from forgetting to laugh.

Moreover, they are asked lots of questions by doctors or nurses. If someone accidentally blurts out an incident about themselves while talking among themselves, their friend sitting at the same table goes to the nurse and reports the incident to them. The nurse convinces the patients that this behavior is part of the treatment. Additionally, Nurse Ratched, who assumes authority, plans Fridays as therapy sessions. In these meetings, she explains the therapeutic community theory to the treatment community, supported by the doctor. Mc. Murphy is a new patient, and he is supposed to listen to the theory of the Therapeutic Community by the doctor. The narrator paraphrases the doctor's words in the following sentences:

How a guy has to learn to get along in a group before he can function in a normal society, how the group can help the guy by showing him where he is out of place, how society is what decides who is sane and who is not, so you got to measure up (Kesey, n.d., p.49).

According to the workers in the mental hospital, the theory aims to contribute to the formation of a democratic society. Although it seems to relieve patients when they share their problems, on the other hand, these secrets create danger since they are known to the nurse. The authority she establishes destroys patients' private lives, feelings, and ideas. Furthermore, the time they wake up in the morning, the medicine they take, and the time they listen to the radio are all decided by Nurse Ratched. By and large, as it is evident from the novel, it cannot be denied that if patients abide by the authority the nurse establishes, they do not have to deal with any problems. Since Nurse Ratched categorizes patients as recoverable and non-recoverable, the hospital crew restrains them, and they cannot be on the same page in terms of their ideas and attitudes towards authority. The reason they do not share the same idea is that the nurse often shows non-recoverable patients to the recoverable ones as a warning, implying that if they do something wrong, they may be forced to stay in the mental hospital indefinitely.

4.1 Nurse Ratched as a Panopticon Metaphor Who Represents Authority

In the novel, Nurse Ratched is described as a panopticon figure. The concept of the *panopticon* must be defined to help the reader better understand the story. The Panopticon is a prison design model created by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the late 18th century. It means observing the whole. Michel Foucault suggests that this concept can also be applied in small communities and specific parts of society. As for the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Nurse Ratched's room is located in the very center of the mental hospital, both as described in the book and as observed in the film adaptation of the novel. In this way, she monitors all patients simultaneously and maintains order. When she notices someone disrupting the order, she takes control of the situation. The room where she works is suitable for observation since it is covered with glass. In this way, she controls her patients and makes them docile. Nurse Ratched is a panopticon figure because she represents the surveillance and control mechanisms. Foucault argues that such arrangements are established to discipline and exert power over people. Constant surveillance of individuals aims to ensure that they comply with certain norms by self-regulation.

Another significant issue that needs to be discussed is Nurse Ratched's nickname. At specific points in the novel, Chief Bromden refers to Nurse Ratched as 'Big Nurse'. It sounds like Big Brother. As is known, there is a concept "Big Brother is watching you!" in George Orwell's novel 1984. Although it sounds scary and uncanny, this concept has been included in many novels and movies in literature. The idea of Big Brother implies that individuals are constantly monitored by a central authority, often associated with the theory of panopticism. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Nurse Ratched, who thoroughly monitors all around in the mental hospital, reflects Big Brother. In this regard, it is an undeniable fact that the surveillance Nurse Ratched creates over her patients is compatible with Foucault's theories of power and surveillance. At the same time, she embodies the panopticon metaphor perfectly. It is observed in the novel that such monitoring is carried out to ensure the continuation of the social order, which supports Foucault's theories.

4.2 Abiding by Rules

One of the most fundamental concepts in the novel is the importance of following the rules. In particular, the goal of Nurse Ratched and other nurses, doctors, and hospital staff is to socialize patients into the small community they have established, enabling them to conform to social norms. Even the daily routine of the patients is under the supervision of Nurse Ratched. Medicine time, radio listening time and sleeping hours are determined by the elderly nurse. She establishes authority over the patients in order to vegetate their souls and prevent them from becoming individuals. In addition to this, she conducts various studies to ensure that the patient's behaviour does not change and always plays the same music. By listening to the same music, she causes the patient to stay in the same process. The patient thus neither improves nor worsens. Stability means order for the nurse. The nurse prevents any behaviour that disrupts the order. Patients are so robotic and vegetated that they do not even hear the music playing in their ears. The nurse's goal is to prevent patients from seeing or hearing what is happening around them. In this way, she manipulates them better and achieves her goals.

According to Foucault, such institutions are used as tools to ensure that individuals comply with social norms and are controlled. “The great hospitals, houses of confinement, establishments of religion and public order, of assistance and punishment, of governmental charity and welfare measures, are a phenomenon of the classical period” (Foucault, 1988, p.43). The novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* can be shown as an example of Foucault’s analysis. The purpose of sending McMurphy to the mental hospital is because it is thought that he cannot exist in society, that he will not comply with the rules of society and that a rebellion will occur. In this context, according to Foucault’s analysis, the mental hospital can be shown as an example of disciplinary mechanisms. In light of this information, when the novel is examined from a Foucauldian perspective, it can offer the reader an in-depth understanding of how society controls and regulates individuals.

Punish is a concept associated with social order and the personal development of individuals. It is defined by Garland as follows. “Punishment is a serious and symbolic issue in any society because it lies directly at the roots of social order, as well as having a prominent place in the psychic formation and development of individual persons” (Garland, 1990, p.11). In this context, the effects of the concepts of *discipline* and *punish* on the spiritual development of individuals have been effectively observed in the people with mental health conditions in the novel. Even categorizing patients as recoverable or non-recoverable is considered within the scope of *discipline* and *punish*. Those who can adapt to the environment recover; the souls of those who cannot become irrecoverable.

4.3 Surveillance and Power Dynamics

Surveillance and power dynamics are essential and significant themes in the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. The nurse is often seen as a symbol of oppressive authority in society. In novels, society’s disregard for individuals’ freedoms and their suppression of their rebellion is conveyed to the reader, usually through a small community. Ken Kesey uses the mental hospital as a setting to reflect this. The nurse manipulated the patients and established authority over them. She achieves this authority through surveillance and power dynamics. The nurse does this so convincingly that the patients believe that surveillance and power are methods of treatment for them. Ratched uses various techniques to do this. To illustrate, she has assistants working around her. When patients disclose something about themselves, the nurse’s assistants report this situation to the nurse. If the problem is not appropriate for the nurse, the patient may be penalized. This is one example of surveillance. In group therapy sessions, Nurse Ratched forces the patients to talk by creating chaos. Chaos breaks out between the patients, and they reveal all the secrets about each other. In this way, the nurse determines what they need to know about all their patients. Routine and order are distinct concepts that should be considered in the context of surveillance and power dynamics. She plans the daily routines of her patients to help organize their lives. The hospital decides patients’ meals, medication and sleeping hours. Even the dose of medication they take is determined by the nurse. In this way, she makes them docile. Those who do not follow the rules are also subject to punishment. Everything in the hospital is so stable and systematic that patients are expected to behave in a similar manner. The meaning of Ratched’s name is ‘controlling woman’. It is a combination of ratchet and wretched. As it is figured out from the meaning of the name, Nurse Ratched represents the oppressive society at the exact time mechanism and dehumanization. She symbolizes oppressive social forces, and she is not a woman to be underestimated. On the one hand, she pretends to care about her patients, and she is considered an ‘angel of mercy’.

On the other hand, she is uncanny in shaming her patients into compliance, as she seems to know exactly how to push her patients’ buttons. In the novel, the nurse enters a power struggle with her biggest rival, McMurphy. Sutherland describes the power dynamics between McMurphy, and the nurse as follows: “It is a battle of wills, and the patients watch to see who will win” (Sutherland, 1972, p. 31). The nurse is faced with such a patient for the first time, and the other patients are inquisitive about who will win this battle. For this reason, a conflict always arises between them, and the nurse constantly supervises McMurphy because she perceives him as a danger. This war between them led to the patients revolting and prompted efforts to undermine the nurse’s authority.

5. Resistance and Rebellion

Resistance and rebellion can be considered the climax of the novel. The novel's narrator, Chief Bromden, struggles to resist. McMurphy is a pioneer in rebellion by changing all the balances established by the nurse. The docility and respect for authority that initially appear in the novel are gradually replaced by resistance and rebellion. McMurphy is aware that other patients at the mental hospital are not recovering because of the behaviour of the nurses and other staff. He tries to explain this situation to them. However, other patients refuse to understand this. Belief systems oppose this perception. For example, when McMurphy first arrived at the mental hospital, he noticed that the patients were listening to music on the radio.

On the other hand, patients were not even aware that they were listening to music. Patients who are unaware of their surroundings are also unaware of the situation they are experiencing. That is why McMurphy has a hard time helping them discover themselves and ultimately succeed. Although the order the nurse tries to establish does not initially disturb the patients, it is noticed that they complain about the situation by creating chaos. A group of patients now opposes this order and is determined to create unrest within the mental hospital. The nurse internally reacts to the patient group's rebellion. In this regard, punishing them is inevitable. The cruelest way is to intervene and ban their card games. The nurse does not surprise the reader by stating that this is a sanction for therapeutic purposes and proceeds to say the following words:

We must take away a privilege. After careful consideration of the circumstances of this rebellion, we have decided that there would be a certain justice in taking away the privilege of the tub room that you men have been using for your card games during the day. Does this seem unfair? (Kesey, n.d., p.200)

The hospital management considers it a privilege for patients to play card games. This approach can be reconciled with the penal system in Foucault's works. On the other hand, when patients are punished with activities such as card games and watching football matches, they no longer remain unresponsive. To drive the nurse crazy, they start watching the football match by pretending the television is on. "By watching blank television, patients isolate themselves from the outside world without reacting to environmental stimuli, especially Nurse Ratched. Meanwhile, Nurse Ratched is yelling at the patients for discipline and order" (Kesey, n.d.). The patients' behaviour may seem mad from the outside. However, the nurse's ban on them watching the match is the patients' resistance and reaction to the nurse.

From Foucault's perspective, within the scope of *Discipline and Punish*, it is observed that the characters in the novel are severely punished when they do not comply with the rules set by the nurse. Roger Paden criticizes this situation as follows: "Although it was necessary to punish a criminal, such punishment had to be limited by those shared duties, or, in the language of the day, by the respect that must be shown to the criminal's soul" (Paden, 1984, p.263). By inference, the treatment method applied in the novel to protect social rules should respect human rights and the inner world of individuals.

5.1 McMurphy as a Figure of Resistance

As stated earlier, McMurphy is a figure of *resistance*, leading other patients. He challenges Nurse Ratched by doing what no other individual in the hospital has dared to do. The nurse, who is unsure of how to handle this situation but unwilling to admit she is at a loss, must deal with various problems created by McMurphy. He is aware from the very beginning of the novel that the patients are driven crazy by the system. Individuals who believe that they are sick regain their true selves thanks to him. In this manner, he is interpreted as a hero not only in the mental hospital but also in society. Although he is perceived as a rebellious figure, he is not considered an anti-hero. He attracts the attention of both the reader and the patients in the mental hospital with his quick wit and sense of humour. Even though his actions appear to be for his benefit, his self-sacrifice not only makes him a victim but also causes him to become a defender of freedom. In this context, it is inevitable to define him as a leader of the freedom struggle. Hereby, he has inspired other patients to find themselves. The nurse, who has never had to conflict with anyone in her hospital before, enters a power struggle with a patient for the first time. However, she has no idea what McMurphy is capable of. The dialogue and power struggle between them begin as follows:

“Ya know, ma’am,” he says, “ya know that is the exact thing somebody always tells me about the rules . . . He grins. They both smile back and forth at each other, sizing each other up” (Kesey, n.d., p. 26).

Fred Madden expresses the beginning of the power struggle between the nurse and McMurphy with the following words. “McMurphy limits his own choices. The interaction between McMurphy and Big Nurse, exchanging smiles and sizing each other up, is also noteworthy” (Madden, 1986). Upon examining this quote, it becomes apparent that the conflict between McMurphy and Nurse gradually develops. The nurse has already realized how strong and quick-witted her opponent is. First, he has a conflict with Nurse Ratched and opposes authority. He plays the game by his own rules. He does not avoid punishment; on the contrary, he enjoys annoying the nurse with his behaviour and mind games. Secondly, his purpose is to unite the group. By creating an organization within the group, he encourages other patients to rebel. In this way, he would destroy the order that the nurse is trying to establish in the mental hospital. Thirdly and most importantly, with this order, he creates not only physical power but also mental power, benefiting from both. For this reason, he engages in manipulative games. Ultimately, although the sacrifices he makes for freedom ultimately lead to his destruction at the novel’s end, his struggle for freedom is appreciated by the other patients, the novel’s narrator, and the reader. This man, a defender of personal identity, is a symbol of *resistance* in the novel, in addition to being a rebel.

McMurphy rebels against the rules imposed by the nurse, encouraging his friends to do the same. Hence, Sutherland states that McMurphy is a quest hero. “McMurphy assumes almost the stature of the typical quest hero at his death. The circumstances of his life have required him to rise above the ‘lowness’ of his original station to become a deliverer, to give up his life for his friend” (Sutherland, 1972, pp. 29-30). Quest heroes are characters who face numerous challenges throughout the novel and undergo significant personal growth and development. When the initial situation is considered, it is not thought that a character needs to be sacrificed. Even if it was believed, it was felt that the person who killed him could have been a nurse. However, the narrator, Chief Bromden, kills him at the end of the novel and declares him a savior hero.

5.2 Impact on Individual Behaviour

In Ken Kesey’s novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Electronic devices are implanted in some of the mentally ill patients to control and monitor their behaviour in the mental hospital. In this way, Ken Kesey sheds light on the social problems of the 17th and 18th centuries, reflecting the society, authority, control, and surveillance over people of that period, as well as their relevance to today’s literature. In Foucault’s work, *Society Must Be Defended*, he refers to disciplinary power through the devices used to control people in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The tools or devices which were used to regulate individuals’ bodies included separations, alignments, and surveillance. These tools and devices were also used for body control. This technology was increasingly internalized from the late 17th to the 18th century (Foucault, 1976).

As a narrator, Chief Bromden is familiar with the tools and devices in the mental hospital from the very beginning of the novel. Hence, he recognizes himself as deaf and dumb. In this way, he avoids being controlled through devices by presenting himself as harmless. These control devices in the novel are also shown as electroshock therapy, medications, punishments, and group therapy sessions to the readers. For instance, the men working in the mental hospital with Nurse Ratched force Chief Bromden to shave. Even if Chief Bromden is afraid of violence and oppression, he does not react and does not even try to escape. He expresses his despair in the following words:

I get ten steps out of the mop closet and drag myself back to the shaving room. I don’t fight or make any noise. If you yell, it’s just tougher on you. I hold back the yelling. I hold back until they reach my temples. I’m not sure it’s one of those substitute machines and not a shaver until it gets to my temples; then, I cannot hold back (Kesey, n.d., p.7).

Since Chief knows there is no point in running away, he embraces his fears and uses silence as a weapon, even though there is no escape from this system. Chief’s attempt to suppress the rebellion within him could be interpreted as an escape plan. He does not try to ignore his strength; on the contrary, by showing himself as weak, he becomes stronger both physically and mentally day by day. The reader will become more aware of this as the pages turn over.

Another impact on individuals' behaviour is the event that happens to the character Billy. The interaction between patients is also significant in the novel. When patients are evaluated as a whole, harm to one another affects others in a chain manner. Ashley Reis expresses this situation as follows in her article: "Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* similarly posits a human interconnectedness to place and suggests that the devastating effects of damage to one entity either environment or human simultaneously wreak havoc on the other" (Reis, 2016, p.712). Based on this quote, for example, in the novel, Billy Bibbit struggles to express himself due to his stuttering and shyness. When the nurse sees him with a woman, she threatens to report him to his mother, and Billy commits suicide out of shame. When McMurphy considers this situation, he wants to kill the nurse. This tragedy that happened to Billy deeply affects all the patients.

While expressing the measures taken during the plague epidemic in the 17th century under the umbrella of panopticism, Foucault describes the situation of individuals who were kept under constant surveillance and control as follows: "Everyone locked up in his cage, everyone at his window, answering to his name and showing himself when asked- it is the great review of the living and the dead" (Sheridan & Foucault, 1995, p.196). In this context, people are caught between life and death. The same is true of the patients in the mental hospital, where people become robots and plants. Being locked away and dealing with the same things every day and being removed from social life caused them to lose their identities.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* can be interpreted in terms of Foucauldian theory, including *discipline* and *punish*, as well as *panopticism*. The search for freedom, which is explored in a small environment such as a hospital in the novel, reveals the struggle and resistance to find a place in the larger society. In the novel, the difficulties faced by patients regarding the system are internalized through Foucault's concept of *discipline* and *punish*, as supported by examples. There are patients in mental hospitals who may or may not recover. Patients classified as recoverable are defined as those who comply with hospital and nursing rules. According to doctors, these patients can regain their health with treatment. Patients who cannot recover are often punished by being kept in the hospital because they do not comply with societal rules, which require them to adapt to authority and order. Nurse Ratched, the authoritarian figure in this novel about social problems, has a significant influence on individuals within the framework of power dynamics and information control. She not only punishes the patients, but she also dominates them.

In this context, the hospital can be associated with a prison. As Foucault stated in his work *Discipline and Punish*, people are often punished in small communities or institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and isolated homes, and these places do not necessarily have to be prisons. The aim is to remove individuals who do not comply with social rules from society. In short, Ken Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which sheds light on today's world by conveying the society in which he lived to the reader, has been examined from Michel Foucault's perspective on *discipline* and *punish*. In this context, this research is linked to Michel Foucault's works, with examples drawn from the plot of the novel and supported by other articles. In light of this information, the aim is to provide a deeper understanding for readers who have read the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. At the same time, by utilizing primary and secondary sources, this study will enable future researchers to further contribute to the existing knowledge in this field and build upon previous studies.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, A.G.U.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, A.G.U.; Writing – Review & Editing, A.G.U.

Funding: This research received no external funding

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest

Informed Consent Statement/Ethics approval: Not applicable.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies: This study has not used any generative AI tools or technologies in the preparation of this manuscript.

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