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FARKLI ENGELLİ BEDENİN DİSİPLİNE EDİLMESİ: *OUT OF MY MIND*'İN FOUCAULTCU BİR OKUMASI *

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ÖZ

ABSTRACT

Çocuklar üzerinde derin etkiler bırakan çocuk edebiyatı, hâkim olan kültürel normları yansıtarak engellilikle ilgili algıları yapılandırmada önemli bir rol oynar. Çağdaş edebiyat engelli kahramanların merkezde olduğu anlatılar yoluyla toplumsal algıların normal kabul etmediği bedenleri temsil ederek toplumsal yapıları sorgular. Engelli bireyin anlatı protezi olarak kullanılmadığı ve kendi varlığını görünür kıldığı Sharon M. Draper tarafından kaleme alınan *Out of My Mind* romanı engellilik hakkında eleştirel bir inceleme sunar. Bu roman engelli bireyleri kimlik, güç, bilgi gibi karmaşık kesişimsel dinamikler çerçevesinde ele alarak toplumsal algıların onları yönetmedeki gücüne odaklanır. Romanın başkahramanı beyin felci hastalığından dolayı konuşamayan tekerlekli sandalyeye mahkûm olan küçük bir kız çocuğu Melody'dir. Bedenindeki noksanlıktan dolayı onun zekâsı tıbbi ve eğitsel söylemlerin klişeleşmiş algıları tarafından tanınmaz. Draper'in anlatımı Melody'nin tıbbi ve eğitim kurumlarında eksikliğini ön plana çıkaran yaşam deneyimlerini dramatize ederek okuyucuyla empatik bir bağ oluşturur. Ableist tutumların normallliği belirlediği ve şekillendirdiği toplumda Melody normal olarak kabul görmeyerek sürekli gözetilen ve kontrol edilen bir nesne olarak göze çarpar. Melody'nin bu durumu Foucault'nun iktidarın bireyleri nasıl gözetim altında tutarak uysallaştırdığını çağırıştırır. Foucault'nun görüşlerinden yola çıkılarak hazırlanan bu çalışma, iktidarın engelli bedenleri nasıl uysallaştırdığını ortaya koyarak, çocuk edebiyatında engellilik üzerine yapılan çalışmaların eksikliğini gidermeye ve bu alana katkı sunmaya hedeflemektedir. Bu makale, Draper'ın *Out of My Mind* adlı romanını Michel Foucault'nun biyopolitika, gözetim, bakış ve normallik kavramları çerçevesinde analiz etmeyi amaçlamakta; bu bağlamda, engelli bedenlerin tıbbi ve eğitsel söylemler aracılığıyla nasıl tanımlandığını ve çeşitli düzenleyici mekanizmalar yoluyla nasıl uysal bedenlere dönüştürüldüğünü tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Engellilik, Foucault, Söylem, Biyopolitika, Normalleştirme

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DISCIPLINING THE DIFFERENT DISABLED BODY: A FOUCAULDIAN READING OF *OUT OF MY MIND**

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ABSTRACT

Children's literature, which has a deep impact on children, plays an important role in structuring perceptions about disability by reflecting the dominant cultural norms. Contemporary literature questions social structures by representing bodies that are not accepted as normal by social perceptions through narratives in which disabled heroes are at the centre. The novel *Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper, in which the disabled individual is not used as a narrative prosthesis and makes her own existence visible, offers a critical examination of disability. This novel focuses on the power of social perceptions to manage disabled people by addressing them within the framework of complex intersectional dynamics such as identity, power, and knowledge. The protagonist of the novel is Melody, a wheelchair-bound little girl who cannot speak due to cerebral palsy. Due to the deficiency in her body, her intelligence is not recognized by the stereotypical perceptions of medical and educational discourses. Draper's narrative creates an empathetic connection with the reader by dramatizing Melody's life experiences that foreground her deficiency in medical and educational institutions. In a society where ableist attitudes determine and shape normality, Melody is not accepted as normal and stands out as an object of constant surveillance and control. Melody's situation recalls Foucault's idea of how power keeps individuals under surveillance and makes them docile. Based on Foucault's views, this study seeks to reveal how power disciplines disabled bodies, thereby addressing the lack of research on disability in children's literature and contributing to this field. This article aims to analyse Draper's novel *Out of My Mind* within the framework of Michel Foucault's concepts of biopolitics, surveillance, gaze and normality; in this context, it discusses how disabled bodies are defined through medical and educational discourses and how they are transformed into docile bodies through various regulatory mechanisms.

Keywords: Disability, Foucault, Discourse, Biopolitics, Normalization

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1. INTRODUCTION

As an interdisciplinary field, disability studies examines the political, social, and cultural aspects of disability. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson notes that disability studies is a new field of study in the academic world called Critical Disability Studies or Interdisciplinary Disability Studies (Emory University, 2013). Since the traditional medical model of disability accepts disability as a medical problem that needs to be corrected and defines it as a personal tragedy, disability studies is not limited to the traditional medical model. According to disability studies, disability is a social construct shaped by physical environments, social policies, and cultural attitudes. Disability “is not a physical or mental defect but a cultural” phenomenon (Siebers, 2008, p. 4). Disability studies emphasize the importance of issues such as disability rights, social interaction, and accessibility.

Theorizing the work that results from acknowledging the diversity of other cultures is the goal of disability studies. Additionally, it seeks to comprehend disability as a sociological development, a human rights concern, a minority identity, and a category of critical study in art and culture (Bakır & Aldemir, 2024). Disability studies, which develops in line with these aims, argues that disability is constructed around intersecting identities such as race, gender, sex, ethnicity, and class. It claims that these intersecting identities shape the experiences of people with disabilities and constitute personality. Disability theory promoting social justice and equality, aims to oppose ableism, that is, systematic discrimination against people with disabilities.

Disability theory that opposes systematic discrimination, reflects this to society through different fields of study. Literature and other cultural forms offer a field of study by reflecting society's understanding of disability through various literary works and exploring ways to shape disability studies. By highlighting the social and cultural factors that lead to the marginalization and exclusion of people with disabilities, disability criticism analyses literary texts and challenges the traditional understanding of disability. As Alice Hall points out, reading and analysing cultural texts from a disability studies perspective is a way of disrupting assumptions. These critical readings can be productive, but the fictional texts analysed can sometimes be restrictive, even if they contain many fictional texts (2016, p. 33). To make disability representation in literature more inclusive, portrayals of disability must change appropriately. Whilst the metaphor of disability is present in a variety of artistic works, it is predominantly employed to provide a supportive framework for the main character. The concept of ‘Narrative Prosthesis’ was coined by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder to describe the use of disability as a metaphor or plot device in literary and film narratives. The purpose of this use is to enhance character development or storyline (2003, p. 49). Disability is portrayed to promote notions of normalcy rather than for its own sake (Hall, 2016, p. 37). Therefore, literary narratives use disability as a crutch to further their agendas.

In contemporary disability narratives, literature reflects not only the social attitudes of society but also the “dominant ideologies” about the body and the norm. The reader can empathize with the struggles of the disabled protagonist of *Out of My Mind* as she undergoes inclusive education at school. Melody's experience demonstrates the way biopower controls and disciplines disabled people within institutions. This study questions the relationship of the disabled person in the novel with the control mechanisms within the scope of Foucault's theories of biopolitics, gaze, surveillance, and normalization. It discusses *Out of My Mind* within the framework of Foucault's theory on how biopolitical practices keep the body of the disabled individual under surveillance and control by determining normality and how they discipline it with appropriate regulations. In particular, Melody's position at school and her relationship with her peers will be examined to shed light on how literature reflects power dynamics. The novel *Out of My Mind* depicts how educational and healthcare institutions and biotechnological applications are portrayed through the disabled body of Melody.

In conducting a literature review for this study, which was planned with this objective in mind, it was also noted that there is a lack of research on the sociocultural dimension of disability theory in literature. This study identifies the social pressures specific to individuals with disabilities and focuses on the positive values these individuals can contribute to society. Furthermore, Sharon M. Draper's novel *Out of My Mind*, which treats disabled individual not as prostheses but as main character in contemporary children's literature, will undoubtedly contribute to the field when examined within the sociocultural context of disability theory.

2. FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF *OUT OF MY MIND*

2.1. Constructing the Docile Bodies in *Out of My Mind* through Institutions

In modern society, the population is tried to be controlled by regulating bodies. Modern states organize people's lives by designing and implementing policies to control medicine, health, population, and reproduction. Foucault draws attention to this order and evaluates biopower in two ways: The first way, which is the discipline of the body, aims to normalize individual bodies by training and disciplining them. In this way, individuals are empowered, but this power does not reduce their manageability. Managing is done through discipline hospitals, schools, prisons, and workshops. In the second way, which is the regulation of populations, biopower controls the

population through birth and death rates, health, and occupational capacities (Ojakangas, 2016, pp. 27-28). *Out of My Mind* bears traces of Foucault's discourse of power. In the novel, Melody's life, -limited by her disability- is regulated and controlled through medical and educational institutions as well as technology to docile her body.

Examined through the lens of Michel Foucault's ideas on institutions and biopolitics, *Out of My Mind* graphically illustrates how people who are different are subjugated. In addition to offering services to people, institutions, in Foucault's view, establish norms that influence behaviour and reinterpret what is considered 'normal' and 'deviant.' In this situation, the medical establishment maintains control over people by classifying them in the diagnosis and treatment procedures. Foucault's conception of the disciplinary institution is embodied in the novel by stigmatizing Melody as different, limiting her to a medical category, and ignoring her brilliance due to her disability. This circumstance demonstrates how various people are suppressed and shaped to conform to the 'normal'.

Melody's potential and limitations are determined in part by the medical authority. Melody states that she is constantly taken to the hospital due to her cerebral palsy with the following sentence: "I've seen dozens of doctors in my life, whom all try to analyse me and figure me out" (Draper, 2010, p. 18). Melody's constant hospitalization is a sign of her beginning the process of subjectification and the production of docile bodies. Foucault's discourse on biopower points to the weave in the plot. Modern society subjugates bodies through various mechanisms, through prisons, hospitals, and schools, through what Foucault calls "normalization, judgment, and scrutiny" (1995, p. 176). Foucault emphasizes the process of subjectification of the individual and states that biopower keeps him under control by making decisions that will affect his learning process, discourses, attitudes, and in short, his whole life (Foucault, 1980, p. 39). He emphasizes that "power transforms people into human subjects" (1982, p. 778). Garland-Thomson claims in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring physical disability in American culture* that the power prepares a health policy and controls individuals by categorizing them under the name of 'improvement'. He states that Foucault's "discourse, which classified the healthy body and the pathological body, focused on disciplining all bodies in the name of improvement" (1997, p. 39). The hospital objectifies individuals by medically classifying them as normal/abnormal or sick/healthy (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983, p. 5). In *Out of My Mind* biopolitics puts Melody into the desired mold with suitable treatment methods. The medical institutions keep Melody under close supervision to improve her physical condition. The hospital's system classifies her as having abnormal and pathological symptoms, diagnosing her with cerebral palsy. She receives tailored treatments to manage her condition effectively.

The medical authority has power over people's lives and bodies; its task is to objectify the individual. Similarly, the character in the novel is also objectified by the medical authority. The medical authority diagnoses Melody with polio, classifies her as sick and abnormal, and saves her file in the system. From now on, whenever her information is entered into the system in any hospital she visits, her personal information is seen before the doctor classifies the patient. Dr. Hugely, as a character in the novel, puts Melody through a test that is prepared in a very simple way and cannot fully measure human intelligence. Melody is diagnosed as severely mentally 'handicapped' due to brain damage (Draper, 2010, p. 24). Dr. Hugely asks Melody's mother and father to decide sending her 'special school for children with developmental disorders' or opting for 'homeschooling'. But he argues that there is no such school nearby, so the third option is a residential care home. The doctor thinks that Melody would be well cared a residential care home (Draper, 2010, p. 21). Dr. Hugely, representing the medical authority, makes decisions about the disabled individual and manages and controls her. Medicine is used as a biopolitical strategy to manage the body. As Foucault points out, not only political and economic control is effective in managing populations in capitalist societies, the management of the body is also active in biopolitical reality. Medical authority is not a neutral sphere, it is not only used to heal people; it is also used to manage institutions and societies (Mendieta, 2014, p. 37). Foucault (2009) underlines that the state creates a disciplinary society by regulating bodies, that is, individual behaviour (p. 107). In *Out of My Mind*, the state fosters a controlled society by managing individual conduct. Like Melody, all individuals are disciplined separately with the aim of disciplining the whole society.

Melody's cerebral palsy diagnosis influences the attitude of others towards her. Melody is categorized as sick rather than normal, incapable rather than capable, and dysfunctional rather than functional. As a result of the classification, the appropriate policy is determined by Dr Hugely, and Melody's body and life are shaped accordingly. The individual regulation of bodies, i.e. the lives of individuals, disciplines the whole society.

One of the institutions where biopower keeps bodies under control is the school. The school turns students into docile bodies by educating them with programs and curricula through a regular system. Students are categorized according to academic success, education, and disabilities. In *Out of My Mind*, the classification of students as disabled and non-disabled categories and their subsequent inclusive education result from biopolitical practices.

Melody gives her impressions of the school in different parts of the novel as follows: "I have been at Spaulding Street Elementary School for five years. It's very ordinary, filled with kids, just like the schools I see on television

shows" (Draper, 2010, p. 23). "But no, I kicked and shrieked and insisted on going to school" (Draper, 2010, p. 160). "I only knew I had to go to school...I kicked and cried out again, shaking my head. No, no, no! I didn't know why it was so important, but I knew I had to show up" (Draper, 2010, p. 161). "I was mad at Penny" (Draper, 2010, p. 165). Melody's willing attendance at Spaulding Street Primary School can be given as an example of her being kept under control and docilized by the strategies of biopower. In the novel, the fact that the government uses the school as a tool and keeps the student in school willingly reflects the basic assumptions of Foucault's theory of biopolitics. According to Foucault, regulatory ideals and norms provide internal control by regulating subjects. The body is docilised by indoctrinating it with inculcated habits and techniques rather than by direct imposition. The term 'imposition' recalls coercion against the will of the individual. Disciplinary power is a form of power that is not restricted or prohibited. Individuals create self-structuring practices. Individuals construct themselves not by coercion but by willingness and desire (Blackman, 2008, p. 25). Foucault explains how the individual is kept under control in prison to be made productive and docile as follows: "Procedures are prepared to distribute individuals [...] to classify them; to make maximum use of them in terms of time and power; to train their bodies; to keep them in perfect visibility; to create an apparatus of observation, and recording around them; to create a [...] centralized on them" (Foucault, 1995, p. 174). In the fictional universe, the submissive and productive experiences of Melody, a character with a disability, reflect the notion of docile bodies discussed by Foucault. A timetable is set at certain hours in the school space. It is understood from Melody's words that she obeys these hours: "I got to school on time every day" (Draper, 2010, p. 48). She goes to school in the morning, has lunch in the afternoon, and returns home in the evening. At school, students are categorized according to their age, education, academic achievement, and physical disabilities. Various schedules and curricula are prepared to increase the efficiency of the students and to make them useful and adaptable. The Special Education Class H-5 for students with disabilities is designed to increase the efficiency of Melody and her disabled friends. Students with impairments are introduced to what the school calls 'inclusive education' when they start Grade 5. The disabled class joins Mrs. Lovelace's music class (Draper, 2010, p. 62). The practice gradually expands, and students are taken to different classes as mainstreamed students (Draper, 2010, p. 64). As a biopolitical tool, inclusive education helps to control and standardize students' behaviour. A perfect and organized image is tried to be achieved.

Melody's life at school reflects Foucault's discourse as schools are substantial institutions where individuals are disciplined. As Foucault points out, individuals are controlled and subjugated to the system. Their transformation into docile bodies is not done through ritualistic accumulation of power or violence; however, it is done through pre-planned biopolitical techniques and strategies (1995, pp. 220-221). The dociling of bodies and increasing efficiency is done through different disciplines and practices such as normalizing judgment and examination, including the school (Foucault, 1995, p.170). In *Out of My Mind*, biopower controls Melody's body through school's pre-arranged methods and tactics. The taming and increasing the productivity of the Special Education Class H-5 are done by means of various techniques in the school. Individuals with disabilities are also disciplined and managed through 'inclusive education' at school.

Biopower uses biotechnological applications to keep populations under control at the social level by activating institutions such as hospitals and schools. Biotechnological devices such as battery-powered wheelchairs and speech devices (Medi-Talker) strengthen the social presence of disabled individuals and increase their productivity. Biopower completes disabled bodies with devices such as cordless wheelchairs and speech devices, organizing and controlling them.

In *Out of My Mind*, Melody receives a wheelchair that runs on batteries when she begins mainstreaming lessons at her school. She compares her old wheelchair with the new one with these lines: "Comparing my new chair to my old one is like comparing a Mercedes to a skateboard. The wheels are almost like car tires, which makes the ride smooth and easy, like riding on pillows" (Draper, 2010, p. 57). The battery-powered wheelchair is not very fast, but Melody can move herself back and forth thanks to the lever on the handle. She gains the ability to move independently, that is, she can now move without someone else pushing her. Melody travels to school on a 'special needs' bus equipped with a wheelchair-accessible elevator. An attendant assists her at the door, ensuring a smooth transition (Draper, 2010, p. 23). Melody goes to school alone even though she can't walk. The special needs bus becomes a biotechnological tool and integrates disabled bodies into society by making them productive. This event exemplifies Foucault's biopower in action. Proponents of Foucault's biopolitics claim that biotechnological applications increase human abilities and improve health problems (Lemke, 2011, p. 1). As illustrated in the novel, Melody's body becomes more functional, and her abilities increase through the battery-powered wheelchair.

Melody has trouble expressing her wants and needs verbally. The following lines indicate that she wanted to have a hamburger with her father one evening outside, but she could not tell her father about it: "I pointed to the picture of my dad, the word go, the word eat, and a happy face. That's all I had to work with" (Draper, 2010, pp. 54-55). Although her father asks a million questions, he cannot find out what Melody needs and desires. Melody's caregiver, Valancia, leaves a few limited words such as 'yes' and 'no' on Melody's speech board. Melody indicates

her needs by marking them. One day Valencia asks Melody: “If you had to choose, which would you rather be able to do—walk or talk?” Melody taps several times on the word ‘talk’ written on the speech board. “Talk, talk” (Draper, 2010, p. 33). According to her, there was so much to talk about... One day in the inclusive class, Miss Gordon gives the students a term paper. The assignment is to research and write a biography of a famous person (Draper, 2010, p. 44). Melody remembers Stephen Hawking, whom she accidentally watched in a documentary in the past and investigates his life. She is intrigued by his ability to communicate with a talking device. Melody and Catherine do a research on speech devices on the computer and find the Medi-Talker speech device that works only with the thumbs. Catherine prints out the Medi-Talker from the computer and gives it to Melody. As soon as Melody goes to her caregiver, she points to the printouts and hits the word ‘talk’, ‘mom’, and ‘dad’ on the speech board (Draper, 2010, p. 79). The speech device is very expensive. To obtain partial coverage for the device, Melody’s mother contacts the insurance company, gets a prescription from the doctor, and keeps meticulous records of their financial situation (Draper, 2010, p. 80). Following the completion of the processes, the speech device is delivered. Thanks to the speech device, Melody makes her voice heard, expresses her feelings, and expresses her needs so she is recognized and enters areas where she will be excluded. This event in the novel exemplifies, as Foucault contends, the introduction of phenomena specific to “human life into the sphere of political techniques”, in the order of power and knowledge, through biopolitics (1980, pp.141-142). Biopolitics uses new technologies and methods to make politics rule life. As witnessed in the work, Melody, who is disabled, can get the speech device she needs after a procedure. Biopolitics practices and public health efforts are aimed at increasing social welfare (Lemke, 2011, p.1). In parallel to these biopolitics practices, meeting the needs of disabled individuals like Melody also serves social welfare. The disabled body becomes functional thanks to the technological device. Similarly, Melody resists marginalization thanks to the speech apparatus as a tool of biopower.

Technologies that require subjugation increase productivity by disciplining people without coercion and violence. Norms are internalized, improvements are made, and the efficiency of bodies is increased. Devices such as a battery-powered wheelchair and a speech device make Melody more functional. The disabled bodies like Melody are integrated into society, increasing their sociability and thus resisting marginalization.

2.2. The Perception of Gaze and Surveillance in *Out of My Mind*

Biopower uses surveillance and gaze as a tool rather than violence and repression to control people and their bodies. The gaze is a metaphor that activates the mechanism of surveillance. It creates a sense of surveillance and control in institutions such as hospitals and schools, thereby making the individual docile. In addition to the feeling of surveillance, the gaze is a tool that reminds the disabled person of his/her disability. The gaze that gives a sense of surveillance has different functions. The urge to understand what is odd is what drives individuals to stare at those with disabilities (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 3), and ignoring them is equivalent to denying their existence. In *Out of My Mind*, Melody is under surveillance and gaze not just at school or the hospital, but in every aspect of her life.

The disabled protagonist is constantly observed by hospital staff, doctors, nurses, and other personnel. Melody, who is taken to the doctor at certain intervals, is under constant surveillance with tests and examinations too. She is taken to the hospital where Dr. Hugely, who “can tell what [her] intelligence level [is]”, works so that Melody can start school. Instead of focusing on Melody’s cognitive capacity, the doctor prioritizes her physical disability. According to the doctor, a person with cerebral palsy is severely mentally handicapped. When Melody’s mother challenges his diagnosis, Dr. Hugely responds: “It takes time to accept the limitations of a beloved child. She has cerebral palsy, Mrs. Brooks.” (Draper, 2010, p. 20). He reminds Melody’s mother about Melody’s hospital diagnosis. Because Melody is always being taken to the doctor, all diagnoses and tests are recorded in the system, so her body is under surveillance. Her body is considered a pathological case and is constantly examined. As Foucault emphasizes, the birthplace of the gaze is the modern medical institution. The doctor looks, that is, observes and tells in the modern clinic (2003a, p. vii). The hospital is where Melody’s disability identity is formed and defined. The identity of disability is deviant from the norm, lower in the social hierarchy. Since disability is perceived as lower physically, it is also considered lower cognitively. According to the norms, a severely physically disabled person is a severely mentally disabled person. Through the gaze that marks her as other, Melody is defined and stigmatized as disabled. Dr. Hugely diagnoses Melody as mentally disabled without a very detailed examination.

Dr. Hugely gives Melody’s family the choice to put her in a residential facility after determining that she has an intellectual disability. Melody gave her mother a desperate glance when she heard Dr. Hugely’s advice. Melody expresses her helplessness and vulnerability with these words: “Maybe it would be easier for them if I weren’t around. I gulped” (Draper, 2010, p. 21). The doctor’s explanation leaves Melody feeling insecure and vulnerable. However, Melody is not mentally disabled, she feels vulnerable and hurt by the doctor’s diagnosis and explanation. Carroll J. Gill’s discourse sheds light on this issue and emphasizes the negative effects of medical classification.

As Gill suggests, most people with disabilities think that they are vulnerable in medical settings. A medical classification that emphasizes deficiency and abnormality permeates the life of the disabled person. Doctors and other medical professionals have the primary authority over public policies that impact the lives of those with disabilities. They recognize issues, foresee possibilities, and take action (2006, p. 183). In the novel, Dr. Hugely diagnoses mental disability and thinks that the residential facility is an appropriate solution for Melody. Dr. Hugely is Melody's principal authority in her life, diagnosing her disease and making appropriate judgments. Melody is susceptible in medical settings since she must obey the doctor's decision.

School is also an environment where students' movements are constantly monitored like a panopticon. Students' academic performance is constantly monitored and evaluated. In addition to physical surveillance, students are also monitored through evaluation mechanisms. Students are checked for attendance and their academic success is monitored through written exams and quizzes. Melody attends school consistently and studies regularly. As Foucault emphasizes, the school keeps people under surveillance without being seen (2019, p. 295). In *Out of My Mind*, Melody's success is closely monitored, especially during the final competition elimination process. Mr. Dimming, who is following the process, observes that Melody's success increases as she studies. Mr. Dimming underlines that "The only person in the class who got every single question correct is . . . Melody Brooks." (Draper, 2010, p. 92). Melody feels that she is under constant surveillance internalizes the process and becomes her overseer. Biopower disciplines and subjugates Melody through the invisible panopticon system in the school.

As Melody is being fed, onlookers glance at her due to some food spilling. Melody doesn't mind strangers when she is being fed, but she cares a lot about how her classmates behave. Melody expresses her hesitation and shyness while eating with her peers with these lines: "Nobody on the team had ever really seen me eat... Mom picked up the spoon and looked at me with the question on her face... Very carefully, she placed a spoonful of pasta in my mouth swallowed. I saw Molly poke Claire, and they exchanged looks" (Draper, 2010, pp. 140-141). Melody is uncomfortable with the stares of her peers and decides to take her food home unfinished. Melody feels that she is being watched. This event in the novel coincides with Foucault's view of surveillance. As Foucault remarks, when an individual feels watched, she internalizes the gaze and becomes her watcher (1980, p. 155). The process of internalization, which is psychological, changes the way one perceives oneself and one's behaviour. As soon as Melody notices the stares from her friends and changes her behaviour. She stops eating during the meal and decides to take the leftovers home to eat later.

On the day of Melody and her family's visit to the aquarium, the crowds are particularly dense due to the holiday. Melody is overjoyed since no one disturbs her with their stares. She expresses her satisfaction with the following lines: "The place is crowded—I guess because it's a holiday weekend. Nobody pays any attention to me, which is perfect. I can almost forget who I am" (Draper, 2010, p. 72). Melody's explanations show how uncomfortable the gaze is for the individual and how happy the disabled person is that her disability is not noticed. The gaze reminds Melody of her disability. As Melody and her friends with disabilities, namely the H-5 special education class, enter the music class for inclusive education, they encounter the gazes and smiles of normal students. Melody describes that moment in the following lines: "One girl in the back row crossed her arms across her chest and scowled at her classmates who were acting up" (Draper, 2010, p. 58). The whole class looks at students with disabilities. The gaze reminds them of disability and recalls the low value in disability. This event in the novel can be evaluated in the light of Hughes' discourse of low value. According to him, disability is a pathological case so disability both enables the formation of an identity and at the same time creates impairment that is against biological laws (Hughes, 2005, p. 82). In the novel, the bodies of Melody and her friends do not comply with biological laws and are incomplete and defective. The way people look at them and laugh at their disabilities reminds them of their low place in the social hierarchy.

In *Out of My Mind*, Melody is aware that she is being stared at so she cannot drink water or eat like normal people. Melody describes the way people around her look at her when she is given a drink as follows: "Mom pours dribbles of the ice-cold coke into my mouth, one sip at a time, making sure I don't spill on my shirt. I am so thirsty, I don't even care that people from the other teams are staring at me" (Draper, 2010, p. 128). Melody faces the same situation not only when being made to drink but also when being fed. As she is being fed outdoors, Melody conveys her awareness of the gazes directed at her with these lines: "Mom and Dad take turns spooning food into my mouth and I ignore anyone rude enough to stare" (Draper, 2010, p.140). People stare at Melody with curious eyes. She is not the only one who is exposed to stares; her other friends with disabilities also suffer the same fate. Melody expresses the situation faced by inclusion students with disabilities when they enter the music class as follows: "All of the 'normal' children in the music class turned to stare" (Draper, 2010, p. 58). People with disabilities frequently feel different from the norm because of stares and gazes. The situation that Melody and her friends are frequently exposed to can be considered within the framework of gaze theory. As Garland-Thomson emphasizes, gazers look because they are curious, they look to know more, and they look to know what seems strange (2009, p. 3). The unusual disabled body attracts the gaze. As William Ian Miller points out, the difference disrupts the normally functioning social order (1997, p. 82). Staring at the abnormal is a discriminatory and exclusionary

attitude (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 46). This action violates social behaviour that's why mothers warn their children not to stare at people with disabilities. Sheryl Eberly recommends that parents should help their children reflect on the commonalities they share with people with disabilities, thus facilitating a more effective relationship. In the case of very young children, their first reaction to meeting someone with a disability may be to stare or to ask about the disability (2001, p. 319). Because the unusual appearance disrupts expectations and perceptions, it forces the children to stare. In *Out of My Mind*, the stares directed at Melody and her disabled peers stem from curiosity—a desire to comprehend their stories and make sense of perceived differences. Their bodies do not comply with societal norms, so their differences draw stares. The onlookers wonder whether Melody and her friends were born disabled or were victims of an accident.

Individuals with disabilities experience moments of being looked at and moments of being overlooked. Upon the entrance of Melody and her disabled peers into the music class, some of the students look at them and laugh, while others avert their gaze (Draper, 2010, p. 58). As Melody rolls into Miss Gordon's class, she asserts that "as usual, nobody looks up me" (Draper, 2010, p. 86). The students in the class see Melody but ignore her. This element aligns with Murphy's theoretical stance on social invisibility. Murphy, like Melody in the novel, is a wheelchair-bound individual in real life. Murphy claims that when he enters an environment in a wheelchair, he is "ignored as if surrounded by a circle of pollution" (Murphy, 1990, p. 91). Able-bodied people look away because they want to distance themselves from the disabled individual. In *Out of My Mind*, Melody is not seen because of her wheelchair and as Murphy points out, it is impossible to hide the wheelchair. When the able-bodied students in the class see the disabled Melody, they turn away, ignoring her existence and denying any acquaintance with her. Able-bodied students in the class turn their faces away from the disabled students to avoid communicating with them. Looking away also carries the meaning of passive exclusion.

People with disabilities are constantly monitored by the gaze and reminded of their differences. The gaze determines the norms against normality and excludes them from these norms. The panopticon-style surveillance model in the hospital, school, and restaurant makes Melody feel that she is being watched and regulates her behaviour accordingly. The gaze shapes her identity by affecting her perception of herself. Staring at Melody and her disabled friends may be meant as an attempt to learn their stories but ignoring them is a denial of their existence.

2.3. Forces of Normalization in *Out of My Mind*

The normalization also plays an important role in the docilization process. The Enlightenment produced scientific categories designed to systematize the study of nature and society and gave rise to hierarchical classifications of physical differences. Initially regarded as a 'freakshow', physical differences gradually become the focus of medical scrutiny. Bodies that had previously been exhibited as 'abnormal' or 'freak' began to be treated as 'problems' or 'diseases' in medicine. By making hierarchical physical categorizations in the nineteenth century, scientists "eventually transformed God's great chain of being into Darwin's and created the 'idea of the norm' that Foucault calls the construction of modern society" (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 77). Bodies that do not conform to the norms of society are examined as 'pathological cases' in medical institutions and removed from public visibility (1997, p. 78). Melody, a disabled person, is seen as subjectivized in *Out of My Mind*, and the idea of normalcy that is created can be evaluated in the context of Foucauldian discourse theory.

In *Out of My Mind*, after Melody and her team win the first competition, the journalist focuses on her, takes her photo, and describes her through the following expression: "One outstanding member of the Spaulding team is Melody Brooks, an eleven-year-old who has been diagnosed with cerebral palsy" (Draper, 2010, p. 143). The journalist foregrounds Melody's identity with a diagnosed illness. Dr. Hugely also claims that Melody "has cerebral palsy" (Draper, 2010, p. 20), indicating that the diagnosis was made in the hospital long before. The diagnosis of the disease is made through the combination of power and knowledge. Melody suffers from a disease unique to her within the framework of the narrative. This child, who is expected to be mentally handicapped, does not have any cognitive problems. Being identified by the disease gives Melody an identity and allows her to join the subjectification process. Since Melody is constantly monitored in hospitals, her unique characteristics are recorded. She is not normal and deviates from the norm. Melody's characteristics are identified by modern knowledge. The disease is diagnosed, and Melody is classified, treated, and kept under control with appropriate tactics and strategies through modern knowledge which has an important position in this process. The process in the novel has parallels with the process Foucault draws attention to in his studies. Jürgen Habermas asserts that modern forms of knowledge (epistemes) function as the foundational conceptual components of scientific thought (Foucault, 2002, p. i). Foucault's aim is not to clearly understand the development of science towards objective truth; it is to reveal the basic structures and conditions that make forms of knowledge possible within the framework of the concept of 'episteme' or 'epistemological field' (Foucault, 2002, p. xxviii). According to him, it is necessary to focus on what was accepted as knowledge in that period by investigating the knowledge structures and rules of each period. It is necessary to work on the history of knowledge as an archaeological field (Foucault, 2002, p. xxiv). Over time, power dynamics structure knowledge and determine the actions of the individual in line

with tactics. Tactics is a type of technique that uses bodies and individuals for the distribution of time and labor (Foucault, 2002, p. 72). Tactics are associated with discourses that define what is considered normal or abnormal, and what is deemed right or wrong. According to Foucault, governmentality is shaped through tactics, institutions, calculations, reflections, analyses, and procedures (2009, p. 108). Power and information dynamics categorize populations and identify those who are unfit, those who are diseased, and those who are threatening. By managing unhealthy groups marginalized by internal racism through various tactics, the medical institution scans individuals in society to determine whether they are carriers of the disease (Foucault, 2003b, p. 316). Power disciplines the sick individual by wielding knowledge. The individual must have an identity and be recognized as a subject so that discipline can be maintained (Foucault, 2006, pp. 54-55). The sick individual is constantly monitored, and his/her characteristics are recorded. The individual is perceived as 'unique' and 'singular' with his/her characteristics. Foucault focuses on the individual's unique bodily qualities and characteristics with the concept of somatic singularity (2006, pp. 54-55). The individual becomes the focal point of power and control with these characteristics. Individuals with disabilities can be included in this group as they deviate from the norm. The disabled individual becomes an emphasized element in power and information dynamics.

In *Out of My Mind*, the norm of disability is constructed by biopower. Children are categorized as disabled bodies and non-disabled bodies. Disabled bodies are subjected to a different education called 'special program'. This education is much simpler than the education of normal children, a program that aims to teach them to read and write. Melody describes the special program with subsequent lines: "We never seem to move up and on like other classes. We just do what we did the year before, but with a new teacher. We don't even get a new classroom each year" (Draper, 2010, p. 24). It is seen that the system determines and defines disabled individuals according to a norm and separates them from the non-disabled body. In social norms, the non-disabled individual is the normal one and the normal one is the ideal one. The narrative's emphasis on normality is consistent with Lennard J. Davis' concept of the normate. Davis claims that the way normality is constructed according to the ideal is problematic (1995, p. 23). Normality should not be constructed according to the ideal norm. In *Out of My Mind*, the educational system is based on normative standards, which prioritize able-bodied persons. It is clear that the education provided for disabled students is dysfunctional. It is problematic that education is organized according to healthy students and that disabled students like Melody are not taken seriously.

Foucault's conception of the norm can be used to assess how the concept of norm is used in the novel's context. He contends that the emergence, legitimization, production, and dissemination of contemporary power are all significantly influenced by the norm. Normalization techniques make individual bodies and populations conform to certain social norms. This is the current form of power/knowledge that through a planned effort, comprehensively governs the life problems of individuals and societies. Power organizes life in proportion to value and usefulness by constantly requiring a set of mechanisms. It qualifies, measures, hierarchizes, and makes arrangements within the framework of norms (1978, p. 140). As Foucault emphasizes, human beings are objectified through 'divisive practices' created by the implementation of norms. The subject is divided within itself or objectified by being divided from others, such as healthy and sick, disabled and mentally intelligent (2016, p.58). The objectification of disabled and normal bodies by separating can also be given as an instance of divisive practices. Examples of the division Foucault described are also shown in the novel including the H-5 class practice's classification of normal and impaired bodies into distinct classes which illustrates subjectification. Foucault explains the subject as follows: "The word subject has two meanings: The subject who is subject to another through control and dependence, and the subject who is bound to his own identity through conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings of the word suggest a form of power that subjugates and subordinates" (2016, p. 63). According to Foucault, in the process of subjectification of the individual, the individual is classified, individualized, and defined around an identity. Through the public network (police, industry, education, medical, and psychiatric institutions (1995, p. 140), every level of society is managed by creating a judicial standard of normalization (1995, p. 295). Thus, a law of truth is imposed, and the individual organizes his/her daily life within that framework (Foucault, 2016, p. 63). In the gradual process of classification and management, the organism is classified and managed by considering power, energy, desires, and thoughts (Foucault, 1980, p. 97). Thus, the categorized individual can be reached more easily.

In *Out of My Mind*, disabled individuals are managed similarly. The formation, legitimization, and transmission of contemporary power are inextricably linked with normalization, which shapes and disciplines Melody and her disabled peers' bodies, forcing them to conform to conventional standards. This type of power/knowledge operates through systemic processes that dominate the lives of disabled people, structuring Melody's existence around hierarchies of worth and utility. By qualifying, measuring, and categorizing bodies under normative frameworks, authority reinforces dividing procedures that objectify Melody both by fragmenting her sense of self and isolating her from others deemed 'normal'. These distinctions are sharply depicted in the novel, particularly in the H-5 class's separation of impaired and non-impaired children. Melody, as a subject of biopower, lives in a position of controlled reliance, tethered to her crippled identity by internalized norms and institutional conditioning. Her subjectification occurs through processes of classification and individualization, as educational, medical, and

psychiatric institutions enforce normative standards that govern her everyday life. These institutions create a regime of truth to which Melody unconsciously clings, shaping her actions and self-perception within its boundaries. Similarly, the other H-5 pupils are governed through examinations of their physiological and behavioural features, with their identities firmly shaped by the label of impairment. Normalization thus serves as a control tool, supporting biopolitical governance by making bodies legible, manipulable, and hierarchically organized. Power practices also include ways of normalization (Tremain, 2005, p. 8). Power functions through normalization, using it to govern and subjugate disabled people within the novel's oppressive social structure.

In *Out of My Mind*, when Penny is hospitalized, Melody feels guilt and worthlessness and articulates her emotions as follows: "It should have been me Nobody would miss me." (Draper, 2010, p. 165). Melody's feelings of worthlessness in the novel can be analysed in the context of Linton's theory of worthlessness. Linton claims that ambiguity arises in abstract comparisons of 'normal' and 'abnormal'. She remarks that while normal is an abstract concept, disability is concretized by the words 'visually impaired' or 'hearing impaired'. Thus, determining norms of normalization leads to duality which results in a division like 'us and them' by diminishing the worth of disabled children (Linton, 1998, p. 30). Melody's desire for the traffic accident that befell her non-disabled sister to have occurred to her illustrates her perception of a divide between 'us and them' and highlights her feelings of worthlessness. Melody wants to be included in the normal side of the classification. She explains "I want to be like other kids... [I want to be] normal" (Draper, 2010, p. 166). Melody wishes to be placed in the opposite category of the normal/abnormal pathological classification, as she feels that the definition of disability devalues her. In the plot, the feeling of worthlessness of being in the abnormal category draws attention. Garland-Thomson contends that rather than being different, the idea of the 'norm' which Foucault saw as developing in the eighteenth century, describes bodies with the distinctions we refer to as impairments as deviant. Therefore, although people have always been drawn to 'monstrous' or remarkable bodies, the modern mind's normal/abnormal dichotomy restricts the explanation of differences to pathology. While explanations like divine punishment or moral corruption have been superseded by the concept of abnormality as an interpretive framework for physical impairment, the normal/abnormal dichotomy devalues disability instead of defining it according to its criteria. Additionally, the term 'disabled person' is oxymoronic since it discredits the dominant personality that the person expresses (1997, p. 114). In the novel the disabled Melody is already impaired so she cannot be strong, and unhindered.

Every individual is expected to comply with certain standards of behaviour and professional norms. Different procedures are implemented in everyday life designed to ensure normality. Determine appropriate correction and rehabilitation methods to normalize disabled bodies. They make it possible to measure differences between individuals and to make transparent the distinctions that these differences are alleged to mark. Normalizing judgments simultaneously impose homogeneity on the social group (Sullivan, 2005, p. 29). Health policies are prepared by the government to cure groups that do not meet the standards of normality. Thus modern societies are categorized through norms, defining normal and deviant norms. Minds and bodies are defined, and standards are created. The reflections of Foucault's discourse are visible through the placement of Melody in a special education class in *Out of My Mind*. Disabled bodies that cannot be normative are identified and separated from the normal, subjectivized. Minds and bodies are defined, and standards are created. Society is organized through norms and disabled individuals are controlled and disciplined.

3. CONCLUSION

To sum up, this study uses Foucault's discursive theories of biopolitics, surveillance, gaze and normalcy to investigate the social status of disabled people. It provides a convincing framework for comprehending the intricate problem in this way. All aspects of society are affected by the idea of biopolitics, which decides whose lives are 'worthy of existence' and how the bodies of the people should be categorized and controlled by state agencies like health and education departments. Due to her physical limitations and speech impediments, Melody is classified as 'abnormal' and is therefore prohibited from receiving a regular education. Considering Foucault's idea of the 'surveillance,' Melody is always being watched and categorized by her classmates and the people in her society. Melody's capabilities are constrained by the surveillance which is a physical observation and a practice of power. One of the novel's main themes, the idea of monitoring, is essential to Melody's actions' ongoing repression, shaping, and control. Social assumptions shape the idea of normalcy, and those who don't fit the mold like people with disabilities are categorized and assimilated into society through specific initiatives. Foucault's concept of a 'docile body' is referenced in the attempt to regulate and conform disabled bodies to social norms. The application of disciplinary processes is crucial to the compliance and effectiveness of these entities in modern society. Due to her incapacity to express her ideas and emotions clearly, Melody is susceptible to external constraints that dictate her behaviour, preventing her potential from being realized. The disabled body that has been suppressed becomes docile and obedient. By allowing Melody to express her inner voice to her environment, Draper's use of the Medi-Talker empowers her to question accepted conventions. Children's literature's cultural dynamics are both reflected and rejected in *Out of My Mind*.

This article contributes to disability studies and children's literature by analysing the novel *Out of My Mind* through a Foucauldian perspective. On the one hand, the study sheds light on the monitoring and disciplining of a disabled body, while on the other hand, it questions society's stereotypical thinking. The findings of this article reveals that how literature questions oppressive structures and uncovers the transformative power of society by adapting Foucault's theories to disability studies. Draper's novel focuses on Melody, reflecting society like a mirror and revealing the workings of disciplinary power. Through the disabled character in *Out of My Mind*, readers are invited to question normative values. The article reveals Melody's reinterpretation and acceptance of her disabled body while questioning society through the Medi-Talker. Children cannot hide their thoughts, especially about individuals with disabilities, and they reflect these thoughts directly to those around them. For this reason, the contribution of children's literature narratives to disability studies is emerging as a promising area for further studies. Future researches should examine how biopower subjugates disabled bodies in children and youth literature and how resistance is organized against it.

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ÇALIŞMANIN ETİK İZNİ

Yapılan bu çalışmada “Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi” kapsamında uyulması belirtilen tüm kurallara uyulmuştur. Yönergenin ikinci bölümü olan “Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine Aykırı Eylemler” başlığı altında belirtilen eylemlerden hiçbiri gerçekleştirilmemiştir.

Bu çalışmada etik kurul izni gerektiren herhangi bir veri toplama süreci mevcut değildir.

Bu araştırma, etik kurul onayı gerektirmeyen bir çalışma olup *Out of My Mind* romanı literatür taraması ışığında vaka çalışması olarak ele alınıp incelenmiştir.

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