

Power Dynamics Through Institutions: Red Birds Perspective

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Abstract

The idea of institutionalizing power and knowledge will be explored in Muhammad Hanif's well-known novel "Red Birds". It will discuss the adverse use of knowledge and power through different means of institutions and the absurdist nature of the unending war within the incredible dreams of world peace. Michel Foucault's views about the spirit of knowledge and power and its opponent make the best structure for weighing the power through different social theorists' viewpoints and other social institutes. The techniques of institutionalization are the ways of launching rules in any organization. Its primary focus lies on the relationship between knowledge and power and its implementation within society. A Foucauldian discourse analysis theory (FDA) emphasizes power structures. It explores how our discourses and knowledge influence power dynamics and its amplification by different institutions through an individual's interaction in society. Many functions in society have power and provide means to live under the shadow of war and the rule of powerful forces. Considering the given thinking processes, this paper will explore Foucault's Discursive Enquiry in Muhammad Hanif's novel Red Bird. It will explore the absurd use of power by different institutions and forces in the Middle East.

Keywords: Foucault, Institutionalization, Discourse, Knowledge, Society, Hanif, Forces.

Introduction

The pursuit of power is intrinsic in human beings. Wars between countries and violation of their territories are merely in search of control over others. To examine power structures and knowledge relation is related to the present script. In every place, some inhabitants endeavor to win control of others by authority or cautious strategic actions. The decisive goal of each institution and association is not to improve the condition of people but to subjugate them through acts of control and subdue them with their sanction. They use subordinate technologies, including religion, power, knowledge, discourse, and even the magical charm of love. Authoritative people use different techniques to overcome their inferiority. Identifying the inability to hide the objectives behind this triumph is based on a strategy of power management. Where there is power, there is resistance. In this way, the investigation focused on how power relations operate implicitly and are subordinate to human life in many directions through institutions. This study aims to examine and analyze Hanif's *Red Birds* (2018) chiefly based on the idea of the Foucauldian relationship between power/knowledge. It is an effort to explore the power connections and social structures and how they relate in knowledge, discourse, group of people, and dominant class over lower class.

The present script focuses on giving an account of circumstances, events, and people, with topics in the speculative light of power/knowledge proposed by Foucault. Dina Nayeri (2018) says about the selected work that; "*Red Birds* is penetrating, cruel criticism of war and US role in the desolation of the Middle East. It unites advanced and antique comical practices in

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exciting ways". Hanif is the prominent author of the favorably widely celebrated book *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008). It, as well as *Red Birds*, highlights the influence of the United States in Pakistan's political, economic, and moral corruption of the Pakistani armed forces government and the woeful working situations of the oppressed working class. *Red Birds* (2018) is set in an unnamed desert region, "a war-torn, devastated half-forgotten place" (Hanif in an interview). Each chapter is voiced in turns by an American, Ellie, a dog named Mutt, and a teenage boy named Momo, an artful survivor of the war.

After the devastation and destruction of the assigned areas, they now assist them by giving them rations to wrap their sympathies. 'On the other side of the refugee camp is a slick, mysterious ghost town called The Hanger. From here, foreigners used to run local war operations but have recently abandoned it' (Hanif, 2018, p.9). The power distribution of government in society is not only institutionalized, but it belongs to an organizational framework that affects the competition concerned with political actors and tries to protect the concept of certain freedoms. Therefore, the institutionalization procedure is a human-specific activity that establishes, adjusts, and alters rules and course of action in the social domains. It influences the interaction of persons, organizations, and political entities such as countries. This difference between individuals and communal actors is significant since the way rules and regulations are advanced and how they operate later differs for each area.

Imperialism is the bureaucratic policy, exercise, or endorsement to expand power and dominion, specifically to supervise territories or about politics and economic rule over other areas. This study will explore the absurdity of never-ending war, US strategies of imperialization in the Middle East, and impossible dreams of World Peace concerning power relations under the framework of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) in Mohammed Hanif's fictional work *Red Birds* (2018). This research will examine the death-haunted scenes and suffocating environment for the minorities and the liberals. The researcher uses Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) Theory with the concept of Foucault to explore the function of power, identity, discourse, and knowledge. Michel Foucault describes that "power determines the course of knowledge" (Foucault, 1980). With this thought, this research intends to explore the versions of socially constructed realities, particularly through different aspects of power. Every belief is constructed and relative because it varies from person to person and community to community. A significant faction of the society holds absolute power, and Lord Acton presents his views, 'power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely' (Acton, 1887).

This major faction of society determines the course of living for minorities and further marginalizes them. Then, they are left to suffer like Momo's family presented in Hanif's novel *Red Birds*. The aim of the study is primarily centered on the subject of power constructed, discourse, and knowledge. In-depth, it studies the working of power and knowledge. Power and knowledge shape ideology, which ultimately works with ruling class ideas. As a result, it creates a suffocating environment for minorities and liberals. The sufferings of these people are unearned. It is the annihilation of fundamental human rights, on which compromise cannot be made. This study condemns such anti-human activities and raises the voices of affected people.

Literature Review

This chapter is concerned with reviewing the literature in the field of ideology and power relations with the particular thoughts of the French Philosopher Michel Foucault. This section aims to review the literature in the same field and its broader spectrum. This spectrum includes Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA), discourse, ideology, religion, social structure as state apparatus, and ideology and power relations. Power determines the course of knowledge, and through cultural apparatus, it strictly shapes identity, reality, consciousness, and ideology. This

study also focuses on how ideology operates in the organization and transformation of societal power relationships through institutions. The interest of this study is to explore the relationship among language, religion, ideology, and power. The significance of this approach is at the center of his attention with the authorities and power structures. Given (2008) states language and behavior express these relationships. Foucault introduced this type of analysis in genealogy work, where power involves the constitution of specific discourses. It also focuses on forming discourse and how it manages social groups. The social world is described through language, and it is also influenced by several means of power. This approach is very near to social constructivism, and social constructivism focuses on how society is constructed or shaped through language. The term discourse can be defined as a connected, coherent, and complete language. "It may apply to oral and written language (literary and non-literary) virtually any language sample for any purpose and may be considered actual language block use" (Leech et al., 1982).

The discourse shows how we think and interact with people, things, and social organizations. Foucault (1971) used the term discourse in his work *'Archaeology of Knowledge'* used discourse as a specific way of speaking. Discourse is socially constructed and does not represent things as they are. Foucault describes the discourse as an abstract structure, not a unit of symbolic symbols, allowing symbolic symbols to specify meaning, thereby conveying specific, repeatable communication between the subject and the announcement' (Foucault, 1969). 'Discourse does not exist in itself, but in relation to other discourses' (Loren et al., 2016). Fairclough (1992) defines text as such; 'Text is considered here as a feature of discourse: an inscribed or verbal product of the script production processes'. All of these elements, such as ideas, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, actions, and practices, work out of time and build discourse in society; it has a great impact on the personal development of the individual. Hall argued in his work;

When power circulates in any society, it constructs a targeted discourse that favors the ideology of the political elite and the dominant faction of society, which creates a suffocating environment for the children. As a result, they suffered in the process (Hall, 1997, p. 220).

Discourse analysts risk revealing patterns of contextual context and articulating their relationship to the pattern of discourse itself. Robbins (1971) emphasizes this task of discourse analysis;

By establishing a contextual context, the observer or analyst promises to state the relationship between the discourse and the context or environment within they are saying or can say (p. 25).

Weedon said that Foucault's work contains the post-structuralist principles of pluralism and the constant delay of meaning and unsteadiness. A self-explanatory structure of the theory of social power and language is included. 'It gives the concentration to the institutional implications of the discourse and its function in the constitution and government of individual subjects' (Weedon 1987, p.107). Foucault says in his famous work in *The History of Sexuality* His focus is on the rhetorical constitution of sexual matters in the judiciary and medical texts. Foucault shows expressions that depend on the unity of discourse, things, styles, concepts, and themes. But the most important condition is that their unity is not stable, but built up through dispersion and suspension. Discourse as defined by Foucault is that there is a way of forming knowledge between these knowledge and power relationships as well as the relations of social experience, subjectivity and power. 'Words are not only thoughts and meanings, but they are the body of the subject they want to control, the 'essence' of conscious and conscious mind and emotional life' (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). Max Weber's writings had a profound and perhaps unmatched influence on management thought and organizational theory over the past century (Lawrence, 2005).

Max Weber's thought had a wide and far-reaching impact on the development of management and organizational theory. His authority writing is of course his most influential. Weber stated, "three basic kinds of authority: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic" (Weber, 1968, p.88). Weber's model is based on the historical tradition of German thought, in which the concept of knowledge is divided into two categories, the natural science and the study of social behavior. These elements are considered to have observation, logical precision and consistency. Weber defines the term 'charisma' from the ecclesiastical meaning of 'the sacred empowerment' or talent to the special qualities of individuals who can inspire and influence others. Conger argued that;

Weber's work on the authority of glamour has become the conceptual basis for the development of the fascinating leadership theory model and the conceptual basis for empirical research on this topic (Conger, 1988; 1993).

Religion is often understood as a mirror of sociology. Weber would rather turn society into a religious mirror that points to the religious nature of all social systems. For Weber, institutions are religious because they bind their followers through faith, sacrifice, and passions. Weber's field of value of spheres theory, its relationship with value rationality, as a religious sociology, applied to modern science. A discourse performs various functions at the level of things. Therefore, the formal structure of the dialogue, any analysis of hidden meanings or psychological traces takes the level of the discourse itself as a matter of course, because it is an unidentifiable original substance. There is an operation of its own. Wodak stated that;

Discourse is seen as form of social activity, always affected by values and social norms, through convention as a naturalized ideology and social values, and always delimited and impacted by power structures and historical processes (Wodak, 1995).

Methodology

The present work will make the research elucidative and vigorous. Data is a primary source qualitative of textual analysis and descriptive to accomplish the research aims. The researcher has selected the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) theory to analyze Hanif's *Red Birds*. There are specific reasons behind the selection of this work and the application of this theory; the most important one is that it has fascinated the researcher enormously. Michel Foucault was a brilliant philosopher of the 20th century who wrote two essential books; the First book he wrote in 1976 with the title of *History of Sexuality* (1976), and the second one was *Power and Knowledge* (1980). Foucault examines the discourse of madness, clinic, sex, and punishment from the power/knowledge relations perspective. In *The Order of Things*, he asserted that "in any given society and at any given moment, there is only one epistemic (system of knowledge) that defines the conditions of the possibility of all knowledge" (1971, p.85).

In his research, Foucault built and used what he called 'archaeological methods.' The historical approach attempts to reveal the layers of relationships and traces of culture to rebuild relevant civilizations. The researcher primarily focuses on Foucault's concept of power. My research methodology is qualitative by using secondary sources based on textbooks, journal articles, histories, commentaries, interviews, encyclopedias, and words, not numerical codes. This research will show foreign policies with a new perspective and through the lenses of Michel Foucault in *Red Birds*. This research is very beneficial in order to analyze Mohammed Hanif's novel *Red Birds* (2018). This research is significant because it explores the relationship among ideology, discourse, power, and knowledge. This study intends to highlight all those factors that cause death, cruelty, injustice, atrocity, and righteous anger in society.

Power Structures

Foucault (1975) talked about two leading powers in *'Discipline and Punishment'*; one is sovereignty, and the other is disciplinary power. Disciplinary power was developed at the end of the 18th century and overthrew the old form of sovereignty. Sovereign power plays a role in feudal society. Personal figures such as kings, priests, or fathers own Power and authority. At the end of the 18th century, this power was inefficient and led to the development of new technologies that controlled people's behavior. This new technology is called disciplinary power. In terms of disciplinary power, the focus is on getting someone to be monitored. There are many ways to control a person's behavior and abilities. In *'Discipline and Punishment,'* Foucault introduced the theory of power related to the archaeology of knowledge. Prison and punishment are the expression of knowledge and power. He argues on the complex structure of power;

Power is neither a system, nor a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; It is a name that belongs to a complex strategic situation in a particular society (1978, p.93).

Power is the extension of humanity, the desire, the motivation, and the need for satisfaction. In terms of its effect, power is perceived in the best way. The influence of power is diverse and mixed. The effects of power include violent short-term political change, limited adjustments to political, social, and economic structures, peaceful change, and long-term change. There are different power structures which are used in the society. Govern mentality, the method of power research, emphasizes the management of people's behavior through active means rather than the sovereign power of the law. Contrary to the form of discipline of power, the government is usually associated with the voluntary participation of the ruled. The concept of govern mentality defines *government* as an exercise of political power organized by a nation or state. It extends it to include the active consent of individuals and their desire to participate in their government.

Analysis

The purpose of this study is to inspect and analyze Hanif's *Red Birds* from a Foucauldian concept of power and knowledge relationships further to analyze the outcomes of these power structures. Hanif, in his novels, discusses the policies and the politicians' role in subjugating the country for their purposes. He gives the concept of power and knowledge in his work. If you have power, then you have authority. He is a great satirist. He satirizes the absurdity of never-ending war and foreign policies in his latest novel, *Red Birds*. The title of this novel, *Red Birds*, has been used symbolically many times in the text. These birds are remarkable birds that no one else sees. No one can see them except the Mutt. He comments on his philosophical ideas about Red Birds. He got a brain-damaging hazard in an accident but his ideas are philosophical based on reality. Mutt says that Red Birds are actually in this world; we cannot see them because we do not want to see them. It is usually that when he sees birds, he growls. Mutt says, 'When I see the red birds, I growl' (p.84). People did not want to see the birds because when they look at them, they remember those who died by US drones. Red Birds symbolically represent the missing people. Mutt talks about red birds in a philosophical way,

When someone dies in a raid or a shooting or when someone's throat is slit, their last drop of blood transform into a tiny red bird and flies away (p.84).

Major Ellie by his own will is working under the governance of Colonel Slatter who gave him the task to destroy the specific region near Hanger. Dear Father, the father of Momo the protagonist of the novel is also working under the governance of USAID at Hanger.

Father Dear worked at the Hanger, Supplies and Logistics, and ran the occasional workshop on youth affairs (p.19).

Red Birds discloses the quest for power and resistance is inborn. Throughout the novel, it shows that foreigners want their domination and authority over the region and its belongings but the inhabitant of the place are angry at their attitude. Dear Father is working at Hanger against the will of his family but his wife became angry and creates a resistance when he introduces Lady Flower body. The family has the strongest influence on its members by shaping the personality of individuals. The United States has challenged Britain's position and has become the dominant force in the Middle East. The rise in power began with American oil companies seeking economic opportunities in oil fields in the region. The United States took advantage of the alternative countries of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Israel to seize the opportunity and begin the imperialist mission to the Middle East. The US main target within the Middle East was to capture the mineral and oil fields. The United States began to expand into the Middle East to obtain huge oil reserves. In the text Major Ellie states,

No lands captured, no slaves taken, no mass rapes, fuck their oil wells, and ignore their mineral deposits (p. 32).

US multinationals are pushing the control of oil in the region and concentrating on where business and strategic opportunities are most beneficial. The consequences of the war have given the United States extensive military operations and related economic opportunities around the world. Military stations and outposts provide American companies with such inherent advantages communication and transportation networks. Throughout the novel there are scenes of destruction and bomb blast everywhere in the camp. There is an outpost near the camp at the Hanger. When Momo's brother disappears from the house, he talks about his brother as, 'Father sold him to the Americans at the Hanger' (p. 29). It clearly shows the presence of Americans at the Hanger where to do the attack. The Americans here help the people; provide them with food and drink. But the effects of the foods that make it worse are affecting human health. Ellie says,

Now they could all go and live in UN tents, eat exotic food donated by USAID and burp after drinking fizzy drinks (p. 33).

US provided aid to the catastrophe and provided food for the people to live in. Give people relief camps to cover their heads. Major military and reconstruction operations are concentrated in different regions. Americans enter foreign markets through exports that provide reconstruction plans and peace keeping missions. The allegations were not new at the time and are still widespread today. In fact, whenever the Americans chooses to achieve the strategic aims in the region through military intervention, the debate on US imperialization in the Middle East will be rekindled, as it had done recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the camp after the war, many people's lives were threatened. The novel is a satire on the never-ending American conflict in a Muslim province similar to the Afghan-Pakistan border. This satirical novel gracefully captures the pure absurdity of the modern world, which is dominated by US foreign policy and has been searching for new enemies to fight a war, and found the reason for launching the war, despite knowing the truth, the rest of the world is still helplessly watching. In *Red Birds* there is predominant theme of absurdity of war that prevailed at every pace. Hanif discusses that there are many thieves who had stolen a lot of thing and trying to capture remaining things. Foreigners came in the boundary wall they did not steal things but also stole their boundary wall as,

A camp without electricity, but surely you can't have a camp without boundary wall (Hanif, 2018, p.13).

They stole everything even their identity. Foreigners first attack the city and then give the aids to realize that they are their well-wishers. It shows that foreigners came with the idea of improving the condition of the people but stole everything which they exist in their region. They had stolen everything with being powerful without any resistance. Refugee camp gives the whole depiction of living society with its all facilities of life such as vegetables shops, Royal

Hardware Depot and doctor has given his medical emergency medical care. The main character and the protagonist of this novel is Momo. The protagonist suspects that his brother is lost by his father. Momo's brother Ali is missing. Power is often conceptualized as a powerful agent to achieve its ability to do what is powerless to the consent of the people, and the capability to force them to do what they don't want to do. The novel explores the entanglement of aid agencies and war machines. These agencies destroyed the place by bombs as well as provide aid of dry rations. It shows that they dropped a large number of so as to cause uniform devastation repeatedly, widely and excessively.

Hanif combines details about Pakistan in the 1980s, the long-term effects of the Afghan war, and the US impact on Pakistani politics. He presented in his texts the living conditions of the lower working class and the desire for change in the country. This novel Mohammed Hanif's third so far may be the most ambitious novel starting with the character of Major Ellie, US air force bomber crashed the plane in an unnamed desert in an unidentified country. Here is a lost man pertaining devilish deceptive vision, death upon the same people who was sent to kill. Ellie muses,

They give you a 65-million-dollar machine to fly, with the smartest bomb (Hanif, 2018, p.1)

It is clear that he came to destroy the camp by being armed with war equipment and bombs for a specific purpose. The United States has the superpowers to carry out drone strikes for its own benefit, then by helping them to enter this place; they establish their domination over this place and the people living there. He was sent by the US air Force to attack, and destroy the area which he was assigned. Mother Dear, who is worried and aware of the war situation, says that first they help us in distress and persecution and then help us to become our sympathizers. She says that before they were less cruel, they dropped bombs on our house, destroyed us and now after destroying our houses, my son was abducted. She says to Ellie,

First, they bomb our house, then they take away my son and now you are here to make us feel alright (p. 48)

Conclusion

In conclusion, throwing light on the concepts of power dynamics through institutions with the perspective of Foucault's theory, it is worth mentioning that a monarch ruler exercised the establishment of society in Middle Ages power, and they used to exercise absolute supervise over the subject by publicly demonstrating violence. In modern times, power is ultimately used in different ways through institutions such as sovereign power, disciplinary powers. It governs mentality, but the new power mechanisms were invented with special procedures and techniques. This article is based on the Foucauldian perspective of power and knowledge and investigates various power structures. The role of power is not a particular institute, structure, or the power that specific people enjoy; these are complicated strategic relationships in a society. Power is insensible and unpremeditated. It could not be contacted by any agent or ascribed to any intent. Without the support of any knowledge system, there can be no power. In *Red Birds*, various power elements are present in human beings. Everyone wants power no matter where they live, but they want it. The intoxication of power is found in everyone's instinct. Power uses the strategic impacts of knowledge to dominate and subjugate people's consent. Often, emphasis is placed on the formation of docile bodies in Hanif's novel. Respecting rules and regulations is not about civilization but about turning them into bodies that can be easily managed. The work justifies Foucault's concept of the reciprocal relation of power. It is a thrilling satire of US foreign policy in different regions, especially in the Middle East, and the ugliness of the war is brilliantly captivating.

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