



Critique and Analysis of “al-Zayani Barakat” Novel from Perspective of Educational Sociology

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 19 May 2020 Revised: 09 June 2020 Accepted: 07 July 2020 Online: 08 July 2020</p>	<p>The Sociological critique is one of the most widely used types of criticism that has gradually entered other fields of science, including sociology of education. This article seeks to examine and analyze the novel by an Egyptian author to show how the components of power are reproduced through social systems such as educational system and in societies such as those in the Middle East. The purpose of this article is to analyze content of Jamal al-Ghitani's novel "al-Zayani Barakat" according to Michel Foucault's sociological theory in a socio-educational field. The research findings confirm Foucault's theory of power-knowledge relationship in text of this literary work. Another finding suggests that content analysis of a novel can provide strong support for explaining role of organization such as education system in maintaining power structure. The present critique provides a new framework for analyzing views of thinkers in the field of educational sociology in other fields of knowledge. The paper concludes with a brief summary that texts that seem to address private issues can shed light on sociological dimensions of educational system.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Educational Sociology</p> <p>Foucault</p> <p>Literary Criticism</p> <p>Novel</p>	

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1. Introduction

Literature has always been a reflection of human concern in a subtle language. It is often not easy to articulate truth and reality because both speaker and listener have to suffer. Literature reduces bitterness of truth and reality, gives them beautiful clothes and reduces danger for everyone. Literature is therefore a universal language (Harcourt, 2010). For this reason, the literature market always has a lot of customers and variety in it. The novel is one of most desirable manifestations of literature, a language that introduces reader to "other" in a distant land. Also, the novel is a mirror in which we see ourselves, the facts and realities of our lives, those around us, and people, but a comfortable sight without accepting responsibility and in form of words and phrases that speak from other heart, mind and language (Dubey 2013). This is first aspect of literature, but there is another aspect as well.

A narrator, writer, or "other" is someone who does not write a novel in a vacuum. According to Adorno, Logach, Goldman, and others (1998), in any novel, type of attitude towards world is not individual and innate, but is influenced by culture, civilization, and social issues. Therefore, he is a novelist or person miles away from our country, or he is a neighbor in this city and country. After all, it is he who, by telling his story, shows history, tradition, politics, economics, culture, and, of course, education to us. A history that we both love and dislike it, a tradition that we are loyal to and sometimes ignore, a politics that is not our politics, an economy that we suffer from, and a way of education that we recognize its weaknesses and wish it was better than this. Literature, and especially the novel, shows how they are connected. Of course, it's easier to understand this connection in societies that are more like our society; an author who speaks our hearts but in another society and language. Therefore, we are familiar with his narrator, society and language.

Jamal Al-Ghitani (1945-2015) is one of those acquaintances. In his novel, *al-Zayani Barakat*, he holds a mirror in his hand. We enjoy reading his novel, but that's not the only purpose. Readers of his novel want to see their politics, culture, society and education in his mirror. According to Lukács (1994), literary transformation indicates social status and development. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to review and critique Al-Ghitani's novel (1975) from a comparative perspective. Also, this is view of Iranian researchers on a novel from Egypt and from perspective of sociological literary criticism. Therefore, main emphasis of authors of research is to analyze this novel according to Foucault's theory and from an educational perspective. According to this goal, sub-objectives of the research are:

- Brief introduction of Jamal Al-Ghitani and novel al-Zayani Barakat,
- Introducing the social and political environment of novel
- Brief introduction of Foucault's views (theoretical foundations)
- Literary text critique and analysis
- Comparative-educational explanation of novel

2. Research Method

The research method is a qualitative comparison with the interpretive-analytical approach. Primary sources such as books and articles were used to collect data, and content analysis based on hermeneutics was used to analyze selected works. Also the most important source examined is al-Zayani Barakat novel (1994 edition published in Beirut). This method of analysis is a classic method of thematic analysis that is used for written texts and any other kind of expression.

3. Results

The present section contains 5 sections. First, a brief description of author's life and content of novel is provided. Then, the characteristics of social environment in which author lived (Egypt) are explained, so that the readers can get acquainted with atmosphere that dominates author's mind and soul. In the next section, theoretical foundations of educational sociology considered by present researchers are stated with reference to Foucault's views. In fourth part of this section, the content of al-Zayani Barakat's novel is criticized according to the views of Foucault. In the last section, we show how content of a novel can bridge the gap between literature and educational sociology (as two distinct areas of knowledge) as well as common educational practices in different countries but in a single geographical zone.

First) Jamal Al-Ghitani and novel al-Zayani Barakat

Born in 1945, Jamal al-Ghitani grew up in the famous al-Jamaliyah neighborhood, where had previously nurtured Egypt's greatest contemporary writer, Najib Mahfouz" (1911-2006). He began his literary career by writing a collection of short stories, "Leaves of a young man who lived a thousand years ". In this collection, he deals with cultural history of Egypt. Al-Ghattani uses history as a mask to speak of tyranny and violence of rulers of the time. His first novel, al-Zayani Barakat - first published in a Cairo magazine in 1971 and in several issues - immediately established him as a first-rate author.

The book tells the story of Zayani Barakat, a historical figure and Cairo police chief before the Ottoman invasion, who also retains his position in the new regime and apparently bears a resemblance to character of then-Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970). Al-Ghattani, in this work, quotes an Egyptian historian and uses medieval fiction to try to avoid censorship scissors. In his later novels, he continues to use Arabic literary tradition as a source of inspiration (Baron, 2005). Al-Zayani Barakat's novel begins with introduction of these notes by the observations of the Venetian tourist Visconti Janetti, who traveled to Cairo in the 16th century to visit Egypt for second time and narrate the situation in Cairo during month of August 1517. This is date when Sultan Salim I, the commander of Ottoman army, occupied Egypt.

Al-Ghattani believes that there are many similarities between that period and the time of the Arab defeat of Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War. The main character in the story is Al-Zayani Barakat, who is the head of the Cairo police and is a very smart, powerful and seductive person. Barakat seeks to maintain its power in any way possible, resorting to bizarre methods such as severe repression of the opposition and espionage. Also, middle-class people, as dissidents and reformists, play a role in the novel, which reflects the thoughts and ideas of al-Qahtani and part of contemporary Egyptian intellectual society.

The book consists of seven parts, each of which has its own story, although it is in the sequence of the main story and previous characters. The novel also depicts a space full of political instability, accompanied by emergence of a new police system; at a time when individuals - both poor students at Al-Azhar University and the head of Cairo's spies - have limited control over their own destiny. The novel tells the story of emergence of a new character named Barakat, who enters political arena and hopes for economic and political reform. But little by little, it is fear of him that fills place of hope in people's minds.

Second) Social and political environment

In the field of Arabic novels, after the 1952 revolution led by Jamal Abdel Nasser and emergence of political and social changes, a new generation of writers emerged who became known in literary circles as "generation of sixties". Following a new approach, this group of writers sought to distance themselves from the predominantly classical style of storytelling of the previous generation by creating a distinct style (Valizadeh, Khaleghi, and Ramezani, 2013). Among these new approaches, we can mention two currents process of "new realism" and "inspiration from past heritage" which were able to express issues of society in a new form (Zarafa, 2007). Meanwhile, Jamal al-Ghitani, with his novel al-Zayani Barakat, was able to take a strong step in the field of

socially themed novels. Therefore, considering this, its sociological approach can reflect social, political and educational currents of Egypt.

Al-Ghattani was a seven-year-old boy when Jamal Abdul Nasser came to power in 1952. Therefore, the rule of Abdel Nasser until his death in 1970 was coincides with childhood and youth prieds of Al-Ghattani' s life; a period in which Egypt was embroiled in major political events such as fall of monarchy, military coups, nationalization of Suez Canal, Six-day war with Israel, suppression of independent parties and newspapers, simultaneous isolation of religious extremists and intellectuals, nationalism and extremist Arabism. Al-Ghitani wrote and published al-Zayani Barakat's book in 1971, a year after Nasser's death and the inauguration of Anwar Sadat - Nasser's comrade and deputy-. Thus, it seems that writer's literary talent with Nasser's death provides an opportunity to critique social system, although new government also followed Nasser's policies (Danielson, 2007).

For this reason, the author tries to criticize social, political and educational system of Egypt by using caution and fear through history of Egypt and through novels, with uncertainty and fear of future trend of political system. The culmination of al-Ghitani's attack on Barakat's novel focuses on issues such as discourse of power, freedom and justice, collective action of masses, relations of lower and upper classes, social conflict and criticism. All of these are multifaceted issues that first attack educational system - in a traditional society like Egypt - and then other social systems.

The publication and acceptance of book as well as its translation into other languages, and author's popularity in Egypt and Arab world, show that readers have well received Al-Ghitani's message (Meyer, 2001). They hear and read their own story again in author's words and sentences, and understand how al-Ghitani has tried to challenge intellectual, educational, and political foundations of totalitarian systems; a systems which can be found all over the world, especially in the Middle East; Systems that never die, but each time show themselves with a new shape and image. Therefore, the Middle East, as one of the hottest geographical areas on most days of year, never sees spring and is always winter.

Third) Theoretical foundations

Literary texts, especially fictional texts, including novels, can be examined and analyzed in terms of their content connection with society. In most literary works, especially realist ones, the socio-cultural situation of society in which work was formed - or created about - is reflected (De Souza, 2014). For this reason, Goldman (2003) believes that the novel, among other literary genres, has most connection with society and is in the sense of a return to everyday life. Of course; sometimes

prominent literary texts have also played a role in shaping structure of human societies. For example, national epic texts or influential novels - which are necessarily social in nature (Mar and Oatley, 2008). The study of this two-way trade between literature and society can be considered in various fields of interdisciplinary epistemology such as literary sociology, political sociology, social psychology, educational sociology and educational philosophy. Based on this thinking, a literary work - such as a famous novel - can be considered in the field of sciences such as psychology and education, reflecting customs, behavior and temperaments of people of writer's time. In fact, human behavior is affected by changes that occur at certain times and places and are reflected in textual structure of work (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001). Therefore, the study of the main categories of the novel can be used as a social document in order to obtain the basic points about the prevailing educational process - on the basis of which the novel originates.

In the present study, to determine these main categories, the views of one of the most famous poststructuralist philosophers, Michel Foucault (1936-1984), have been inspired and used from perspective of educational sociology. Analyzing the text of al-Zayani Barakat's novel, the main categories include discourse of power, freedom and justice, collective action of masses, relations of lower and upper classes, conflict and social criticism. Here we first and briefly express Foucault's views on these categories:

According to Foucault, power is present in all society and in all everyday affairs and relationships, while it is often thought that power is nothing but the ability of powerful agents to exercise their will over powerless people and to force them to do what they do not want Balan (2017). Criticizing this attitude, Foucault sees power as more like a "strategy." So power is a form of doing things, not something that can be captured; a system of relationships that extends throughout society, family, administration, and school. Regarding freedom, Foucault pointed to use of surveillance tools by those in power and said that people, like prisoners in society, have a sense of constant surveillance. Even when no one is really monitoring and caring, they find themselves under supervision of others by attending various social institutions (as students, patient, worker, client, etc.). Therefore, over time, individuals find inner discipline and become agents of exercising power over themselves and their oppression (Piro, 2008).

From Foucault's opinion, power in modern societies is a system of knowledge-based relationships (knowledge-power network) that places the individual within himself. In other words, when one is subjected to a system of sciences such as medicine, psychology, or education, one becomes visible and is dominated by power (Foucault, 1995). In this way, power affects individuals through the education system and other social systems (Foucault, 1980).

Fourth) Review of al-Zayani Barakat's novel

An examination and analysis of various sections of novel “al-Zayani Al-Barakat” shows depiction of a society in which security is shattered; a government that continues to survive with the support of a security apparatus; with long and wide-ranging organizations, but rotten from within, and signs of corruption, bribery, poverty and unbridled wealth. Along with a failed ideology and a collective illusion lost on the battlefield (Mehrez, 1985). With this in mind, we can now analyze the layers of novel according to Foucault's theories:

1: Discourse of Power

The most important feature of Zayani al-Barakat's novel from perspective of sociology in general and educational sociology in particular, is discourse of power. For Foucault, it is impossible to apply power without knowledge (Foucault, 1972). Al-Ghattani agrees with Foucault. He deserves to be blamed for his nation's lack of power. In his view, the reason for backwardness of the Third World is lack of attention to truth, knowledge, and advances of civilization. He considers most people of East to be a "lowly" nation because they do not pay attention to knowledge. In Zayani al-Barakat, the narrator, like the skilled sociologist, critiques elements of power in Arab society. By creating spaces and situations that challenge mind and thoughts of reader, he reveals bitter but behind-the-scenes realities of power in this part of the world (Alkhadra, 2015).

2: Freedom and justice

Power is exercised when there are concepts such as "freedom", "security" and "justice". In fact, there are complex relationships between these concepts, so that power may manifest itself by emphasizing the protection of freedom, security, and justice (Turkel, 1990). In this case, these concepts are tools in the hands of the ruling class to use unlimited surveillance methods; strong supervision that leaves nothing but a simple name of freedom. This intense monitoring is beautifully illustrated in report of one spy:

"About men and old men, women and slaves and slaves and houses of prostitutes and patrols and nightclubs and jurists and baths and markets and houses and tribes and villages and resorts, about the letters of the Romans living there and those who came to Europe They have established and the Egyptians who have visited them,

every big and small issue has been recorded and reported here. From the elders and nobles and celebrities and what is related to them, their carnal habits and moods, their intellectual tendencies and hobbies, and what has passed from them to happiness and infidelity, are all here ” (Al-Ghitani, 1994: 11). From the elders and nobles and celebrities and what is related to them, their carnal habits and moods, their intellectual tendencies and hobbies, and what has passed from them to happiness and infidelity, are all here ” (Al-Ghitani, 1994: 11).

The result is a sense of "permanent control" every time and everywhere.

3: Collective action

For Foucault, society is a set of actions and reactions that are shaped by behavioral patterns over time (Grimshaw, 1993). Therefore, individuals collectively have same actions against phenomena, culture, and social norms. The social system in Zayani al-Barakat's novel is a network of interrelationships between individuals and groups:

“All people in Bataniya district, men and women, were cheering, their hands were shaking and their larynx was roaring. The conversations had completely changed. Likewise, the multiplicity of sentences and encouragement from people, especially women, who chanted slogans, laughed and shouted for happiness.” (Al-Ghitani, 1994: 105).

It seems that actions in society that this novel trying to portray are not result of a normal course of collective life, but are product of what is dictated to it. Interestingly, almost all social actors in this novel are men, and women are always in shadows and behind the scenes.

4: The rich and poor

The social novels talk a lot about ordinary people; their relationship with each other and with people of high class. Zayani al-Barakat's novel also pays close attention to depiction of public and social places. Coffee houses and shops are places where history is told by the poor in a different way than the history of those in power.

“People in cafes listen to poets ... They follow the news of Barmakian in the time of Bani Abbas, Hazrat Suleiman and the rule over goblins, the martyrdom of "Habib Najib" in Karbala and ... (Al-Ghitani, 1994: 92).

5: Social conflict and criticism

At the heart of social novel lies a kind of protest (Abdullah 2017). The author of social novel is in a state of negation before any action and says "no" to everything. This protest is a "no" to any kind of deviation, injustice and social, political, moral, religious and educational pollution that the novelist observes around him and does not tolerate. In Zayani al-Barakat's novel, Saeed is a character who does not give in to the oppression and hypocrisy of society and protests against it.

"A black man is hanged, a thief's hand is cut off, a woman who steals a piece of bread, left hand is cut off Saeed's heart - like a bird's chick with its wings wet - is impatient. Why does this happen, why? Questions invade him "(Al-Ghitani, 1994: 25)

Fifth) Educational-comparative explanation

The components of Foucault's theory are all educational. The structure of power in Foucault's theory - unlike conventional analysis - does not emphasize overt force and weapons, although power does use weapons. Knowledge plays a major role in the new power. The education system serves the power system in two ways: First, production of knowledge (effective sciences in service of human control) and second, preparation of human resources (scientists) (Niesche, & Gowlett, 2019). In Zayani al-Barakat's novel, the system of power has information about all people. It monitors people's behavior everywhere, but lacks knowledge to serve society. It also lacks the modern education system that Foucault mentions in a knowledge-based society. The educational system governing Zayani al-Barakat's novel is an old system to which both power and people are accustomed. For this reason, behaviors follow traditional patterns rooted in history; behaviors such as fear and surrender to power, pessimism in social relations, overcoming personal interests, and ignoring children and women. These characteristics are common to all Third World societies. Educational, political, social and economic systems serve each other and do not allow change. That is why even the presence and establishment of new organizations does not change the power relations, but rather strengthens them through new regulatory methods.

4. Conclusion

Al-Ghaitani has tried to address ruling power in Zayani al-Barakat novel. He wants to show that power does not manifest itself in a blatant and obvious way, but controls everything in a very complicated and clever way. Most importantly, it changes and controls people's minds and behaviors. Al-Ghitani also sees domination in Arab countries as a theorized issue, with all processes in this part of the world moving in direction of sending people to dreams and demands that ensure

preservation of existing power. Demands such as past civilization, historical superiority, nationalism, and building of a united Arab empire; dreams that Jamal Abdul Nasser made for the Egyptian people without success. Nasser's legacy has been passed on to other Middle Eastern leaders for years. Like Nasser, they dreamed of their own nations. Unattainable dreams that are taught to children in schools, in textbooks and in everyday slogans. Then they grow up - and in Foucault's terms, with self-discipline learned from school- enter society and re-serve power. From al-Ghitani's point of view, it is the power of network in which everyone is involved, and human beings, institutions and structures all serve it. From al-Ghitani's point of view, power is a network in which everyone is involved, and human beings, institutions and structures all serve it.

The poor are another component of author's attention in this novel. The image that al-Ghitani derives from this class is picture of a nation ruled by "ignorance." Where facilities are not based on merit - but on relationships and lobbying - and knowledge and expertise have no place in it. In his view, vigilance against domination is something to be considered; because the ruling class - wherever necessary - will try to maintain its political, ideological, economic and social dominance through a fully educational-security atmosphere. And finally, this novel is story of emergence of a new controller named Zayani al-Barakat, a policeman who, by entering the field of politics, brings hope for reform; but little by little is the fear of him that fills the place of hope. In this story, the author tries to show the situation of his society through a complex narrative relying on "Arab history". Welcoming Zayani al-Barakat's book in other Middle East countries shows that the system of power and its relationship with other social systems through organizations such as schools still continues, and that the coming and going of old and new dictators has not changed relationship of domination. Egypt itself is a testament to this claim. After General Nasser, three more generals have arrived, but power relations in Egypt are still the same as when al-Ghitani wrote his novel. Unfortunately, there are many in the Middle East like Egypt.

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