

IN ME  
STRANGER

PERSON, WHEN HE WAS  
REJECTED THE MYTHS,  
PHAEDRUS SAID,  
"INSANE!"

EXTERM  
ALL T  
BRITES

# Method to the Madness

FROM HIS  
SOMETHING

NAME THIS TYPE OF  
MADMAN

A study of the border-mad in narrative  
texts through Foucaultian analysis

REALLY I'M JUST  
MADMAN IN  
A BOX

Wie reitet  
durch  
Es ist dem  
seine

KS TO MY

"I STAND

BORDER BETWEEN TRUTH EVEN

WELDS.

IF IT  
DIDN'T  
HAPPEN

RE CAN THE HORIZON lie

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07-07-2013

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## Foreword

As with many things in life, this thesis was born from from philosophizing on comic books and listening to Jack White. I was thinking about the insane in comics, and why we see them as such: in the Christopher Nolan's *Batman*-films, the villainous Bane and Joker both attempt to achieve the same goal (unleashing anarchy) but the first is seen as a normal 'bad guy' while the second is clearly *insane*. And in Marvel's *Punisher*-comics, the protagonist is described as mentally unsound for using the techniques he learned in Vietnam to fight crime in America. It seemed, I thought, that madness had less to do with *what* you did, and more with *where* and *how*. From my iPod, Jack White sung: "And Lord knows there's a method to her madness, but the Lord's joke is a boat in a sea of sadness." What was that method? How did it work? I had found a subject for my thesis.

That was almost a year ago. In that year, *Batman* was replaced with *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*. I found my tools in Foucault, and on my iPod Jack White was joined by David Bowie ("All the Madmen"), Schubert ("Der Erlkönig") and The Doors ("The End"). It was hard work, but also a journey I wouldn't have missed for the world. And it never would have been possible without the support of those around me. So my gratitude goes out to Laressa Smitshoek, for keeping me sane. To my father and mother (and my grandmother!), who brought order to my chaos. To my friends, who had to put up with my obsession. And finally, to Susanne Knittel for offering me her guidance, support and patience throughout this entire process. She helped me find a method to my own madness, and for that I cannot thank her enough.

## Introduction

I belong to a chosen few who are freely allowed to cross from one side to the other. Thanks to my 'insanity' I stand on the border between two worlds. Maybe it is precisely because of this that I am liberated from the superstitions and 'reasonings' of the mind. The mind's prejudices are alien to me and put me under no obligation.

(Grabinski, *Saturnin Sektor*, p. 124)

And I wasn't arguing with a lunatic either. Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear (...). But his soul was mad.

(Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 95)

The mad come in all shapes and sizes. Some we call mad because they hear voices inside their head or see things that are not real. Some we call mad because they act according to reasons known only to them, unable to contain themselves. And sometimes we declare men to be mad because, simply put, we don't understand them.

As the subject of my thesis, I have chosen to study a selection of literary characters who are seen as mad because they possess a certain way of viewing and interacting with the world around them. Their minds are sound, but they have distanced themselves from the social paradigm. When they are brought back into interacting with this paradigm, they are labelled as 'insane,' 'mad' or 'unreasonable' because society cannot properly understand them.

For example, take Mr. Kurtz from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: intelligent and successful, but also 'mad' because his methods are seen as ethically unsound. This classification is not based on a universal constant, but on the rhetoric of 19th century European discourse. Kurtz's methods and reasoning have a discourse of their own, and when his meets that of European society, the latter declares the former mad.

This is the type of 'madman' I have researched: characters that, through various means, methods and histories, have distanced themselves from the dominant paradigm but have not succeeded in removing themselves from it completely. They are caught in a liminal position between the paradigm and the Other. In this thesis, I refer to this liminal position as 'the border.' This term does not indicate a strict line between vague concepts such as 'normality' and 'madness,' but can be compared to the border described by Bhabha: an area between two systems from which new forms of interaction, insight and

invention are born. When the paradigm of society interprets these new signs as signals of madness, the characters that reside there are declared insane.

Such figures are undoubtedly present in the reality surrounding us, but my analysis will be focussed on their presence in narrative texts such as literature and film. This is not only because such figures are often essential to textual social criticism, but also because narration in texts offers the possibility of thematizing language (thus examining, amongst other things, its relation to power) and deterritorializing us through the inclusion of 'the mad.' In this manner, narrative texts can transform 'reasonable' and 'established' certainties into ambiguities. They allow us to see in art what is shaded in shadows around us through the establishment of new viewpoints, and transform madness' communicative void into new realms of meaning. In fulfilling this function, the presence of the madmen (as described above) in narrative texts will be the subject of my thesis.

Considering that we will be looking at the social paradigm, dominant discourses and the ways these things work upon and interact with the individual, our theoretical background will be the works of Michel Foucault. Foucault's theories concerning the way society is ruled through discipline, the workings of the Gaze and the classification of the mad will prove useful in understanding how one is labelled as 'insane.' I have mainly drawn upon the books *Madness and Civilization*, about the classification of madness and the birth of the asylum, and *Discipline and Punishment*, which provides us with tools to understand and analyze the workings of power, discourse, discipline and the Gaze. At times, I will also use some of the terminology developed by Foucault's colleagues, Deleuze and Guattari. Their development of the term 'deterritorialization' will prove helpful in describing the process characters undergo at the border, a process that can also be better explained if we compare it to the (partial) transformation into a body without organs. This last term will also prove helpful in explaining my use of the word 'paradigm.'

With these tools, we will analyze three texts: Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (which I will also compare with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*). These texts have been chosen for fulfilling the following criteria. First of all, they all offer social criticism through the use of an 'insane' character that deterritorializes the reader/viewer. This social criticism originates from the interplay between the individual and society, in which the former reveals the irrationality of the latter.

Secondly, because the 'madness' of these characters is dependent on their position concerning the paradigm, a comparison between them benefits from the texts dealing with similar paradigms. *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and *Apocalypse Now* are all American texts from the later half of the 20th century, criticizing social issues relevant to that time and space that are often connected to the counter-culture movement. Through the struggle of their 'madmen,' they each criticize different aspects of the same paradigm. Kesey criticizes the normalizing powers of American society, Pirsig attacks reason as the centre of the Western paradigm, and Conrad and Coppola show the inherent horror and madness in colonialism and war. In addition, both *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* utilize their 'mad' characters to construct anti-psychiatric sentiment.

Of course, our research also benefits from diversity. The characters in these texts all travel different roads to madness, and the functioning of their 'insanity' differs in interesting ways. In addition, these texts also differ in genre, authorial background and time of publishing. This will allow for a broad and interesting comparison between them.

Before moving on I wish to clarify my terminology, starting with my use of the word 'paradigm.' Every society has a certain worldview that determines what it considers to be true and untrue, reasonable and unreasonable, and is reflected in its discourse. This worldview is upheld through subtle, intricate and sometimes invisible distribution and use of power, including the application of discipline. In this manner, society is structured through the distribution of what Foucault called 'power-knowledge.' When I use the term 'paradigm,' I refer to the social structure build through power-knowledge. In a way, the paradigm describes society as a 'body without organs.' It refers to the social structure upheld through discipline and discourse, and encompasses all possible knowledge it has chosen to determine as true.

Secondly, I must define is my use of the words 'madness' and 'insanity.' The characters I analyze are not delusional, and their deterritorialization disputes the idea of a clear-cut normality. Because I wish to avoid speaking in terms that divide the world along a strict line, with a universal 'normality' on one side and 'madness' on the other, my description of characters as 'mad' or 'insane' strictly means that he or she is *seen as mentally divergent*. In other words, these terms are used to indicate a diagnosis rather than a mental condition.

In the first three chapters, we will look at the 'madmen' in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, and *Apocalypse Now*: the rebellious McMurphy, the figure of Phaedrus, and the disturbed Kurtz. For our analysis of that last one, I will compare the structure of *Apocalypse Now* and *Heart of Darkness* to demonstrate how Kurtz is an integral element in both. Then, we will look at how this 'madness' is approached and presented in the texts. Finally, we will study how the 'madmen' are utilized in context of the text's social critique. What social elements does it confront, and what does it tell us through this?

Finally, in the fourth chapter, we will use these analyses to compare the texts, focussing on their structure, their stylistic- and literary techniques, and above all the mechanisms of their respective 'madmen.' The goal of this is to achieve a clear overview of how the characters we've analyzed work. In this manner I will present my claim that these characters are examples of a very specific type of madman, the 'border-mad.' Through a combination of terminology from the fields of poststructuralism and postcolonialism, my aim is to introduce this new concept and thus open up new theoretical windows for the approach of madness in literature and other narrative texts.

In the end, I hope we can reach a deeper understanding of those literary characters whose liminal position establish them as mad. How are these figures constructed? How do they function, and what can they tell us? Or, in other words: what is the method to their madness?

## Chapter 1: *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*

In 1962 Ken Kesey published his first novel, the now classic *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*.<sup>1</sup> The book, which helped establish the author as a figure of massive importance in the American counter-culture movement of the sixties, criticized what Kesey saw as society's normalizing pressure by telling the tale of a born deviant who struggles with the administration of a mental institution. Through questioning society's classification of madness as an instrument of normalization –and the methods it uses to do so– it has also become a fundamental work of the anti-psychiatry movement, which strongly identified with the book's approach to madness as a social construct and deconstruction of normality. It is in this context that we will approach the book: as a text which presents madness in a carefully constructed political context where we are forced to question its existence and classification.

*Cuckoo* was published in the same year as Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, another fundamental anti-psychiatric text, and Kesey's text shares many social critiques with this and other works of Foucault. Through a Foucaultian analysis of the text, I will show how *Cuckoo* situates the diagnosis of madness as a social construction, and how it handles the position inhabited by the diagnosed individual.

*Cuckoo*'s protagonist is the loud and brass Irishman Randall McMurphy. But his story and the setting of the institution are approached through the narration of another character, the schizophrenic Chief Bromden. Bromden's frequent hallucinations and paranoia make for an –at times– psychedelic narrative, in which people's bodies undergo metamorphoses, and time and space are manipulated by strange machinery. The focal point of his mania lies in a belief in 'the Combine,' a powerful conglomerate that controls Western society through a combination of institutions and strange technologies, forcing people to perform their lives in perfectly normalized roles. From Bromden's perspective, the mental institution is "a factory for the Combine" meant for "fixing up mistakes made in the neighborhoods and in the schools and in the churches." (Kesey, p. 36)

A natural response to such a 'mad' narrator is to label him unreliable, and indeed the reader of this text has to interpret Bromden's descriptions in order to find out what is really going on. But his hallucinations are not random: they are part of a carefully

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<sup>1</sup> From this point on, I will abbreviate the title to *Cuckoo*.

constructed metaphor.<sup>2</sup> His madness contains critical truths that remind us of Foucault.<sup>3</sup>

Foucault describes modern society as a construction in which the individual is forced to conform under the constant pressure of observation and discipline. What holds this structure together is power combined with knowledge, two elements that complement and uphold each other. This power-knowledge is present in the construction of dominant discourse, and subjects are kept within society's bounds of normality through a strict process of discipline and categorization, performed by various institutions (such as the clinic, the hospital, the prison) that guide the subject from the womb to the grave. Power, here, is directly connected to observation, made most clear in the power of what Foucault describes as the 'Gaze.'

In the context of *Cuckoo*, this matches many of Bromden's hallucinations. Nurse Ratched controls her patients not through machines and radio beams, but through applied discipline and the observing Gaze. There is no Combine, but there is a 'controlling' paradigm constructed of power-knowledge. As Vitkus notes: "The Chief's belief in the reality of the Combine is not just a "crazy" conspiracy theory—it is a lucid metaphor for the repressive effects of the dominant ideology." (p. 70) Bromden's hallucinations are figuratively and metaphorically true. He is an 'holy fool' whose visions reveal the truth

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Semino and Swindlehurst's exhaustive *Metaphor and mind style in Ken Kesey's One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* and Vitkus when he says that: "Although his account is "crazy," the Chief's narrative offers –through the media of hallucination, dream, and reverie– an imagery and a language which communicates, metaphorically, an alternative vision to that enforced by "the merciless language of non-madness.'" (p. 67)

<sup>3</sup> I am aware that a Foucaultian approach towards *Cuckoo* is far from uncommon, and has been done by many others as well. Just a few examples of this are Vitkus, who uses *Madness and Civilization* as a basis to search for misogyny in Kesey's text, and Peter Swirski, who utilized a Foucaultian analysis of *Cuckoo* to analyze it as a metaphor for American society, and then used this analysis to transform Kesey's clinic into a metaphor that shows the faults of American democracy. Kesey's novel has even been used as an example to familiarize new students of comparative literature with Foucault, in *Literary Theory: The Basics* by Hans Bertens. Where my approach differs from them, is that my Foucaultian analysis ultimately serves to introduce the concept of the border-mad.

about reality.<sup>4</sup>

Through Bromden's narration the institution is transformed into a micro-model of American civilization itself, where the individual is subjected to discipline from all sides in order to create and sustain normalization. In this way, criticism on the institution performs a double function of both criticizing the American society on a macro-level (as a society which *requires* the institution to uphold its normality) and a micro-level (focussed on the institution as a corrective facility, which I will return to later).

Foucault also helps us explain Bromden's strategy of presenting himself as dumb and mute, which he hopes will keep the Combine from increasing its grasp on him: he is trying to escape society's paradigm by refraining from discourse.<sup>5</sup> This silence effects Bromden's role as a narrator: because he hardly interacts with his surroundings, he almost functions as an extradiegetic narrator. But through the influence of McMurphy's resistant acts he allows himself to interact more and more with his environment, thus acting as a living vehicle for the reader to be drawn to the 'other side', the side of the rebel. McMurphy's actions have another effect as well. Bromden has spent ten years in the institution, received EST numerous times, and is still believed to be without hope of recovery. Only through McMurphy's resistance and assurance is his functioning as a self-

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<sup>4</sup> This reading seems to be reaffirmed by several elements. First of all, there is Bromden's Indian heritage. The Native American can function as a symbol that calls to mind images of men and women who lived in an America that was still free of the modern American culture which Kesey sees as oppressive towards the individual, a freedom crushed by the onset of modern society. As Vitkus notes: "As Native Americans, the Chief and his people represent...a position of integration with nature and an alternative society to that of the Combine." (p. 70) But more importantly, Bromden's heritage also invites us to read his feverish images as the visions of an old shaman. And, as is the nature of visions, these images disclose the truth through symbol and abstraction rather than clear imagery.

The second point refers back to the book's context. Written in the early sixties, it is almost impossible to ignore Kesey's own role as an advocate for –and pioneer of– psychedelic drugs. Together with people such as Timothy Leary and Kesey's own Merry Pranksters, Kesey promoted the use of psychedelics as they allowed the user to experience the world in a whole new way, freed from what was considered to be a constricting, normalizing view. Psychedelics enabled people to conjure up visions on reality which were uniquely their own, allowing them to break free from what they considered to be prescribed views. By experiencing reality in a completely different, yet convincingly true, way, one is brought to question the value and existence of singular truth. (In fact, Kesey's inspiration for the novel comes from the time when he first started experimenting with psychedelics as part of MKUltra while at the same time working at a mental health facility in Menlo Park) In other words, the belief was that truth could be seen by *breaking away* from reality, rather than consigning to it. This makes the deployment of a narrator such as Bromden a political, critical construction. What becomes important is not what is real, because reality can only be accessed through the human experience, but what we take to be true. And as Bromden himself describes it: "But it's the truth even if it didn't happen." (p. 13) It is here that we also find our first implicit attack on institutionalized psychiatry, as it forces us to question the sense of locking people up and treating them for not conforming to a truth which is not necessarily singular in its validity.

<sup>5</sup> I would like to refer here to Spivak's "Can The Subaltern Speak?", in which the subaltern, who has no means to participate in discourse, becomes an invisible element whose actions are often misinterpreted by those who claim to speak for them. Bromden wishes to remain invisible, but this also leads to an interpretation of his actions by others, which leads to his continual diagnosis as mad.

reliant individual restored, resulting in a decrease of hallucinations, partaking in conversations, and even his eventual escape. What the system could not 'fix' in all those years, the rebel McMurphy did in less than one. Rather than society curing the madman, it seems Bromden has to be 'cured' of society. His character causes us to doubt the validity of claims that declare men to be mad for their experience of the system, and presents madness as the possible result of our own society. Why, then, should society have the right to present itself as a healer through the institution?

I now move on to a study of the novel's protagonist, Randall McMurphy. After being charged with statutory rape,<sup>6</sup> McMurphy is sentenced to a work farm. From there, he is diagnosed as a psychopath and transferred to the clinic. This diagnosis is not based on a single incident: it is a carefully constructed conclusion based on a lifetime of noted misbehaviors resulting from a supposed critical lack of self-control. And these misbehaviors continue after McMurphy is institutionalized, in his resistance against Ratched and her administration. While these actions seem to revalidate the diagnosis, a closer look shows something to be amiss. According to most common definitions of psychopathy, the psychopath suffers from a shallow and antisocial personality, egocentrism and (most importantly) an inability to feel empathy for others.<sup>7</sup> This does not match McMurphy's motivations, which become increasingly reliant upon empathy. While McMurphy is arguably driven by his own mischievous instinct at the start of the text, he later continues his resistance out of empathy for his fellow patients, even though he knows this will affect himself negatively. Examples of this are the fishing trip he organizes, a late-night party, and his attempt to strangle Nurse Ratched. This last action is caused by empathy: McMurphy is motivated by an emotional response over Ratched's role in the suicide of another patient, and driven by the observing Gaze of the other patients.<sup>8</sup> This makes his act of violence the polar opposite of psychotic.

Even more odd is that the institution's administration realizes that McMurphy

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<sup>6</sup> The crime in question involved the sleeping with a fourteen year old girl. The book goes out of its way to ensure us that this sexual act was wholly consensual, and even implies that McMurphy was unsure of the girl's age and thought she was of the age of consent. While the implications of this have the potential to open up a whole new debate, especially when we look at those critics who claim the presence of several misogynistic elements in *Cuckoo*, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. For now, what is significant is that the text attempts to establish McMurphy's crime as a victimless one without ill intentions.

<sup>7</sup> I am basing this on the Hare's Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, which was based on Cleckley's work from the 1940's. Even so, psychopathy remains an incredibly hard to define term, especially in Kesey's time. Kesey's choice to have a heroic character diagnosed with such a vague term can be read as a darkly satirical element that expresses an anti-psychiatric sentiment.

<sup>8</sup> Described by Bromden as "obeying orders beamed at him from forty masters." (p. 250)

probably faked his condition,<sup>9</sup> but still continues his treatment because they consider him to be 'dangerous.' Why is this?

McMurphy is a deviant, having first broken away from the traditional family by running away from home, then from discipline by being dishonorably discharged from the army, and eventually even from sexual mores. It is this last act that sees him sentenced to a work farm and eventually transferred to a clinic. The deviant must be corrected, and as McMurphy's history shows it doesn't seem to matter whether this is done in a penitentiary or in a clinic.<sup>10</sup> McMurphy's 'madness' is deviancy, and must be corrected through discipline enforced by power. As Foucault says in *Madness and Civilization*: "Madness will be punished in the asylum, even is it is innocent outside of it. For a long time to come, and until our own day at least, it is imprisoned in a moral world." (p. 256)

The clinic in *Cuckoo* functions as a correctional institution. Patients are aware of their constant observation, an example of the Gaze keeping the power on the side of the observers, the administration. Any hint of misbehavior, that being the production of outward signs of madness, is immediately responded to with disciplinary measures called acts of therapy.<sup>11</sup> The patterns of the Gaze put Ratched in the greatest position of power, observing through orderlies, dossiers, the patients and the Nurses' Station window. Meanwhile, she herself remains largely unseen, her persona permanently hidden out of sight under her uniform and function.<sup>12</sup> The goal of this observation and punishment is to

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<sup>9</sup> Something the character himself seems to confirm to his fellow patients, explaining that he would have done anything to get away from the work farm.

<sup>10</sup> Again, the idea that the difference between the clinic and the prison is merely a symbolical one can be seen as a good example of an anti-psychiatric argument.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see this quotation in which the patient Harding describes the use of EST to McMurphy:

"The Shock Shop, Mr. McMurphy, is jargon for the EST machine, the Electro Shock Therapy. A device that might be said to do the work of the sleeping pill, the electric chair, *and* the torture rack.(...) That, my friend, is what we can be threatened with."

(Kesey, p. 58/59)

Another example of this can be seen when Bromden describes the presence of patients that are no longer capable of functioning after ECT or lobotomy in the main hall as a tactic employed by the nurse. They are to serve as a reminder to the other patients that they are to behave if they do not wish to receive the same form of 'therapy'. (p. 17)

<sup>12</sup> This position is permanently damaged when McMurphy tries to strangle her, not only taking away her voice (and thus her means of producing discourse) but also exposing her breasts, ripping away the uniform that designates her function and thus painfully exposing the woman who has remained unseen and sexless throughout the book.

install a firm discipline that is not just extrinsic (the patients' behavior) but intrinsic as well. The patients must be constantly aware and vigilant of their own madness, and only through perfect intrinsic discipline can the patient be declared "cured." This intrinsic discipline is so powerful that, even though most of the Acutes are voluntarily committed, they won't leave because they have come to believe in their own madness. This demonstrates Foucaultian connections between power and knowledge: as soon as the patient accepts the knowledge of his condition ("you are mad") he has given the institution power over his own body (he is committed).

Yet we would be mistaken to think that this correctional function is hidden behind a facade of medicine: rather, the correction *is* the medicine. This is why the Nurse's tools serve a double function as both tools of medical science and disciplinary measures: patients who misbehave are humiliated during the therapy sessions, and excessive misbehavior can lead to involuntary EST or even lobotomy. They will subject themselves to discipline, or see their persona destroyed.<sup>13</sup>

One last example of the clinic as a correctional facility. After his attempted murder of Ratched fails, he is lobotomized and left in a vegetative state. While this 'therapeutic' measure does indeed 'cure' McMurphy's 'violent urges,' it is not beneficial to the patient himself, thereby being of debatable medical value. However, this procedure makes perfect sense as *punishment*. Just like those who committed regicide in the past, the sentence of McMurphy for his attempt to murder the 'queen' can only be the utter destruction of the individual and everything he stood for.<sup>14</sup> If the correctional facility of the clinic cannot correct the deviant, it must destroy it.<sup>15</sup>

Now back to McMurphy and his position in the clinic. In much of his resistance against Ratched's administration lies an attempted reversal and manipulation of power-relationships. For example, every time McMurphy breaks the glass of Ratched's office and the window needs to be replaced, the Nurse's view on her patients is blocked by a board and her Gaze is disabled: McMurphy diminishes her power and empowers the patients.

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<sup>13</sup> In this, the institution in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* functions in much the same way as the 19th century mental hospitals described by Foucault, when he says that: "With Pinel, the use of the shower became frankly juridical; the shower was the habitual punishment of the ordinary police tribunal that sat permanently at the asylum." (p. 279) The fact that the institution of the modern age is, at heart, still the same as historic horror houses such as Bedlam can be seen as another anti-psychiatric argument.

<sup>14</sup> A difference between this and medieval sentencing is that this is the ultimate destruction of the psyche instead of the body, which must remain as an example to the other patients.

<sup>15</sup> This, of course, can be seen as an act of medicine as well, only it is society that is cured of the madman.

And he helps the patients to recover their self-worth by providing a counter-discourse that says they are sane.<sup>16</sup>

These acts put McMurphy in a particular position: his blatant non-conformity and resistance set him apart from the other patients, who see him as a hero and savior. At the same time, it reinforces the administration's belief that he truly is dangerous and must be categorized as mad. It creates an almost unbreakable circle: a sane man is admitted for deviancy into an insane place, where resistance is the only natural response. Yet this sane resistance leads to him being categorized as insane, thus continuing his admittance. Stuck between the 'insane' Acutes and the powerful administration, McMurphy is positioned in a dangerous place, a *border-position* that brings about isolation on a fundamental level and determines the individual's possible actions. Here, it is society's positioning of the 'madman' that makes him insane.

This argument is further reinforced if we look at the scene where McMurphy smuggles his fellow patients along for a fishing trip. Out on open waters, freed from society's Gaze, diagnosis, and the constantly threatening discipline, the patients appear remarkably normal<sup>17</sup> and McMurphy's counter-discourse takes hold, causing a transformation within the patients so that they view themselves as sane and oppressed rather than mad and dependent. If the removal of society can make the madman sane, then in this novel society is the cause rather than the cure to madness.<sup>18</sup>

In the end the system takes its disciplinary revenge on McMurphy, lobotomizing him. Yet it is still him that holds the final victory, as is shown when McMurphy is brought back into the ward after his operation and the other patients refuse to acknowledge that this body belongs to him. The dismissal by the patients of the symbol of Ratched's power shows that McMurphy's resistance was more than just a battle against rules and discipline: it was a successful deconstruction of the discipline that upheld the paradigm of knowledge-

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<sup>16</sup> That McMurphy's resistance can be read as a manipulation of power-relationships is further reinforced by Jennings, who writes that: "The power embodied in the ward is not fully under the control of any character, including Nurse Ratched. The overriding factor here is the logic of control, and biopower trumps professional nursing ethics...the real threat to [Nurse Ratched's] control—and to the logic of biopower operating through her—is...McMurphy's sheer life-force." (p. 17)

<sup>17</sup> One can refer here to Foucault's description of heterotopias, isolated places where one is forced to truly observe oneself and undergo a transformation. In this case, the transformation takes the form of a newfound belief in the patients that they are, perhaps, not truly mad at all.

<sup>18</sup> Another interesting act of resistance is the party McMurphy organizes towards the end of the book, inside of the clinic. Not only does this act set in motion the events that determine the book's ending, it also shows a radical victory of McMurphy's counter-discourse in which an institution of confinement is transformed into a stage on which the patients express their newfound freedom.

power. By bringing about a change in knowledge ('you are **not** mad'<sup>19</sup>) he has successfully changed the paradigm and nullified the power that the clinic held over the patients. Is it any wonder then that his fellow patients all leave the clinic? That Ratched, while alive, has lost the ability to raise her voice or turn her head, thus disabling her discourse and Gaze? And that Bromden is finally capable of regaining his freedom and self-worth by using his strength to escape, after euthanizing McMurphy and nullifying the Nurse's power one last time? McMurphy's resistance has thoroughly disrupted the well-oiled machine which was the clinic, and even 'cured' the patients by seeing them embrace their own freedom. If society is the cause of insanity through a maddening demand for conformity and normalization, then *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* clearly shows that resistance and deviancy are the only sane answers.

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<sup>19</sup> A sentiment most clearly expressed by Harding on page 242, when he says that it is not society which drove him crazy. Rather, he says: "It is us." This indicates a understanding that the only way to freedom comes with the dismissal of the discourse and intrinsic discipline which keeps the madman mad.

## Chapter 2: *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

The second text we will analyze is Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.<sup>20</sup> In *ZAMM*, first published in 1974, Pirsig tells a highly autobiographical tale that combines the structure of the traditional novel with a philosophical treatise, thus playfully residing somewhere in-between.<sup>21</sup> This results in a book that found an audience which identified with its philosophic ideas, its tale of an estranged father that tries to connect with his son, and even some of its anti-psychiatric elements.<sup>22</sup>

*ZAMM* tells the tale of a father and his estranged eleven-year old son, Chris, as they journey on a motorcycle through America. During this journey, the father (who narrates the story in the present tense) meditates on his past, when he was a brilliant figure whom he calls Phaedrus. Phaedrus became obsessed with answering the question 'what is best?' This philosophical quest led to a belief in –and obsession over– a metaphysical concept of Quality, comparable with the Deleuzian concept of desiring-production,<sup>23</sup> that he found at the basis of all things. His attempts to define Quality eventually end in insanity, commitment and involuntary 'Annihilation ECS'<sup>24</sup> that destroyed his id. The narrator is the personality that now inhabits Phaedrus' body, and through his attempt to rediscover memories of his predecessor's life and philosophy, the book introduces various philosophical treatises. Phaedrus' figure haunts the narrator on his

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<sup>20</sup> From now on, I will abbreviate the title to *ZAMM*.

<sup>21</sup> George Steiner described it as "[lurching] between fiction and philosophic discourse, between a private memoir and the formulaic impersonality of an engineering or trade journal." (p. 250) This dual nature has sent the analyses of critics and researchers in wildly different directions. Some, like T.S. Steele, approach its narrative aspects, while others, like John G. Cawelti, put the book's philosophical material first. Finally, some approach it in a third manner that sees the two natures as complementing each other: for example, in *The Cosmic Web* Hayles spends a chapter analyzing *ZAMM*'s use of rhetoric and the dualistic nature presented by the text's protagonist as a precise mechanism that makes the reader experience the concept of Quality through the text without having to define it.

<sup>22</sup> In an afterword written by Pirsig for the book's tenth anniversary, he highlights these elements by comparing his book to what the Swedes call a 'kulturbärer,' an object of art that becomes part of the foundation that underlies social and cultural change and development. About his own book, whose plot deals with the terrible effects of involuntary ECS, he says: "The success of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* seems the result of this culture-bearing phenomenon. The involuntary shock treatment described here is against the law today. It is a violation of human liberty. The culture has changed."

<sup>23</sup> Just as Deleuze and Guattari saw desire as an unconscious force that lead to creation, Phaedrus contrasts his metaphysical Quality as a force that both drives and creates systems of 'Reason,' thus being the prime force behind the human existence.

<sup>24</sup> A form of ECT that does not exist in reality, but can be read as a literary symbol.

journey, and the book ends with a reconciliation between the two. Pirsig presents this narrative through a playful application of Goethe's *Erlkönig* in theme and structure.

In this chapter, I will analyze the narrative of *ZAMM*, and study its approach of madness. First, we will look at how Phaedrus reached insanity, and how this madness is tied to a presence on the paradigm's borders. Then we will look at the narrator, and how he approaches the figure of his predecessor. Finally, we will study the text's use of the symbol of ghosts, its application of the *Erlkönig*-motif, and how these are used to illustrate the novel's ending.

Phaedrus' search for Quality is not value-free: it is connected to an attack on Western society, and through finding a definition of Quality Phaedrus hopes to offer a solution to the problems he sees around him. But this attack is not just aimed at modernity: it goes back to the time of Plato and Aristoteles. As described in *ZAMM*:

He felt that the solution started with a new philosophy, or he saw it as even broader than that...a new spiritual rationality...in which the ugliness and the loneliness and the spiritual blankness of dualistic technological reason would become illogical. Reason was no longer to be "value free." Reason was to be subordinate, logically, to Quality, and he was sure he would find the cause of its not being so back among the ancient Greeks, whose mythos had endowed our culture with the tendency underlying all the evil of our technology, the tendency to do what is "reasonable" even when it isn't any good.

(Pirsig, p. 368)

Phaedrus' battle is against Western society's mythos, its prioritizing of strict reason, and 2500 years of Western philosophy. The term 'mythos' is later explained as "the huge body of common knowledge that unites our minds as cells are united in the body of a man." From a Foucaultian perspective this is interesting: 'mythos' appears to have the same meaning as 'paradigm,' both referring to an almost inescapable epistemological system, upheld through power-knowledge.<sup>25</sup> Then we read:

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<sup>25</sup> Of course, I am aware that there are some rather large differences between the natures of *mythos*, as discussed in Classic philosophy, and *paradigm* in modern philosophy. My argument here purely refers to the definition of *mythos* provided by Pirsig in this book.

There is only one kind of person, Phaedrus said, who accepts or rejects the mythos in which he lives. And the definition of that person, when he has rejected the mythos, Phaedrus said, is “insane.” (...)

He knew that the Quality he talked about lay outside the mythos.

(...) He knew that to understand Quality he would have to leave the mythos.

That’s why he felt that slippage. He knew something was about to happen.

(Pirsig, p. 359-360)

Insanity here has a Foucaultian appearance: it is the great void of communication that occurs when one has left the paradigmatic realm of reason. This gives us a clear view on the root of Phaedrus’ eventual insanity: it is a logical result of willingly distancing himself from the paradigm and developing a counter-discourse whose core-concept precedes reason, thus being a discourse that can be seen as *unreasonable*, as madness.

This alone is not reason enough for insanity. But as Phaedrus develops his theory further, he enrolls for a study in philosophy at the University of Chicago, where the works of Plato and Aristoteles are held in high regard. He is quickly drawn into battle with his tutors over the works of the Greek philosophers, and it is here that he begins to slip. For Phaedrus, universities are “Churches of Reason.” This describes universities as institutions devoted to reasonable thinking, but it also indicates that they are institutions upholding a mythos/paradigm which dictates that the universe is reasonable and should be observed in a manner that always puts reason first. For Phaedrus, whose Quality is metaphysical and unreasonable, this evokes hostility. And while he eventually wins his battle, he has been forced to fight reason through reasonable dialogue. This paradoxical battle leads not only to a hollow victory, it also puts him in a border-position where he attempts to both break away from the paradigm while at the same time engaging with it. It

is this border-position, combined with sever exhaustion, that finally pushes him over the edge into insanity and sees him committed.<sup>26</sup>

In the clinic, Phaedrus is destroyed through a court-ordered 'Annihilation ECS.' His personality "had been liquidated without a trace in a technologically faultless act..." (p. 88) Phaedrus always criticized modern, 'soulless' technology whose creation was only dictated by reason and efficiency. What better tool could the society which creates such technology employ than this efficient, logical, "technologically flawless" violence to avenge itself on such a deviant? Through this cold irony the act becomes not merely medical, but punitive as well. In *ZAMM*, the clinic is described in a minimum of words, yet its shadow hangs over the entire book: its violence traumatically fragments the individual, leaving a broken subject that spends the entire tale looking for a form of resolution and reconciliation. Rather than healing the individual, Annihilation ECS destroys it. What remains and is called 'cured' is merely an useful subject for society.

Even if Phaedrus was insane, his philosophy was not: his madness was the result of his own inability to successfully disengage himself from the paradigm he was criticizing. What Phaedrus needed was not a clinic but a philosopher, someone who could have shown him how to reconcile his philosophy and position with that of those around him.

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<sup>26</sup> Because Phaedrus traces so many of society's problems to the 'reason-first' philosophy propagated by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, one cannot help but notice that, for all the philosophers who are named in this book, no attention is paid to those great minds of the 20th century that found fault with this as well. There are various explanations for this: for example, Steiner sees this as a fault that "betray[s] the aggressive certitudes of the self-taught man," (p. 253) while Hayles reads Pirsig's apparent lack of knowledge concerning 20th century philosophy of science as "striking evidence that the cultural matrix is capable of guiding individual inquiry in parallel directions, even when there is little or no direct influence between the different inquiries." (p. 66) Personally, I believe that this is less an error of the author, and more a stylistic choice. Looking at Phaedrus, we can't help but think of one of the most important Western philosophers of the 19th and 20th century: Friedrich Nietzsche. Phaedrus' life, in the way it is narrated to us, shows remarkable similarities with that of this German philosopher. Both stem from an academic background, held friendships with artists, roamed the land (a theme that is recurrent in Pirsig's text) and eventually buckled under the weight of their own philosophies, ending in madness for engaging in a counter-discourse that opposed the paradigm of Western society. And, noticeably, both men have a shared disdain for Classical philosophy. Of course, they differ from each other as well, even in points such as the earlier mentioned criticism and disdain. Still, it is my belief that the omission of these historical philosophers is done on purpose, in order to not just make Phaedrus function as a literary character, but as a symbol of the methods of those mentioned critical minds as well. Phaedrus, in a way, *is* 20th century critical philosophy, complete with the social chaos that is linked to it and a radical breaking away from the past. Further stylistic choices that seem to point in this direction are found in how the university is presented: as an extremely classical institution, a symbol for the discourse of old. And in a way, the solution to our problems offered by Phaedrus mirrors the solution presented in the sixties and seventies: to approach reality in a radically different manner and form new social mores according to this. This is why, I believe, we never see Phaedrus look at those past philosophers: where he to engage, for example, with Nietzsche and Sartre, he would become a literary symbol that directly engages its object of reference, a stylistic nightmare that undermines the power of the symbolical by changing the symbol into a reference, which lacks the symbol's value of meaning.

Through ending Phaedrus' deviant battle with 800 mills of amperage, the clinic becomes a tool of adjustment rather than healing and a clear anti-psychiatric message surfaces.

We must now look to the narrator, the personality that inhabits Phaedrus' body after the ECS, and how he tells his story. *ZAMM* is a travel-narrative in two ways. Firstly, there is the actual journey undertaken by the narrator and Chris towards the Californian coast. But another journey lies in the narrator's gradual approach towards Phaedrus through a rediscovery of the latter's memories and philosophy.

These two journeys sustain each other. The narrator's journey sees him visiting (often isolated) places connected to Phaedrus' history, where freedom from the Gaze (the enabler of discipline, which destroyed Phaedrus) and unknown familiarity allow memories from a past life to surface, enabling him to tell Phaedrus' tale. At the same time, events from Phaedrus' life are often repeated symbolically after they are told through occurrences on the journey. For example, when Phaedrus experiences a breakthrough in his research, this is immediately mirrored by a breakthrough in the weather for the narrator. (p. 215) Thus intertwined, the approach of the journey's end becomes the narrator's unavoidable approach of Phaedrus himself.

Throughout the book, the narrator is in agreement with Phaedrus' philosophy. But he differs from his predecessor by avoiding conflict, only wanting to utilize Phaedrus' philosophy to better his own life as an individual. A good example of this is chapter 27, where the narrator discusses motorcycle maintenance, and embeds Phaedrus' entire philosophy of Quality in his approach towards this relatively 'simple' task. He has no wish to confront the paradigm, because he believes that:

The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart and head and hands, and then work outward from there. Other people can talk about how to expand the destiny of mankind. I just want to talk about how to fix a motorcycle.

(Pirsig, p. 226)

By avoiding conflict, the narrator is not drawn into the border-position that proved fatal for his predecessor. He hopes to find sanity through fulfillment of the book's title.

A returning symbol in *ZAMM* is that of the 'ghost.' Ghosts are everywhere: Phaedrus fights "the ghost of reason," Newton's theories are described as "ghosts," the narrator sees himself as 'haunted' by Phaedrus' specter, and the book is structured after Goethe's

*Erlkönig*. If we try to decipher this symbol through Foucaultian analysis, we can interpret these ghosts as *products of discourse*. Discursive products, similar to their spectral symbol, possess neither mass nor matter but are nonetheless present in –and possessive of– our daily life. A dominant discourse shared by many can result in products like Newton’s laws and the “ghost of reason.” If a discourse is spoken and understood by only one, then its speaker becomes isolated and unintelligible: he is ‘insane,’ incapable of meaningful interaction. This is the position Phaedrus found himself in through his philosophy, and in this form he haunts the narrator: as a fear of maddening isolation returning for the him and Chris, who suffers from hypochondria.<sup>27</sup> This explains both why Phaedrus draws closer as the narrator remembers more about him, and why the narrator hopes to bury him by making his philosophy understandable and useable.<sup>28</sup>

Structurally, *ZAMM* takes great inspiration from Goethe’s *Erlkönig*, another tale about a traveling father and son who are pursued by a ghost, with Phaedrus seemingly fulfilling the role of the *Erlkönig*. But at the book’s end, the roles are reversed through the revelation of ‘ghostly’ characteristics in the narrator himself: after gaining a full recollection of Phaedrus’ ideas, he’s not only convinced that he himself is becoming insane, but he tells Chris madness might claim him as well. Through this conviction his true nature is revealed: he is the ghost of the clinic, of an ingrained discipline that forces the subject into constant (self)observation. He is a clinical, artificial product of discourse that possesses another’s body. This figure is potentially far more harmful towards Chris than Phaedrus ever could be. Rather than an exorcism, a reconciliation is needed. This is achieved through Chris’ pleading for his father of old (Phaedrus): fatherly love reconciles the fractured individual. For Chris, Phaedrus gives up his battle and the narrator lets go of his diagnosis. The narrator’s individualistic application of Phaedrus’ philosophy, combined with Phaedrus’ defiant courage, enable a departure from the border-position, a freeing from discipline and return to sanity. Thus, the narrator of the last chapter is an healed individual

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<sup>27</sup> Chris suffers from mysterious stomachaches that have no physical cause, and we are told they are signs of insanity’s onset. Though the particular insanity is never named, I think it is safe to say that this can be read as hypochondria.

<sup>28</sup> Because we’ve already established, the narrator approaches Phaedrus through a rediscovery of his philosophy and memories. Thus, Hayles notes that the narrator’s attempt to “bury” his predecessor is highly ironic since “it is increasingly evident that the effect of his talking about Phaedrus is precisely the opposite of what he intends.” (p. 72)

containing both Phaedrus and the former narrator, and the relation between father and son is safely restored.<sup>29</sup>

This process of healing also contains an interesting use of style and symbols. Firstly, we've seen that by intertwining memories of Phaedrus' life with occurrences on the narrator's journey, the book presents the confrontation between Phaedrus and the narrator as an inevitability. In the last chapters, the outside world still fulfills its function as a symbolic mirror to the narrator's inner life, but rather than reflecting memories of the past, it now reflects the narrator's immediate mood and thoughts, thus showing that Phaedrus has finally 'caught up' with him. An example of such 'immediate parallelism' is the sudden appearance of a truck threatening to hit Chris. It appears when the narrator becomes a danger to his son, and calmly stops when the son is 'saved' through the return of Phaedrus.

Secondly, there is the scene's setting. Throughout the book, the narrator is haunted by dreams in which Phaedrus prophesies to him that they shall meet at "the bottom of the ocean," interpreted as a symbol of madness.<sup>30</sup> The scene described above takes place at the coast during a heavy fog, reflecting the narrator's belief that this crisis has taken them to that symbolical place. But water, the sea and the ocean are also ancient symbols of healing, transforming the setting into a place where this fractured identity can be repaired.

The insanity of Phaedrus, the deviant philosopher, directly resulted from taking up a border-position through conflict. For the deviant thinkers, *ZAMM* offers a solution of neither battle nor cowardice: it tells us that the individual is capable of regaining and retaining his own freedom if he shows the strength to stay true to what he himself believes is important. In this, we are free. After all:

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<sup>29</sup> In Thomas S. Steele's reading of this scene, the reversal of roles from the *Erkönig*-poem is taken even further. He suggests that the narrator, as a product of the clinic, is existentially inauthentic as he "had rejected [Phaedrus'] quest and participated instead in the attempted murder of Phaedrus." (p. 291) In his reading, the narrator is the Erkönig, Phaedrus is the child in danger of being destroyed, and Chris fulfills the role of the father who 'carries' him. While I believe the ending leaves enough room for interpretation that both readings can be valid, I disagree with Steele's view that the narrator was only a danger to Phaedrus, and believe the latter's return was only made possible through the former's success in taking Phaedrus' philosophy away from the border.

<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that these dreams are later revealed to be traumatic memories of the clinic, of the moment in which Phaedrus last saw his wife and son before being taken away for ECS. This truth is only revealed after the narrator and Phaedrus are reconciled, further indicating that we are looking at a process of healing. Another interesting point is that appearances in dreams are part of a long supernatural tradition, tied to the appearance of ghosts, and can thus be seen as another symbol of Phaedrus' spectral form.

What is good, Phaedrus,  
And what is not good,  
Need we ask anyone to tell us these things?

(Plato, *Phaedrus*)

### Chapter 3: *Apocalypse Now and Heart of Darkness*

In 1979, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* opened in theaters. Released to an American audience that was still struggling with its involvement in the Vietnam War, *Apocalypse Now* attempted to illustrate the experience of the war rather than its history, and offered a critique on it through meditating on the dark nature of war itself. In order to do this it drew inspiration from a varied selection of sources, chief amongst them Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Michael Herr's *Dispatches*. As Vargas describes the incorporation of the structure from Conrad's novel into Coppola's film: "*Apocalypse Now* bridges the gap between literature and history by "transposing" *Heart of Darkness* with the Vietnam War through the incorporation of images, narrative and discourse provided by Herr in *Dispatches*." (p. 100) In this way, the Conrad's criticism on the colonial operation is transformed into a critique of Vietnam. Central in both *Apocalypse Now* and *Heart of Darkness* is the complex (and potentially insane) figure of Kurtz, whom we will focus on in this chapter.

I will demonstrate why Kurtz functions as a critical part of the structure used by both *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*, and how this textual structure leads to social criticism. Then, I will show why I believe the heart of Kurtz's madness, in both texts, lies in his position on the border of the paradigm. Through this study of the deep structure of Kurtz's character, I hope to uncover the secrets of his madness.

*Heart of Darkness* tells the tale of Marlow, tasked with captaining a steamer up the Congo river in order to retrieve the ailing Mr. Kurtz from the Inner Station. In *Apocalypse Now*, Marlow is replaced with Cpt. Willard, an American special forces operative ordered to take a boat up to the Cambodian border and assassinate the rogue col. Kurtz. Both texts are socially critical, offering critique on specific systems present in Western society. Conrad criticized 19th century colonial conduct in central Africa,<sup>31</sup> and Coppola adapted the basic narrative to comment on the Vietnam War.

As the protagonists of both stories travel towards Kurtz, across an area that is best described as the border of civilization where the Western 'civilized' world meets the

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<sup>31</sup> Or, to be more precise, the disasters that befell Congo during its time as the Congo Free State, under Belgian rule.

unknowable and dangerous territory of the Other,<sup>32</sup> they are confronted with several signs of the military and colonial systems such as Army bases and colonial stations. Through the scenes witnessed there by the protagonist-narrators, these signs of 'civilization' are transformed into signs of the dysfunctional and even the insane. For example, in *Apocalypse Now* Willard encounters an US outpost defending a bridge from the Vietcong. The situation there is utter chaos, resulting from a situation in which both parties have reached a standstill. One of Willard's crew members describes it so:

Like this bridge: we build it every night. Charlie blows it right back up again. Just so the generals can say the road is open. Think about it. Who cares?

(Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*)

Rather than a brave fight, the soldier's plight is transformed into an absurd Sisyphean task. Or what to think of *Apocalypse Now's* Lt. Col. Kilgore, a man whose childlike enthusiasm for napalm and battle both serves to make him a poster child of American optimism and can-do attitude, while at the same time coming across as hopelessly naive? His words, perfectly reflecting the propaganda fed to those at home, sound like complete madness when spoken in the context of Vietnam's dark, impenetrable jungle. These scenes come across as absurd because their reason has been obscured by the disappearance of a distinct cause-and-effect. They seem insane because they appear to be without purpose.<sup>33</sup>

Still, those who perform these actions believe them to be purposeful. This is because their purpose is not based on real effects, but on a belief in discourse. Rather than based upon a 'universal truth,' *Apocalypse Now's* proper military conduct (as well as *Heart of Darkness's* Enlightenment-ideology) is a product of discourse. It is a 'hollow' construct with no natural foundation.

Such discursive structures exist to conceal a paradox: our talk of civilization and proper military conduct condemns the 'savagery' of brutal killings and robbery, while at the

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<sup>32</sup> In his famous attack on Conrad's book, *An Image of Africa*, Chinua Achebe criticizes the work for dehumanizing the African population. While I have not the space to go into Achebe's postcolonial critique, I do believe his argument that the African serves as a metaphorical extension of the dark jungle is interesting for our own research, as it shows a strong, stylistically upheld border between the knowable Self and the unknowable Other.

<sup>33</sup> Such scenes are also present in *Heart of Darkness*, where the colonial operation can only be described by words such as "unreal" and "fantastic" (for an example, see Marlow's description of the station on p. 33). Think, for example, of the managers and accountants that are sweating away in perfectly-pressed suits while slaves labor outside, the warships' continual firing into an impenetrable jungle, the brickmaker whose existence is an utter paradox and the man who sits all day defending an almost deserted road.

same time propagating goals for which such methods are absolutely necessary.<sup>34</sup> The belief in proper military conduct both enables and results from a discourse of ‘civilized war.’ This illusionary ‘civilized war’ justifies the brutal reality, and its discourse transforms a gruesome bid for power into a quest for humanistic and humanitarian goals described in abstract terms such as “freedom” and “aid,” even if the reality of the situation often directly contradicts this.<sup>35</sup> These texts show that such systems are more than hollow: they are hypocritical. In the words of Cpt. Willard:

It was a way of living with ourselves. We’d cut them up with a machine gun and give them a bandaid. It was a lie. I hated lies.

(Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*)

The reason that the methodology of proper military conduct is upheld in *Apocalypse Now*, despite its hypocrisy and inefficiency, is because it is enforced through discipline. Discipline, according to Foucault, requires “a strict mechanism that coerces by means of observation,” (*Discipline and Punish*, p. 238). This mechanism is the Gaze. Because the soldiers at the bridge know they are observed, they won’t give up their pointless task.<sup>36</sup> The Gaze upholds discipline, discipline upholds the proper discourse, and this discourse is essential in the necessary covering-up of the system’s own discrepancies. Thus divergence cannot be allowed.

This is why Kurtz’ transformation takes place in the unseen areas, where the disappearance of the Gaze enables freedom from discipline and discourse. Both the Inner Station in *Heart of Darkness* and the Cambodian border in *Apocalypse Now* are described

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<sup>34</sup> The goals here being the complete extermination or forced surrendering of the enemy in *Apocalypse Now* and the gaining of maximum colonial profit in *Heart of Darkness*.

<sup>35</sup> In the same way, the belief in Enlightened civilization in *Heart of Darkness* serves as a justification of the entire colonial operation. It disguises the brutal plundering of Africa as an humanitarian mission that will set the ‘poor, unchristened African’ on the path to progress.

<sup>36</sup> The same controlling powers of the Gaze are found in *Heart of Darkness* as well, although in a different form. For example, take this quote:

[The constant plotting of men at the station against each other] was as unreal as everything else — as the philanthropic pretense of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages.

(Conrad, p. 35)

Through the Gaze, the constant observation of each other, the paradigm is upheld, and only by participating in the proper discourse can one hope to be promoted.

in terms of sensory lack: they lie unseen in darkness, so remote that they cannot hear or be heard.<sup>37</sup> Freed from discourse, Kurtz changes from a 'beacon of civilization' into a tyrant whose methods are "unsound," who proudly displays severed heads and corpses, and who has deified himself. These are acts of horror, but can we deny their efficiency in achieving the goals of Kurtz's deployment? Just as how Conrad's Kurtz is the area's most efficient ivory-collector, Coppola's Kurtz has become a terror for the Vietcong. If the purpose of the colonial agent is the collection of riches, and the soldier's purpose is the destruction of the enemy, how are their methods "unsound?"

Freed from the Gaze, Kurtz realizes that the discourse surrounding him is hollow and counterproductive towards its own goals. It is the same insight we have described above, and the same insight experienced by Willard and Marlow as they journey towards Kurtz. Through this point of view the 'sane' acts of civilization come across as insane to Marlow and Willard, and thus to the reader/viewer.<sup>38</sup>

Our civilization is built on discourse, just as our discourse is in turn a reflection of our civilization. But here on the border, through the extreme circumstances of the jungle and direct confrontation with the Other, civilization reveals itself as an arbitrary phenomenon that holds no universal value. In these texts, civilization serves only to hide and transform our most primitive desires, while at the same time bringing them to fruition on a massive, industrial scale. Discourse merely serves to cover this up. In this manner, every discourse will prove itself to be hollow and, to a certain extent, unnecessary. This is why Kurtz disposes of its methodology, opting instead for a more direct approach.

But Kurtz's actions, horrific as they may be, still serve the ultimate goals of the system that put him there. We condemn Kurtz as insane, while condoning those that perform the same acts, with the same intention, but hide behind discourse. Realizing this means recognizing Kurtz as the true and uncovered face of militarism and colonialism.

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<sup>37</sup> In this light, the following passage is interesting: "I felt how big, how confoundedly big, was that thing that couldn't talk, and perhaps was deaf as well." (p. 38) This description of the jungle is given by Marlow. Pay attention to the way it is described as a place without voice or ears: a place that is completely free from discourse.

<sup>38</sup> I would argue that for the reader, this view is further enabled by a structure in which the story's narrator views the world while on a continual journey. This constant movement keeps them from becoming engrained in the particular custom and discourse of one place. It forces them to judge the events surrounding them purely on a basis of cause-and-effect, often coming to see them as ineffectual and hypocritical. And, of course, it is this same inward movement of the journey that will lead them to Kurtz.

Kurtz functions as the result of a literary structure in a socially critical text, representing the elements of our own society that are inherently 'insane.'<sup>39</sup>

Having analyzed Kurtz's madness as a product of a socially critical text's structure, we will now attempt to understand the nature of his madness.

By denouncing the discourse and removing himself from the Gaze, Kurtz' departure from the paradigm becomes inevitable. Had this been the entire story, had Kurtz simply 'gone native,' there probably would not have been any problem: he would have simply disappeared and become an unknowable Other. But this is not the case. When Marlow encounters Kurtz, he has not become an unknowable African,<sup>40</sup> and when Cpt. Willard finds him, he is not a member of the Indian tribes or a combatant for the Vietcong. While Kurtz was capable of leaving the paradigm's discourse behind, he has not been able to distance himself from the paradigm's goals that discourse served. Everything Kurtz has done in *Apocalypse Now* has been to fight the Vietcong, and in *Heart of Darkness* he still attempts to attain greatness through collecting ivory.

Kurtz has positioned himself on a border. For him, the only known way of attaining greatness is through means prescribed by the Western paradigm. But because of Kurtz's dismissal of the paradigm's discourse through his methods and ideology, the West now sees him as an Other. At the same time, the Other that inhabits the area can't identify with Kurtz either: his brutal violence against them ensure he is an object of fear<sup>41</sup> for the Africans and Vietcong. Through his positioning on the spatial border, deep in the jungle between the known and the unknown, Kurtz was capable of positioning himself mentally on an ideological border as well. Stuck precisely in the middle, he has left every known discourse behind until he has become unknowable to all.<sup>42</sup> The West is unable to

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<sup>39</sup> On this note, it is worth noticing the irony that Kurtz' removal is ordered by the very system he represents so perfectly. In my opinion, this is because he functions as a 'dark mirror,' a reflection of the elements society wishes not to be reminded of. This is tied to the perception that all discourse, including our own, and the civilization it is tied to, is hollow: like the infant's mirror stage as described by Lacan, this is a traumatic insight that comes with feelings of isolation and confusion. And, of course, this mirror-function also ties back to Foucault's heterotopias, where the condemned but necessary action is condoned as long as it happens in those areas that are both known and out-of-sight.

<sup>40</sup> Again, I wish to refer to Achebe's work. In Conrad's book, Africa is the unknowable continent of the Other, and its inhabitants are only referred to as an extension of this Otherness.

<sup>41</sup> And, for some of the men around him, fearful devotion.

<sup>42</sup> That is, of course, with the exception of Marlow and Willard, whose history and position allow them (and the reader) to understand this tale. For Marlow, his newness as a recent arrival in Africa, combined with his perpetual journey, have left him relatively untouched by colonial discourse. And Willard, is an experienced veteran who is cynical towards the war. What makes them different from Kurtz is that these men have never attempted to break completely free of the paradigm.

understand his methods because they no longer reflect its discourse,<sup>43</sup> while the local population is cannot understand the purpose of Kurtz's brutal methods.<sup>44</sup> And what can we call a man that cannot be understood, other than insane?

This border-position leads to a paradox in Kurtz's behavior as well. At the border, where good and evil (which, as ethical concepts, are products of discourse) have disappeared, remains only a desire for greatness. Cahir describes him as standing "in both works, as the hollow man's antithesis" and as "a man forever altered by a dark satori, by an understanding of the ubiquitous nature of darkness." (p. 186) But because 'greatness,' for Kurtz, is still determined by the Western paradigm, he can't free himself from these intrinsic values, and thus can never be free from himself.<sup>45</sup> Kurtz can be seen as a failed Nietzschean Übermensch, a man that has succeeded in rising above 'good' and 'evil' yet fails to live with the resulting consequences.

This is most clear in the ultimate pointlessness of Kurtz's work. He is an ivory-collector with no wish to ever return home and enjoy his riches, and a he is soldier who fights an enemy on orders of a government he has broken away from, in a war he no longer believes in. Kurtz's attempt to achieve greatness is pointless because he has already declared the parameters through which such greatness is measured to be invalid. This failure to achieve "true freedom" is best illustrated by Yang's Deleuzian analysis of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, which describes his lust for ivory as "an act of his desiring production" that ends in being "finally conditioned/reterritorialized by his endless greediness for more power (over the natives) and wealth (by collecting ivory) that originated from the values of a capitalist society." (Yang, p. 7)

This is a corrupted reasoning, caught in a paradox of its own creation. What results from Kurtz's 'Wille zur Macht' is not greatness, merely expressions of strength through

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<sup>43</sup> And, we should remember, this discourse serves to *justify* the violence permeated by civilization. In other words, it is fully aware that this violence –through which civilization upholds itself, yet is forced to condone–contradicts civilization's self-image, and is thus tasked with burying this inherent paradox.

<sup>44</sup> I do not mean to say that the Africans cannot understand that Kurtz is robbing their ivory, or that the Vietcong do not understand the violence unleashed upon them. Rather, I mean that since they do not share in the West's discourse, I have a hard time believing they would agree with Kurtz's belief that this brutality comes with the rewards of greatness.

<sup>45</sup> The desire for achieving this freedom is perfectly pronounced by Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, when he asks Cpt. Willard if he's "ever considered real freedoms? Freedom from the opinion of others? Even the opinions of yourself?" Kurtz says that the only way he's found to approach this freedom is through isolating himself in the jungle, thus removing himself from the Gaze and discourse. In the end, though, his behavior indicates that he failed in this goal.

simple, brutal violence.<sup>46</sup> His mind is 'disturbed' by a hollow, corrupted reasoning, caused by a collapse into itself at the border.

Only when dying is Kurtz capable of letting this paradox go. His last words ("The horror! The horror!") should not be read as an acceptance of guilt, but as accepting the paradox of his existence: letting it go by finally facing the fact that his dream of greatness was as hollow as the paradigm it originated in. All that remains for Kurtz is a horrendous dark emptiness that underlies the human existence, an existence that man tries to make meaningful through the dreams and arbitrary values that form its civilizations.<sup>47</sup>

While such a view is nihilistic, it does not equate madness. Rather, Kurtz's insanity results from his position on the border and the resulting internal conflict. Even if one successfully escapes the paradigm's discourse and territory on the outside, such freedoms can only be meaningful if we succeed in freeing ourselves *inside* as well. Those on the border, who have distanced themselves from society's discourse and values, must provide their own justification for their actions. If they can handle this, this position can bring great wisdom. But for those who get stuck, trapped like Kurtz was, what else remains but the beating, apocalyptic heart of darkness?

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<sup>46</sup> The clearest example of this change in reasoning can be found in Kurtz' writing. In both texts, Kurtz is tasked with the creation of a report. In *Heart of Darkness* this is done on the behalf of the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, in *Apocalypse Now* it is written for the American army. In both texts, Kurtz writes a report in which he advises on how to access the local situation and handle the natives with care. And in both works, after his descend into madness, he adds a further suggestion with pen: "Exterminate all the brutes!" in *Heart of Darkness*, and "Drop the bomb. Exterminate them all!" in *Apocalypse Now*.

<sup>47</sup> Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness*' final scenes, is not spared from these thought either. As he talks to Kurtz' widow, he is still haunted by Kurtz's final words, which for him are as valid in London as they were in Africa. *Apocalypse Now* illustrates the same feelings of loss in a different manner: when Willard leaves Kurtz's base by boat, it is unclear to the audience whether he steers it back up the river, or further down. The fact that the viewer cannot know for sure, and that both options seem equally valid, is something I interpret as meaning that the difference between the two is null: wherever Willard goes, his knowledge will haunt him regardless.

## **Conclusion:**

### **Method to the Madness**

In the previous chapters, we have observed three different ‘madmen’ and studied their situation and texts. In this final chapter, I wish to compare these characters, their situation and their texts, in order to lay bare similarities in textual structure and functioning. Or, put differently: by comparing these insane characters, I hope to uncover the mechanisms of a specific type of madness and how it functions in artistic, narrative texts.<sup>48</sup> The time has come to look for a method to this madness.

#### *Part I: The position of madness*

The first thing we notice when comparing McMurphy, Phaedrus and Kurtz are their differences. Their ‘madness’ results from different circumstances: McMurphy’s was the result of clinical diagnosis, Phaedrus’ resulted from a philosophical battle, and Kurtz’ state of mind was brought about by the isolation of the jungle. All three eventually break away from the paradigm, but in different manners: McMurphy does it through deviancy and rejection of discipline, Phaedrus distances himself from society’s philosophy and epistemology, and Kurtz trades in discourse for the practical reality of his immediate surroundings. And, of course, all three originate from very different stories, genres and times.

But beneath these differences lie strong similarities in the texts’ deep structure: for all three, their madness results from their position in the intricate web of power-knowledge. The character’s (sometimes voluntary) positioning on the border enables a diagnosis of insanity.<sup>49</sup> Within this border resides the paradigm from which the ‘mad’ character originates, and outside of it lies the territory of the unknowable Other.<sup>50</sup>

Prior to being diagnosed as ‘insane,’ all of our literary subjects have experienced a moment in which they broke away from paradigmatic discourse and, in variable manners,

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<sup>48</sup> I refrain from using the word ‘literature’ here, because our research also includes film, and the ideas proposed in this thesis are also theoretically applicable to theater, music and potentially other (concrete, narrative) art forms.

<sup>49</sup> As stated in my introduction, I use the word ‘border’ to indicate a liminal space, referring to a position on the edge of the (ideological and/or spacial) paradigmatic area. It absolutely does not refer to a line of distinction between ‘normal’ and ‘insane.’

<sup>50</sup> In reality, such borders would be hard to determine: this description, for now, ignores potential areas of overlap and common ground. While such areas are of course always present, and are continuously created when two different systems meet, their existence does not preclude that of these borders at specific times and places. And, more importantly, while areas of overlap are found in reality, the texts studied in these thesis share a characteristic lack of them.

from the paradigm itself. This transports the subject to the border. If they would cross it, the story would end with their transformation into the Other. But in our texts, this is never the case. All three of our subjects have (through resistance, battle and/or remaining ideals) remained in a state of interaction with the paradigm. This situation positions our subjects on the border: theirs is a special insanity, a 'border-madness.'

While interaction with the paradigm still occurs on the border, this position limits the potential forms of communication in a very specific manner. Because breaking away from the paradigm inevitably means breaking-away from its discourse, it becomes impossible to maintain a meaningful communication between those in the paradigm's centre and the 'border-mad.'<sup>51</sup> Concerning communication, the border-mad have gone out of reach. But because they reside on the border and continuously interact with the paradigm, the border-mad remain within reach of the inevitable disciplinary measures unleashed by the paradigm.<sup>52</sup> Through the mechanism of discipline, our subjects are diagnosed as 'mad' and must face the possible consequences this entails.

Put shortly, the birth of the border-mad results from their breaking away from the paradigm and its discourse, while at the same time failing or refusing to distance themselves from it entirely. If we would describe them in the terms of Deleuze and Guattari, we could describe them as men that attempted the creation of a body without organs. Deleuze and Guattari describe this process as such:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO.

(Deleuze and Guattari, p. 167)

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<sup>51</sup> I must make it very clear that the terms 'border-mad' and 'border-madness' refer to a situation in which the subject is seen as insane because he resides in a liminal position. It has absolutely nothing to do with the psychiatric condition called 'borderline,' which refers to a personality disorder.

<sup>52</sup> Of course, the importance of disciplinary mechanisms as described here is derived from the work of Foucault. One could argue that, with the exception of colonial times and their influence in our postcolonial world, the processes as described by Foucault are mainly based on Western history. And although a research into non-Western literature concerning this subject would be incredibly interesting, it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

In this manner, we can read the border-mad's journeys towards the border as "movements of deterritorialization" through which they distance themselves from the paradigm. Through this distancing, they are allowed "freeing lines of flight" and at the border, they are (partially) transformed into a body without organs.<sup>53</sup>

By breaking away from the paradigm's discourse, the border-mad simultaneously does away with the values this upholds, thus disposing the paradigm's self-chosen image of truth. Despite this, the reader of texts in which such characters appears will often recognize that they are sound of mind.<sup>54</sup> The position of this 'madman,' on the border between the paradigm and the Other, between what we consider to be true and what is equally true but can only be perceived as chaos, allows him to reject our notions of truth. When our image of truth is thus rejected while the reader is still capable of understanding the 'madman' (because the reader can recognize his/her reasoning as *potentially* valid), the text rejects any permanent notion of singular truth.

In this manner, the presence of the border-mad automatically leads to a rejection of singular truth. What follows is best described by utilizing the terms of Deleuze and Guattari. Because the border is a position of liminality, to inhabit it requires a partial transformation into a 'body without organs.' The border-mad, when positioning themselves in the middle, must undergo a process of deterritorialization by partially letting go of the paradigm. Because the reader of the text is capable of understanding the border-mad's reasoning, they undergo the same process. It is through this intentional deterritorialization that the text rejects singular truth and is thus socially critical. It deconstructs the line between normality and madness in *Cuckoo*, shows how reason can be unreasonable in *ZAMM* and turns success in war and colonialism into signs that reflect the horror of those systems. The presence of the border-mad results in a rejection of singular truth, thus automatically and irrevocably making the text *socially critical*.

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<sup>53</sup> See also Yang's description of Kurtz as a potential body without organs.

<sup>54</sup> I will explain the reasons for this later on in this chapter.

*Part II: The formation of knowledge concerning the border-mad and the workings of textual structure*

We will now compare the texts, and study the similarities between various artistic elements<sup>55</sup> and techniques that directly influence our perception of the border-mad. But in order to do this, we must first examine what it is about these characters that is truly *artistic*. Therefore I will start by taking a step back, and look at the reality surrounding us.

Our perception of reality and our formation of meaning are determined by the paradigm surrounding us.<sup>56</sup> The distance between the paradigm's centre and its border results from a difference in experiencing reality, an epistemological difference. Because the paradigm is determined by an epistemology, and the border is determined by a *rejection* of that epistemology, attempting to comprehend the border from the paradigm's centre results in a paradox. It is almost impossible to both recognize and actually *understand* the borders of the paradigm from our own position in its centre. The paradigm's interpretive model prevents us from comprehending the border, and only by leaving our position in the centre can we circumvent this. As Deleuze and Guattari say:

It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down at them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes.<sup>57</sup>

(Deleuze & Guattari, p. 23)

Witnessing the border-mad from anything but the border (the middle) skews our view. Only by approaching the border ourselves can we recognize and understand them.<sup>58</sup>

But this leads to another problem: approaching the border-mad in this manner means that we, as our own distance to the border diminishes until it reaches a vanishing point, would have to become partially border-mad ourselves.

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<sup>55</sup> My thesis handles both films and books, and many of the elements and techniques I'll describe could also be utilized in other art forms. While I would like to use the term *literary* elements here, I chose the word *artistic* because it holds a wider range.

<sup>56</sup> In a way, one can paraphrase the entire meaning of the word *paradigm* in this manner: as something built from power-knowledge, and thus a literal structure whose form (visible in its myriad power-relationships) is determined through a selection of possible knowledge. And this structure, in its turn, determines our epistemology.

<sup>57</sup> My thanks go out to dr. Susanne Knittel for suggesting this passage.

<sup>58</sup> This recognizing is further troubled by the fact that, as parts of the paradigm, we would have trouble determining if someone actually qualifies as border-mad.

Even if we could accept comprehending and approaching the border-mad in this manner, two significant problems remain. First of all, this approach is paradoxical: we'd attempt to approach a destination known in advance, even though this destination can only be recognized after we've already arrived. Thus, a deliberate journey is impossible: it is only through (situational) circumstance that we can reach the border-mad.<sup>59</sup> This leads us to the second problem: if we wish to avoid the paradox of a deliberate journey, while not letting go of our position in the center of the paradigm, we'd need a so-called 'top-down' view: a view that both provides a *complete* oversight of our own paradigm (in order to recognize the points where one could break away) while giving us an insight into the position of the border as well.

In reality, such a view is impossible. First of all, we cannot have a *complete* overview of our own paradigm from our position in the centre. Secondly, such a view does not necessarily prevent us from still finding ourselves in the position of the border-mad after reaching them.

But such problems are only valid in reality: a place where we are provided with such a 'top-down view,' where we are capable of sharing and experience it, is in the arts. Because art is capable of creating its own narrative and/or interpretive space, it can give us perspectives not easily reached in reality and thus provide new forms of understanding. Artistic, narrative texts can utilize specific techniques to provide their reader with both an simultaneous understanding of the paradigm and the border-mad.

First of all, through choosing what to present to the reader/viewer and guiding his/her interpretation of events, each text constructs its own narrative space. Within this space, the text is capable of constructing a scaled-down model of the paradigm in a manner that is relevant to its border-mad. Thus, the reader is allowed to 'see' the paradigm while at the same time witness those points where one can break away, and so be aware of the border-mad's position.<sup>60</sup> This is why, in our texts, we often find a 'zoomed-in' view on a specific situation or setting, which can then function as a microcosm: the clinic in *One*

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<sup>59</sup> Because of this, I do not believe it to be a coincidence that in the texts I've analyzed, the confrontation with the border-mad is always the result of some bigger situational circumstance: Marlow/Willard meeting Kurtz was, for the former, the result of an ordered journey, Bromden and McMurphy meet in the greater context of the state-run clinic, and the confrontation between the narrator and Phaedrus is the result of an unwanted personal history.

<sup>60</sup> Of course, we should note that even for the auteur such a scaled-down paradigm is never based on a true, 'complete' overview, since he or she is always part of the paradigm him- or herself. And even if the auteur would be capable of achieving such an overview, the position of the border would still require him/her to partially speak for the Other as well, with all the inaccuracies and faults this entails. But what an author can do, is choose his madman and situation with care, so that he can form a scaled-down model around this.

*Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* functions as a scaled-down model of American, normalizing society, the individual's crisis was approached in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* through the conflict of a man who finds his son on one side, and the institution on the other, and both *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* utilized the colonial/military operation in the jungle as a sign that speaks of the inherent hollowness present in civilization and its discourse. All three can function as critical standards through which the paradigm is measured.

Secondly, all our texts provide the reader with a second ego, a stand-in capable of undertaking the journey towards the border for us while sharing his interpretations and discoveries: the intradiegetic narrator. As a living presence in the text, the intradiegetic narrator allows us to join him on his journey as he travels from the paradigm's center toward the border of the 'madman.' In this manner, the narrator and his journey function as a bridge that allows the reader to understand both areas simultaneously. Through the narrator's own participation in the story, the reader is provided with the necessary constantly shifting perspective as we travel towards the border, while still allowing us to relate and understand this shifting perspective by making the reader a witness to the narrator's reasoning. This also shows us the importance of the motive of the journey: it is only through a gradual distancing from the paradigm and approach of the border-mad that the latter can be understood by us.<sup>61 62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> At first glance, the only text that does not seem to fit this model is *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, in which the narrator himself appears to be crazy at the story's start. But because Bromden is our only view into the clinic, and we are tasked with deciphering his hallucinations, the reader is made complicit in his madness. It is through his perspective that we are guaranteed to see the deviant McMurphy as sane, while the administration appears to be the opposite. Thus, the importance of the intradiegetic narrator still cannot be denied.

And neither absent is the motive of the journey: it is housed, metaphorically, in the development of Bromden as a character and in the process of transformation witnessed in the clinic and its patients. But it is also present in a more physical form in the book's ending, when (through the influence of McMurphy) Bromden's development as a character is complete and he escapes the clinic, a literal departure from the narrative space.

<sup>62</sup> Of course we have to ask ourselves why it is that, if the border-mad can only be approached through narrative texts, the authors are successful in inserting them into their own texts. Besides the fact that these texts deal in discussing scaled-down versions of the paradigm, it is also interesting to note that (with the exception of *Apocalypse Now*, which was an adaption) all these texts contain autobiographical elements, respectively taken from periods in their authors' life where one could say they approached the border themselves. Although this should definitely not be taken as an attempt to 'bring the author back to life,' it remains true that *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* was based on Kesey's experience with working in a mental hospital while experimenting with hallucinogens, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* was extremely autobiographical for Pirsig, and *Heart of Darkness* was inspired by Conrad's own journey through Congo. In a way, one would almost presume that the experiences of these authors mirror the journeys undertaken by their narrators.

A third technique that allows the reader to better understand the border-mad is the application of various old and much repeated (literary) symbols, which illustrate the border-mad's condition and its development. Two such symbols are the symbol of the healing water and the multiple symbolic functions of the ship.

Dating back to ancient history, water has often been seen as a symbol of healing, a status it received due to its properties as a natural cleansing element. In Foucault's extensive study of the mental hospital's history, belief in this symbol recurs throughout the ages. Think, for example, of the cold showers that were supposed to shake patients from their stupor, and water's status as a 'cool' element opposed to madness' blazing hotness. In our texts, water is present as a symbol of healing as well. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* provides a good example. The narrator's fractured psyche is restored through a confrontation with Phaedrus at the coast, a scene described as "the bottom of the ocean." This conveys a sense of isolation in which every possible contact with the rest of the world has become forfeit: the isolation of madness, "the great void,"<sup>63</sup> the end of meaningful communication. Water further isolates in the presence of a thick fog enveloping the scene.<sup>64</sup> But through this isolation, water fulfills its healing role by transforming the setting into an heterotopia where Phaedrus appears and the fractured psyche is healed.

Connected to the symbol of the healing water is the heterotopia of the boat. In *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, the heterotopia of the boat temporarily transforms the patients from 'madmen' into functional individuals. And in *Heart of Darkness*, it is only once on board of Marlow's ship that Kurtz can let go of the paradox that haunts him and be cured of it through death.

The boat can also serve as a representation of the slow movement towards the border. From the water one has a clear view on the coast where the paradigm resides, while at the same time passing alongside it in constant movement as an outsider,<sup>65</sup> out of sight from the Gaze. This reversal, which finds the madman observing the sane one, temporarily reverses their normal relation of power and thus forces the 'sane' world into a confrontation. Here, the water functions as a 'border of the border.'

The final symbolic role performed by the boat is that of the Ship of Fools, an old allegory in Western literature. In *Cuckoo*, the fishing boat is literally a ship filled with

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<sup>63</sup> Term taken from Foucault.

<sup>64</sup> This fog can also be read as a symbol of the unconscious parts of the mind from which Phaedrus arises.

<sup>65</sup> This point, of course, is mainly applicable to *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*.

madmen that, as soon as it reaches open waters, fulfills the promise of miraculous healing so hoped for in ancient times.<sup>66</sup> Even more important is the Ship of Fools in *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*. Throughout these texts, the colonial/military system is constantly presented as bizarre through the encounters experienced by the narrator at various outposts. Through these encounters, Marlow and Willard experience a growing belief in Kurtz as someone special, a one-eyed king in a kingdom of the blind. When these stories leave the outposts behind them and enter the isolation of the jungle, we are at risk of losing Kurtz's meaning through a loss of context. This is avoided by having the narrator accompanied on his ship by a varied collection of 'fools,' respectively an almost cartoonish expedition force in *Heart of Darkness* and an ill-disciplined and naive military outfit in *Apocalypse Now*. They transform the narrator's boat into a Ship of Fools that symbolizes the colonial/military system, and thus allow Kurtz to perform his role in the narrative by bringing the greater context to his doorstep.

Finally, there is one more returning similarity in these texts: the end of madness comes through violent resolution. Not one of our literary subjects finds a peaceful end in 'insanity:' Phaedrus' id is (temporarily) destroyed by ECT, McMurphy meets his end through a lobotomy, and Kurtz's final confrontation with the paradigm is payed for with his life in both appearances. All three perish by the hand of the inevitable disciplinary measures undertaken by the paradigm after it becomes aware of their existence.<sup>67</sup> This battle is unavoidable when contact between the paradigm and the border-mad is established, because it reveals the workings of both to the reader one last time. It is here that madness ends, at the point where she reveals her true face one last time in uncovering what was hidden under the paradigm's mask all along.

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<sup>66</sup> Others have read this scene as an essential part of McMurphy's role as a Messiah, mirroring Jesus fishing with his apostles. While I will not deny that this scene can fulfill multiple symbolic functions simultaneously, one might believe that an interpretation that combines these two readings would definitely be interesting.

<sup>67</sup> This is the case in *Heart of Darkness* as well, even though Kurtz died from malaria. After all, Marlow was tasked with not just helping Kurtz, but above all to retrieve him, to remove him as an agent of discipline. Therefore, I read Kurtz' dead as the only possible result for a man that is incapable of returning to civilization, yet is forced to do so in confrontation.

## *Final Conclusions*

As we have reached the end of this thesis, I would like to conclude with a short reiteration of the conclusions reached through my research.

1. In literature we are capable of discerning certain characters defined by a *specific type of madness, that is the result from their position on the borders of the paradigm*. I name this type of madman the border-mad.
2. Because the presence of the border-mad is inseparable from a critique on the belief in singular truth, *the texts in which they appear are always (in variable amounts) socially critical*.
3. It is impossible for a large audience to deliberately recognize and understand the border-mad in reality. This is different in artistic, narrative texts, where the position of the border can be shown through the construction of a scaled-down version of the paradigm in the narrative space. Other artistic techniques, such as the use of an intradiegetic narrator and the insertion of various literary symbols and structures, can be utilized in order to present a comprehensible, artificially-constructed form of the border-mad.

Here ends my research into madness and the paradigm. Through these conclusions, I hope not just to have provided a better understanding of the border-mad as a literary/ artistic figure, but also to inspire further thoughts into the connection between the texts in which they appear and the societies that produce them.

According to Foucault, the key sign of madness is its inability to meaningfully express itself to the outside world. It cannot be understood, nor can its calls be answered. And yet, as I hope to have shown in this thesis, the border-mad is an exception to this. Its position can be studied, the structures that produced it can be understood.

When Polonius questioned the truthfulness of Hamlet's madness, he did so by stating that there was a method in it. For if such is the case, how can it truly be madness? Concerning the border-mad: if there is a method in their madness, then we have at least partially uncovered it here. And that, perhaps, might provide the greatest answer of all. So when we think of McMurphy in the clinic, of Phaedrus, strapped onto an operating table with electrodes fastened to his head, of Kurtz, menacing through the jungle, and of all those invisible subjects that mirror them in the world surrounding us, we should not think of them as 'madmen' in our midst. For they are nothing more than our own reflection, freely shown on a mirror untouched by the dust of discourse and power. They are not the 'insane,' but

the lost and the free, roaming the borders of our system, and he who looks them in the eye is allowed to see the true nature of both.

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