



THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF POWER: A FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HANIF KUREISHI'S RED BIRDS

1. Samina Ilyas, Visiting Lecturer Department of English University of Sahiwal
2. Tanveer Akhtar, PhD Scholar, Department of English, GCUF, and Lecturer Department of English University of Sahiwal
3. Muntazra Mehdi, Department of English, Riphah International University Islamabad Pakistan

Abstract

This study explores the idea of institutionalisation of power in Hanif's Red Birds from the perspective of power and knowledge. It discusses the negative uses of power through different modes of institutions and the absurd notion of the endless war with the impossible dreams of world peace. Michel Foucault's perceptions into the spirit of power and opposition provide an appropriate structure for assessing the power forms through different moods of institutions in the society with the social theory of power. The process of institutionalisation is the action of establishing something as a custom or rule in an organisation or any institution. It focuses on the behaviour and meaning of discourse and stress on relationship of power and knowledge in society. A Foucauldian discourse analysis theory focuses on the power structures and institutional implication of discourse through individual's social practices. Significant factions of society hold absolute power and determine the course of living under the shadows of war and powerful domination. Through this kind of thinking, this study aims to explore the discourse under the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) framework in Hanif's Red Birds. It demonstrates the negative use of power through different institutional sentiments and the absurd concept of never-ending in the Middle East.

Keywords: Foucault, Discourse, Surveillance, Sovereignty, Imperialisation, Disciplinary power,

Introduction

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

The present script focuses toward giving an account of circumstances, events, 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 excitement 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 political, economic and moral corruption of the Pakistani armed forces government and the woeful working situations of the down trodden working class. *Red Birds* (2018) set in an unnamed desert region "a war-torn, devastated half-forgotten place" (Hanif in an interview). Each chapter voiced in turns by an American Ellie, a dog named Mutt, and a teenage boy Momo an artful survivor of the war.

After the devastation and destruction of the assigned areas, they are now assisting 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 the society is not only institutionalised, but it is belonging to an organisational framework that effects the competition concerned with political actors and tries to protect the concept of certain freedoms. Therefore, the procedure of institutionalisation 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 and organisations as well as 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 is different for each area.

Imperialism is the bureaucratic policy, exercise or endorsement to expand power and dominion, specifically to supervise territories or pertaining to politics and economic rule over other areas. This study will explore the absurdity of never ending war, US strategies of imperialisation in the Middle East and impossible dreams of World Peace with respect to power relation under the frame work 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 for the liberals (Imran & Wei, 2019). 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 realities that are socially constructed, particularly through different aspects of power. Every belief is constructed and also relative because it varies person to person and community to community. Major faction of the society holds absolute power and Lord Acton presents his views, ‘Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely’ (Lord Acton, 1887).

This major faction of the society determines the course of living for minorities and further marginalises 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 center on a subject of power constructed, discourse and knowledge. In depth it studies the working of power and knowledge. Power and knowledge shapes ideology, which ultimately works ruling class ideas. Resultantly, it creates suffocating environment for minorities and liberals. The sufferings of these people are unearned. This is the annihilation of fundamental human rights, on which compromise cannot be made. This study condemns such anti-human activities and raises voices for affected people.

The review of the related literature in ideology and power relations with the particular thoughts of French Philosopher Michel Foucault shows the importance of this study. This section aims at reviewing the literature done in the same field and its broader spectrum. This type of spectrum includes Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA), discourse, ideology, religion as state apparatus and ideology and power relations. Power determines the course of knowledge, and through cultural apparatus it strictly shapes identity, reality, conscious and ideology. This study also focuses on how ideology operates in the organisation, reproduction and transformation of power relationships in society. 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. Lisa. M 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 the formation of 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 organisations. 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 relations to other discourses' (Loren Cova R., 2016, Joyia & Gull, 2017).

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 greatly impacts the individual's personal development. Hall argued in his work;

When power circulates in any society, it constructs a targeted discourse that favours 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, 1997.220).

Discourse analysts risk revealing patterns of contextual context and articulating their relationship to the pattern of discourse itself. Robbins (1971) emphasises 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). In his famous work in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault says that 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 a way of forming knowledge between these knowledge and power relationships and 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 the 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 organisational theory over the past century (Lawrence, 2005).

Max Weber's thought had a wide and far-reaching impact on the development of management and organisational 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, natural science and the study of social behaviour (Iqbal & Iqbal, 2021). 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 naturalised ideology and social values, and always delimited and impacted by power structures and historical processes (Wodak, 1995).

The researcher has selected the FDA theory to analyse the targeted novel of Hanif; there were certain reasons behind the selection of this work and application of this theory, the most important one is it has fascinated the researcher enormously. Michel Foucault was brilliant philosopher of 20th century, who wrote two very important books, First book he wrote in 1976 with the title of *History of Sexuality* (1976) and second one is *Power and Knowledge* (1980). Foucault examines the discourse of madness, clinic, sex and punishment from the perspective of power/knowledge relations. In *The Order of Things* he asserted that “in any given society and at any given moment there is only one episteme (system of knowledge) that defines the conditions of the possibility of all knowledge” (1971, p.85).

Foucault in his research, he built and used what he called ‘archaeological methods.’ The historical approach attempts to reveal the layers of relationships and traces of culture in order to rebuild the relevant civilisations. 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, encyclopedia and words, not numerical codes (Imran & Wei, 2019). This research will show the foreign policies with a new perspective and through the lenses of Michel Foucault in *Red Birds*. This research is very beneficial in order to analyse Mohammed Hanif’s novel *Red Birds* (2018). This research is very significant because it explores the relationship between ideology, discourse, Power and knowledge. This study intends to highlight all those factors that cause death, cruelty, injustice, atrocity and righteous anger in society.

Foucault (1975) talked about two main powers in ‘*Discipline and Punishment*’: sovereignty and 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 are the owners of 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 behaviour. 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 behaviour and abilities. In ‘*Discipline and Punishment*’, Foucault introduced the theory of power related to the archaeology of knowledge. Prison and punishment are expressions 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. Different power structures are used in society. Governmentality, the method of power research, emphasises the management of people’s behaviour 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 governmentality takes the definition of government as an exercise of political power organised by a nation or state and extends it to include individuals’ active consent and desire to participate in their own government.

This study aims to inspect and analyse the selected text, from a Foucauldian concept of power and knowledge relationships that exists in Hanif’s *Red Birds* and explore the outcomes of these power relationships. Hanif, in his novels, discusses the policies and the politicians’ role to subjugate the

country for their own 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 satirises the absurdity of never-ending war and foreign policies in his latest novel, *Red Birds*. The title of this novel is *Red Birds* that have been used symbolically many times in the text. These birds are special 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 philosophically based on reality. Mutt says that Red Birds are actually in this world; we cannot see them because we don't 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 are died by US drones. Red Birds symbolically represent the missing people. Mutt tells about red birds in his philosophical way,

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

By his own will, Major Ellie 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 becomes angry and creates resistance when he introduces Lady Folwerbody. The family has the most substantial 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 substantial 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 worldwide. Military stations and outposts provide American companies with such inherent advantages in communication and transportation networks. Throughout the novel, there are scenes of destruction and bomb blasts everywhere in the camp. There is an outpost near the camp at the Hanger. When Momo's brother disappears from the house, he tells 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 make 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).

The 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 peacekeeping missions. The allegations were not new at the time and are still widespread today. Whenever the Americans choose to achieve the region's strategic aims through military intervention, the debate on US imperialistic 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 the predominant theme of absurdity of war that prevails at every pace. Hanif discusses that many thieves had stolen a lot of things and tried to capture the remaining things. Foreigners came in the boundary wall they did not steal things but also stole their boundary wall as,

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

They have stolen everything, even their identity. Foreigners first attack the city and then give the aids to realise that they are their well-wishers. It shows that foreigners came with the idea of improving the people's condition but stole everything that existed in their region (Akhtar et al., 2021). They had stolen everything by being powerful without any resistance. Refugee camp gives the whole depiction of living society with its all facilities of life such as vegetable shops, Royal Hardware Depot and doctor has given his medical emergency medical care. The main character and the protagonist of this novel are Momo. The protagonist suspects that his brother is lost by his father. Momo's brother Ali is missing. Power is often conceptualised as a powerful agent to achieve its ability to do what is powerless to the people's consent 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 with bombs as well as provided aid of dry rations. It shows that they dropped a large number to cause uniform devastation, widely and excessively repeatedly.

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, a US air force bomber who crashed the plane in an unnamed desert in an unidentified country. Here is a lost man with devilish deceptive vision, death upon the same people 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 enter this place, they establish their domination over this place and the people living there. The US Air Force sent him to attack and destroy the area to which he was assigned. Mother Dear, who is worried and aware of the war situation, says that they help us in distress and persecution and then help us become our sympathisers. 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)

In Conclusion, it is worth mentioning that during the establishment of a society in the middle Ages, power was exercised by a monarch ruler. 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 and governmentality but the new power mechanisms were invented with special procedures and techniques. This article is established upon the Foucauldian perspective of power and knowledge and it investigated various structures of power. 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 ascribe to any intent. Without the support of any knowledge system, there can be no power. In *Red Birds*, there are various power elements that present in human beings. Everyone wants the power no matter where they are living, but they want the power. The intoxication of power is found in everyone instinct. Power uses the strategic impacts of knowledge to dominate and subjugate by the consent of people. Often the emphasis is placed on the formation of docile bodies in Hanif's novel. Respecting rules and regulations is not about civilisation but about turning them into bodies that can be easily managed. The work justifies the Foucauldian concept of reciprocal relation of power and a thrilling satire of US foreign policy in different regions, especially in the Middle East. Therefore, this study has critically analyzed the horrors of the war comprehensively.

References

- Acton, Lord John Emerich Edward Dalberg. (1887). *Religion Past and Present*. doi:10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_sim_00134
- Akhtar, S., Imran, M., Xiaofei, W., & Chen, Y. (2021). Identity and Nation in Shamsie's Kartography and Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 14(3), 483-501.
- Fairclough N. (1989/2002). *Language and Power*. London Macmillan/ Palgrave
- Fairclough, N. (1992). Book Reviews. *Discourse & Society*, 3(2), 239-241. doi:10.1177/0957926592003002008.
- Foucault M. (1972). *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Tavistock, London
- Foucault, M.(1991). "Governmentality". In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller), pp. 87-104. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1969). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1971). *The Order of Things*. London, England: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Foucault.M.(1980). *Power-Knowledge*. (n.d.). *Critical Essays on Major Curriculum Theorists*, 52-63. doi:10.4324/9780203461884_chapter_5.
- Hall S. (1997) Representation; *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage & Open University Press
- Hanif, M. (2008). *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Hanif, M. (2011). *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Imran, M., & Wei, X. M. (2019). A transition from empire to nation in Southern Asia. *Postcolonial Studies*, 1-3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2019.1619501>
- Iqbal, M., & Iqbal, I. (2021). Dilemma of Identity: Jung's Archetypes Approaches Self & Identity in Taufiq Rafat's Foothold. *International Review of Literary Studies*, 3(1), 22-28.
- Joyia, M. I., & Gull, A. (2017). Courageous Women: A Study of Resilience of Women in Khaled Hosseini's Novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. *Language in India*, 17(1).
- Leech, G., Deuchar, M., & Hoogenraad, R. (1982). *English Grammar for Today*. doi:10.1007/978-1-349-16878-1.
- Red Birds." *The New Yorker* January 2018:1-12.18 December <http://www.newyorker.com>. <<http://www.newyorker.com>>. <<http://theguardian.com/books/2018/oct/10/red-birds-Mohammed-hanif-review>> 10 Oct 2018.