

Madness in Susanna Kaysen's Girl, Interrupted: A Foucauldian Reading

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Abstract : This paper is accomplished to probe Susanna Kaysen's memoir *Girl, Interrupted* in the light of Michel Foucault's theory of madness comprehensively set forth in his *History of Madness* (1961). It is an endeavor to analysis this novel based on Foucault's idea of madness. In his archeological study of madness, Foucault introduces a way to perceive madness and its association with dominant discourses. He argues that the concept of madness is constructed within the social context, and different institutions affect its definition. Furthermore, he takes into consideration how each era treats madness, and affirms that in modern times, people considered mad are exiled out of cities, confined in madhouses, and later in clinics where they are treated with drugs. Set after World War II, the novel under observation highlights women's conditions in which they were becoming a housewife or following their own desires; in fact, choosing the second one results in labeling mad. The protagonist of novel is labeled 'mad,' and is hence impelled to go to asylums where so-called patients are under the vigilant surveillance of the authorities to go through the process of 'normalization.' To discern how she is considered 'mad,' this article probes the dominant discourse of the time when the stories take place to provide a better understanding of madness under the impact of social, cultural, and political conditions. It examines how a so-called mad considered 'Other' and treated after being confined by the disciplinary system of the asylum in a panoptic world. In addition to, it describes the aim of treatment is to punish and control a patient not to cure. This article aims to indicate that Susanna Kaysen tries to picture what is defined as women's madness is the result of the patriarchal society of the post-war America as well as the mental illness has nothing to do with blood; it is rather the result of the social inequality of the age.

Keywords : clinical treatment, disciplining and punishment, dominant discourse, normalization, other, panoptic world, reason vs. unreason

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