
The Mechanisms of Foucauldian Power and Kafkaesque Situation in *Shahr-Bandan*

Dr. Negin Binazir *

Assistant Professor, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, University of Guilan, Guilan, Iran

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

With the transformation of modernity from a cultural and intellectual stream into a socio-political system along with the constructive results and the enormous achievements of this trend, contemporary human has more than ever realized the impossibility of his emancipation. The failure of the clarity and transparency promised by modern reason, and the scope and extent of ambiguity, turbulence, dispersion, contradiction and loneliness indicate the captivity of man to the industry structures and consequences, power, technology, and reason sovereignty (Thorn, 2001; Nozari, 2001). Foucauldian power and Kafkaesque situation are two of the consequences of the modern world, two trends that, in their contexts of the philosophical, literary, sociological and political aspects, analyze the mechanisms of modern power, the hegemony of modern consequences, and the state of human captivity in the complex maze of this world. They also respond to this process, and strive to find a way into human emancipation. This essay, first deals with Foucault's intellectual foundations and Kafka's view of the concept of power, its mechanisms, and the human situations formed in modern power, then, explains the relationship between these two views and areas, and finally analyzes the story of *Shahr-Bandan* i by Javad Mojabi simultaneously from the above-mentioned perspectives.

2. Literature Review

Many texts have been analyzed from the Foucauldian power perspective; for instance, "A Survey on Power and Political Culture in Kalile va Demne" by Javad Dehghanian (2011) and "The Analysis of Power Relations in *Keikhosrow* Story Based on Foucauldian View" by Sima Erami (2012) can be mentioned. In connection with the story of circumstance, one can refer to

* Corresponding Author Email: neginbinazir@yahoo.com

The Magics of Story (four essays on story writing) by Hossein Senapour (2008) and “The Intertwining of Magical Realism and Story of Circumstance” by Binazir and Razi (2011). There are two distinguishing points about the present study, it is for the first time that *Shahr-Bandan* is analyzed from this point of view, and the other is that the current essay analyzes this novel in terms of Foucauldian power and Kafkaesque situation simultaneously and in a consolidated manner.

3. Method

The essence of the modern power presence, the extent and ways of expanding it, and its reproduction are fundamentally different from the traditional power. In the traditional structure, power was what was seen and manifested, so it owed much of its hegemony and authority to being seen. This power was exercised on those who could stay unseen and remain in the dark. However, disciplinary technology, as one of the most important techniques of modern power, is applied by its concealment and invisibility, and its authority lies in its concealment. The principle of visibility is imposed on the subjects, those over whom power is implemented (see Eco, 2007; Foucault, 2009). Disciplinary technology has a significant relationship with the human body and dominance over it that deals with the organization, normalization of subjects, and the training of docile bodies based on the principle of subject visibility. The principle of visibility enables both continuous surveillance, strict control and meticulous care, and enforces the application of other disciplinary technology, namely the normalizing punishment (see Dreyfus, 2006; 244; Foucault, 2009; Miller, 2005; Creator, 2006). Many of the concepts and keywords that have been elaborated and analyzed in Foucault's intellectual system had been projected, predicted and perhaps warned in Kafka's fictional world (Kafkaesque) many years ago. Certainly, Michel Foucault's elaboration, explanation and formulation of the process of modern power and its mechanisms in the body of society differ from the fictional world of Kafka. However, both Foucault and Kafka depict the wondrous and crisis-stricken man captured under the control of modern power; controlled, and cared under the constant watch of this continuous surveillance so that through tricks and ploys become a submissive and humble citizen. Many common concepts bring the two currents closer together such as hidden power and maze, the extent and manner of its expansion, constant presence in the most private moments, power monitoring, the constant monitoring and intervention of power and its powerful arms, the police and spy atmosphere, conforming, assimilating, stripping people of their identities and eliminating

individuality, subject formation, conspiracy, tagging, and the subject's obedience and resistance points.

4. Results and Discussion

Thanks to its powerful arms in *Shahr-Bandan* such as the men in brown, the restaurant apprentice, the constable, the judge, and the sweeper, discipline technology controls and monitors the doctor, his family, and the whole city in all institutions and organs with different and varied ways and mechanisms. The capillary presence of pieces of the power puzzle, as Deleuze calls it "a sequential space" (see Deleuze, 1394), can be found in all trades and movements of story characters, especially in all aspects of the doctor's life in *Shahr-Bandan*. There is nothing hidden from the power surveillance. The capillary presence of power scares the lawyer and confirms the driver's statements and the constant presence and surveillance of power. "Sir, isn't it better for a man to have such freedom to take any road he wishes . . . whistle, dance, it's even rude to say, fart. Forgive me, if he would like to piss a little, stand and escape. No, I swear by your mustache, isn't it rude to put people in this spinning grave, surrounded from four sides by iron, and say just go ahead, no one has the right to choose his way to his home . . . flashlight, gun, speech, again gun, flashlight, speech, again flashlight, gun, bang. You like to stop somewhere to piss; they appear like a jinn checking your urine with a flashlight to make sure you hadn't transgressed the rules" (Mojabi, 2013). The lawyer in *Shahr-Bandan* is caught in a powerful puzzle, and gradually loses his identity after his home, family, assets, and then, his identity card and name are being seized. He is a subject with a new name that puts him in a special category. "A house with that characteristics was considered as part of the public property. That vain imagination did not leave him. He had demanded for his authentication. He had no ID in that engine-house; the paper in which the identity of his wife and children were recorded, contained surprising data. His wife was a widow and his children were in the custody of the Guardianship Office of the Orphans. He shouted: I'm alive, here I am,..." (Mojabi, 2013). There were no signs or documents of the lawyer, his properties, and his being alive in the identification department and in any system. All of his past, properties, and roots had been removed. The lawyer, after a lot of effort and struggle against the powerful position, force and its mighty dominance, gets frustrated and adjusts himself to the circumstances. Hence, the power process in a professional plan both accused the lawyer of murdering a young person in order to subjugate him, and in order to get him involved in the power game, assigned him a position in the new government to make him part of the power body.

5. Conclusion

Shahr-Bandan depicts fear, loneliness, concern, desperation and frustration of a modern man caught under the control of disciplinary technology's power and position; a situation in which he has the ability neither to understand nor to get out. The purpose of this system of continuous control and surveillance is realized in the process of disciplinary punishment in the life of the lawyer; this process gradually, through seizing the home and family as well as tagging and conspiracy, paves the way for the project of subjectivating the lawyer and by accusing him of murdering, denying his citizenship, and reducing his identity to a number both swallows the hero's individual identity and completes the process of subjectivation for him.

Keywords: Disciplinary technology, Power surveillance, Kafkaesque situation, *Shahr-Bandan*, Javad Mojabi

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