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Subjection and Defiance in the Tannery: Power Relations, Discipline, and Resistance in Houshang Moradi Kermani's School Story, "The Smile of the Pomegranate"

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Abstract

This article examines the representation of power relations, disciplinary practices and defiance in Houshang Moradi Kermani's school story, "The Smile of the Pomegranate", through a Foucauldian lens. Employing a descriptive-interpretive approach this research situates itself within the field of comparative literature as defined by Henry Remak (1961), who posits that comparative literature is concerned with the relationships between literature and various other fields of knowledge, including sociology. As Foucault's perspective on discipline and punishment explores the intersection of literature with broader social dimensions of power relations and disciplinary practices, this research aligns with the sociological aspect of comparative literature. The findings indicate that the fictional characters in this story are transformed into docile bodies that serve the utility and productivity of society through the implementation of significant disciplinary techniques such as examination, surveillance, hierarchical observation, documentation, internalization, and normalization, along with micro-penalties related to time, speech, and behavior. Moreover, the story elucidates the complicity of the family with the school institution in the formation of docile bodies. To mold pupils into docile bodies, the headmaster suppress their childhood playfulness, viewing it as a hindrance to the cultivation of productivity. The use of symbols and proper names functions as a mechanism for disciplinary practices as well. Nevertheless, this story also introduces a form of resistance that diverges from Foucault's framework. While Foucault envisions resistance within existing power structures, here the character's resistance, Farid, radically subvert the entire disciplinary system, thereby challenging the conventional hierarchy between child and adult.

Keywords: Houshang Moradi Kermani, School story, "The Smile of the Pomegranate", Michel Foucault, Comparative literature

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Introduction

Power (relation) plays a fundamental role in children's and young adult literature. Roberta Selinger Trites (2000), examining young adult literature through the lens of Michel Foucault, argues that the central issue in this genre is power, which she considers even more critical than the issue of growth. Maria Nikolajeva (2009) goes beyond Trites' position, asserting that power is a pervasive element throughout children's literature, from ABC books to young adult novels. She highlights that this focus on power aligns children's literature with other literatures about marginalized groups, such as those centered on women and indigenous peoples. These works often explore power structures, either supporting or challenging the existing social order and status quo (7).

Among the various genres of children's literature, the school story is uniquely characterized by its weaving of power relations whether through clear demonstrations of authority or more subtle influences. Definitions of school stories vary, but most agree that the school setting is central to this genre. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* states that in these works, the school is "not just a backdrop but rather is the raison d'être of the novel" (online edition, 2006). Grenby (2008) also maintains that that school "features almost as a character itself" (87). Although David Rudd (2012) observes a shift where the school setting has become less central to the plot, he still believes that "the most memorable school stories […] are those in which the school is almost a character in itself" (238). Since its beginnings with Sarah Fielding's *The Governess; or, The Little Female Academy* (though there is some debate on the exact origins of this genre), school stories in the Western world have consistently highlighted power dynamics, a theme that continues to captivate researchers and scholars.

The ongoing scholarly investigation into school stories stems from an interest in real-world power dynamics and the transmission of socialization from adults to children, as reflected in the fiction of this genre. Adults, in positions of authority, engage in socializing students within the school environment, frequently encountering resistance from the younger generation. Thus, the school story genre becomes a rich terrain where the realities of power dynamics and socialization are both mirrored and contested. Grenby (2008) characterizes this genre as simultaneously oppressive and negotiable, highlighting the complex interplay between institutional authority and individual autonomy. He views the genre as oppressive because it requires individuals to internalize school discipline and ethos (113). Yet, it also serves as a realm where a delicate balance between submission and defiance, authority and freedom, is negotiated (113). This dual nature reflects the broader social landscape's realities, making the genre a focal point for examining power relations.

In Western children's and young adult literature, the evolution of the school story from Victorian times to the present has aided in our understanding of changing perspectives on childhood, education, and power dynamics. However, there is a

significant gap in the study of this genre, particularly in relation to power dynamics, within Iranian children's and young adult literature. This research deficiency becomes more apparent when we acknowledge that both adult and children's literature in Iran contain numerous stories that revolve around schools and power dynamics, either as central themes or as integral parts of larger narratives.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

Considering the scarcity of academic attention focused on power dynamics within Iranian school stories, this article sets out to explore how this phenomenon is portrayed in Houshang Moradi Kermani's "The Smile of the Pomegranate". Moradi Kermani is an Iranian notable writer in children's and young adult literature, who has written several works set in schools or with schools as a central backdrop. "The Smile of the Pomegranate" revolves around the subtle and overt exertion of disciplinary measures by authority figures, aiming to shape students' perspectives and behaviors. This story thread resonates with Michel Foucault's seminal work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), wherein he addresses the pervasive nature of power across societal domains, including educational institutions. Drawing from Foucault's insights, this study answers the question: how are power relations, disciplinary practices and resistance represented in Moradi Kermani's "The Smile of the Pomegranate"?

This research falls within the field of comparative literature based on Henry H. H. Remak's definition that

> Comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences (e.g., politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, etc., on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression (Remak 1961: 3).

In line with Remak's definition, my article draws on Foucault's theories of power and disciplinary practices, positioning itself within the field of comparative literature. This perspective moves beyond traditional views that limit comparative literature to comparing two national literatures, whether within a single cultural context or across different nations. Instead, it embraces a more expansive inquiry that explores the dynamic interaction between literature and disciplines like the social sciences, as illuminated by Foucault's theoretical framework. Such an approach not only deepens our comprehension of literature but also showcases its ability to shed light on complex themes of power and discipline across diverse areas of human knowledge. This research exemplifies how comparative literature serves as a crucial

ground for interdisciplinary dialogue, offering insights into societal issues through the dual lenses of literary analysis and theoretical exploration. It underscores the evolving nature of comparative studies, highlighting its capacity to foster broader intellectual engagement and critical discourse within scholarly communities.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in various dimensions. Firstly, it illuminates the mechanisms by which disciplinary practices influence the behavior and subjectivity of students. This understanding not only enhances our understanding of Iranian school stories but also offers valuable insights into wider societal power dynamics, going beyond the realms of literature and providing implications for educational policy and practice.

Secondly, this underscores the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in literary analysis. By integrating Foucault's theories on power and discipline with the study of literature, I demonstrate the interdisciplinary relevance of literary scholarship. This interdisciplinary framework enables a deeper understanding of Moradi Kermani's works, revealing the intricate intersections between literature, culture, and education. Furthermore, this investigation highlights the enduring relevance of Foucault's ideas in contemporary literary analysis, demonstrating how his theories continue to offer insights into power relations and disciplinary practices in diverse cultural contexts.

Critical Review of Literature

The study of the school story as an independent genre in the mainstream of Iranian children's and young adult literary theory and criticism has been relatively unexplored, especially regarding its evolutionary trajectory and thematic exploration. When focusing on the issue of power relations in this genre, we notice a scarcity of comprehensive inquiries capable of delineating the taxonomy of power dynamics in the stories falling within this genre. Among the scholarly inquiries addressing the issue of power relations in this genre, notable mention can be made of Negin Binazir's research. In her 2018 article, Binazir employs a Foucauldian lens to analyze the power discourse and disciplinary mechanisms in Houshang Moradi Kermani's a subsequent article (2019), she shifts her focus to the role of disciplinary technology in shaping the corporeal dimensions of students within selected Iranian school stories. Drawing on the sociology of the body and theoretical frameworks from scholars like Michel Foucault, she examines how disciplinary mechanisms, techniques, and strategies contribute to the formation and configuration of students' bodies.

Rahbarian's research (2016) investigates the depiction of schools and the complexities of education in contemporary Persian literature. His study analyzes a wide range of works by Iranian writers, including works for adults and children, depicting both positive and negative schooling experiences through memoirs and fictional narratives. However, Rahbarian's study does not specifically examine the

representation of power relationsin Iranian children's and young adult literature and the discussion on power relations is brief and mainly descriptive.

The choice of Foucault as a specific and fitting theoretical framework for studying power relations in Iranian school stories holds great significance. Foucault's theories provide a comprehensive analytical toolkit that resonates with the power, discipline, and knowledge dynamics present in these stories. This selection is particularly meaningful due to the prevalence of disciplinary practices in Iran's educational system, both historically and in the contemporary context. My research, which also adopts a Foucauldian approach to analyze a story by Houshang Moradi Kermani, introduces new contributions and innovations. One key aspect is the shift in textual focus. While Binazir concentrates on *Majid's Tales*, I explore a different narrative by the same author. This change enables a comparative analysis within Kermani's body of work, shedding light on how various stories by the same writer may portray differences in power dynamics and disciplinary practices. Furthermore, while Binazir concentrates on specific Foucauldian themes like visibility, categorization, and the formation of docile bodies, my research examines other Foucauldian concepts such as micro-penalties as well. This broader thematic exploration enriches the understanding of Foucauldian dynamics in Kermani's stories.

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

Michel Foucault has discussed the issue of power and its relation to discipline and disciplinary methods as extensively as he does in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). It is noteworthy that, as pointed out by Havis (2014), while Foucault formally addresses power and discipline in *Discipline and Punish*, these themes can also be found in his other works, such as *History of Madness* (110). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault begins with a description of a brutal public execution in 1757 and transitions to the more regimented and *seemingly* humane practices of modern penal institutions. He poses a central question: how did Western societies move from the spectacle of public torture and execution to the more hidden, systematic, and regulated forms of punishment we see today? His exploration aims to reveal the underlying power mechanisms that enabled this shift. He aims to demonstrate that the shift was not merely about becoming more humane but was part of a broader strategy of power to exert control in more efficient and pervasive ways.

Foucault's work (1977) is deeply connected to various social institutions, including schools. He argues that the same disciplinary techniques used in prisons are also employed in other institutions like schools, hospitals, military barracks, and factories (140, 172, 227-228). These institutions share common strategies for managing and regulating individuals: constant surveillance, detailed documentation, rigorous routines, and a system of rewards and punishments designed to enforce conformity and productivity. In schools, for example, disciplinary techniques are evident in the use of timetables, the organization of space (classrooms arranged to

facilitate surveillance), and the monitoring of student behavior and performance. Schools teach not only academic knowledge but also social norms and acceptable behaviors, preparing individuals to become docile and productive members of society.

The research approach is qualitative and adopts a descriptive-interpretive method (Maykut & Morehouse 2002). Qualitative research highlights the importance of exploring the depth, richness, and context of human experiences and social phenomena, which is crucial for examining how power is constructed, maintained, and resisted in Houshang Moradi Kermani's school stories. Data analysis is carried out using thematic analysis, a flexible and robust method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. This approach is well-suited for literary analysis as it allows for a systematic exploration and interpretation of the complex and layered representations of power relations within the texts. Through thematic analysis, key themes related to Foucault's concepts of discipline punishment, and resistance are identified and examined in the context of Kermani's stories. The following section will detail the main aspects of Foucault's theory on power relations and discipline, as they relate to the analysis of "The Smile of the Pomegranate".

Results and Discussion

"The Smile of the Pomegranate" stands as the inaugural piece in a collection of 16 short stories written by Houshang Moradi Kermani under the same title. This story narrates a commemorative gathering, wherein former pupils of the late principal, Mr. Dabbagh, now distinguished and accomplished individuals, convene annually to pay homage to his enduring legacy, disciplinary regime. These esteemed alumni unanimously ascribe their achievements to Mr. Dabbagh's uncompromising disciplinary measures, which notably encompassed the use of corporal punishment administered with pomegranate sticks and bastinado.

In this story, school functions as an institution dedicated to molding subjects that are both productive and efficient for society and the family, or in Foucault's terms they have to become "docile body". The term refers to a body that is subjected, used, transformed, and improved through various techniques of control and regulation. Foucault explains that modern power mechanisms aim to produce bodies that are docile and capable, meaning they are both obedient and efficient (Foucault 1977: 137). To maximize the utility and efficacy of the students, the school must implement discipline. Any deviation from established values and norms, as well as any failure to become a useful and effective member of society, should be corrected through disciplinary methods.

Dr. Mehrava, now a distinguished physician, has transformed to such a docile body. Taking immense pride in his transformation into an efficacious and advantageous individual, one who serves a plethora of patients, he ascribes his success and eminence to the stringent disciplinary measures imposed upon him by Mr. Dabbagh:

> I will speak candidly and without reservation: if I am a successful doctor today—one who has treated hundreds of patients and whom many aspiring young doctors wish to emulate—it is entirely due to the discipline and, most significantly, the beatings I received from that great man. They set me on the right path, rescuing me from laziness and neglect of my studies. […] Today, in this place, I believe the prayers of many patients, whom I have treated and relieved from pain and suffering, are owed to the man who acquainted me with discipline, diligence, and effort. Yes, these hands that can now alleviate the pain of the afflicted in the operating room, and restore them to health and vitality, have not forgotten the sting of those pomegranate sticks, even to this day (Moradi Kermani 2011: 8-9).

The recognition and commendation of Mr. Dabbagh's disciplinary methods by Dr. Mehrava illuminate the profound workings of disciplinary power, which not only regulates external behavior but also infiltrates the innermost aspects of the individual, shaping their attitudes, beliefs, and subjectivity. Dr. Mehrava's narrative exemplifies this internalization of disciplinary mechanisms, as he attributes his professional success to the rigorous discipline he received. This indicates that such disciplinary practices not only rectified his conduct but also sculpted his identity, aspirations, and selfhood, reflecting the deep-seated influence of disciplinary power.

Although in this story Mr. Dabbagh as the representative of the power institution endeavors to mold such subjects, or in Foucault's term, "docile body" through various disciplinary methods it is important to note a particular point here. Foucault (1977) asserts that, historically, the methods of power exertion have shifted from open spectacle sovereign forms to disciplinary technologies as exerted by institutions such as schools. This transition involves a significant reduction in the use of physical pain and punishment. Instead, modern disciplinary techniques rely on surveillance, normalization, and the internalization of norms to achieve control and compliance. This marks a shift towards more subtle and pervasive forms of power that are embedded within the structures of society. However, in this story, traces and remnants of the traditional sovereign system, which involves public punishment (receiving public bastinado) and the infliction of pain on the body are still evident.

Another example of how disciplinary mechanisms construct docile bodies oriented towards greater utility and efficiency can be found in the statements of Mrs. Akbari, a literature teacher, who begins with a poem by Sa'di:

"Harshness and gentleness work together,
Like the vein-cutter who is both a surgeon and a healer"

By invoking Sa'di, a classical Iranian poet, Mrs. Akbari emphasizes that the principles of discipline and education have deep roots in Iranian culture, thereby legitimizing the use of corporal punishment. She aligns the harsh disciplinary methods employed by Mr. Dabbagh with Sa'di's balanced view of harshness and gentleness, underscoring the main theme of the story: the relationship between discipline,

education, and success. This suggests that enduring and overcoming hardships is often a prerequisite for achieving success. To concretize the notion of how harsh disciplinary measures lead to productive success and individuals' utility, Dr. Mehrava is cited as an example whom despite enduring severe physical punishment from Mr. Dabbagh, has transformed into a useful body.

To train individuals and amplify their capabilities, as the main function of discipline, Mr. Dabbagh hinges on major disciplinary techniques and means of correct training. Foucault believes that the success of disciplinary power is manifested through the application of simple instrument such as hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and their combination in the form of a concept he calls examination)Foucault .(170 Mr .Dabbagh executes the examination process to its fullest extent in order to maximize docile bodies and disciplinary power .By analyzing the following quotes from Dr .Mehrava ,we can better understand how Mr .Dabbagh's concept of examination manifests in practice:

> From the very outset ,he meticulously monitored my attendance ,overseeing my lessons and exercises personally .Every day ,Mr .Dabbagh would administer blows to my palms and feet using pomegranate sticks ,those same ones mentioned by Mr .Sepehri ,until got trained .I distanced myself from unsuitable friends ,ensured punctual attendance at school ,finished my homework promptly) Moradi Kermani.(8 :2011

For Foucault *examination* "combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish" (Foucault 184). The fact that Mr. Dabbagh meticulously monitors the protagonist's attendance and oversees their lessons and exercises personally reflects hierarchical observation and surveillance, where authority figures observe and regulate individuals' behavior within institutional setting. Mr. Dabbagh's administration of physical punishment using pomegranate sticks serves as a form of normalizing judgment. Through this punishment, the protagonist is disciplined and corrected to conform to established norms and expectations. This aligns with Foucault's idea that examination involves techniques of observing hierarchy and normalizing judgment to qualify, classify, and punish individuals. He is judged and categorized based on his behavior in doing tasks and his relationship with friends. Because he fails to meet the expected standards he is deemed in need of correction and is thus classified as disobedient or unruly.

Mr. Dabbagh's disciplinary actions towards the character in this example, and throughout the story, reflect a ritualistic aspect of examination that Foucault (1977) identifies as an element of examination, serving to normalize behavior and uphold institutional authority through repetitive actions and symbolic gestures. Mr. Dabbagh's daily administration of physical punishment using pomegranate sticks represents a ritualistic aspect of examination. The repetitive nature of this punishment, coupled with its symbolic significance, transforms it into a ritual that

reinforces disciplinary norms and power dynamics within the educational institution. Mr. Dabbagh's meticulous monitoring of the protagonist's attendance and activities further contributes to the this ritualistic aspect.

Mr. Dabbagh, akin to an omnipresent spirit, permeates the entire educational environment with his examination practices, which encompass hierarchical observation and a panoptic, normalizing gaze. Another former student of the school recalls how Mr. Dabbagh's ubiquitous presence and his remarkable ability to instill a spirit of discipline in the students left a lasting impression:

> I was a geometry teacher. To be honest, I couldn't quiet the class. Whenever I had a lesson, Mr. Dabbagh would take his seat, bring it behind the classroom door, and sit there with the door half-opened. The children, out of fear of him, remained silent, attentively listening to my lecture. When we lined up, we had no need for a monitor; Mr. Dabbagh's spirit sufficed. No child would misbehave or step out of line. Everyone would calmly and silently depart from the queue when they reached their street or home (Moradi Kermani 2011: 21-22).

Mr Dabbagh's process of examination in terms of hierarchical observation has left permanent psychological effects on people's personality and psyche. In various situations throughout this story, we witness how discipline, as a perpetual force, has firmly and indelibly established its presence within the individual. In this context, Abdul Hossein states "[I] stayed up late to complete [my homework]. If I didn't finish and went to sleep, I'd be haunted by frightening dreams of Mr. Dabbagh's punishments until morning" (8). And

> We happened to have guests one night, and we conversed and laughed with them until the late hours. I grew profoundly weary and fell asleep. In the middle of the night, I dreamt of my palms burning. I woke up, switched on the light, and wrote five pages of homework. My mother woke up and said "Abdul Hossein go to sleep", but I paid no heed to my mother. (9)

Both quotations illustrate how the effects of disciplinary power are perpetual and deeply ingrained in the minds of individuals. Foucault asserts that discipline "is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy" (Foucault 170). This perpetual control is evident in how Abdul Hossein's behavior is continuously dictated by the fear of punishment. The absence of immediate external pressure does not diminish the power's effectiveness; instead, it underscores another disciplinary technique, namely surveillance, reflecting Foucault's idea regarding the role of constant monitoring and control in disciplinary practices. As Foucault states, it is one of the characteristics of discipline that one behaves in such a way that he is always under surveillance in order to accept the norms (Havis, 2014: 110). The psychological dimension of Foucault's theory is also highlighted here, with

dreams and physical sensations (burning palms) clearly indicating how disciplinary power operates within the subconscious mind, shaping behavior through fear and internalized norms.

Mr. Dabbagh, in addition to employing major disciplinary techniques like examination, utilizes subtle stratagems that transform individuals into docile bodies. These micro-strategies align with Foucault's concept of "micro-penalty," which encompasses small, everyday actions and practices that shape behavior and subjectivity. Foucault argues that these micro-penalties are essential for the functioning of disciplinary power, as they constantly reinforce norms and regulate conduct at a micro-level. They include various minor but significant punishments, such as penalties related to time management (lateness, absences), activity, behavior (impoliteness, disobedience), and speech (idle chatter, insolence) (Foucault 178).

Instances of these micro-penalties abound in the story. Mr. Sepehri, acting as the program host, consistently underscores the importance of time management and redirects any discourse not directly relevant to the main subject matter. Another illustration of the micro-penalty related to time occurs when Mrs. Akbari's husband asserts his deserving of punishment for arriving late to the gathering, emphasizing his adherence to the disciplinary norms instilled by Mr. Dabbagh during his student years. His wife, Mrs. Akbari also ardently maintains that her husband must not be exempt from this punitive measure:

> Mrs. Akbari's husband had mingled with the crowd, taken off his shoes and socks, and lay on the stage, shouting, beat me, I am guilty. I was absent without permission. Punish me. His wife pleaded, don't break his spirit, beat him, or he will die of sorrow and take it out on me (Moradi Kermani 2011: 39).

The insistence of Mrs. Akbari and her husband on physical punishment and his belief in deserving such treatment also suggest that discipline interacts with individuals in a manner whereby they voluntarily subject themselves to disciplinary measures. As Foucault states "discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (Foucault 170).

Another kind of micro-penalty in the story is related to regulating speech within disciplinary frameworks. This is evident in a situation when Mr. Hashemi, now nearly an old man, is speaking, and Mr. Esfandi makes a comment during his talk. Here, Mr. Sepehri admonishes him, saying, "do not speak without permission. Your name has been noted down." (14). Mr. Sepehri's command that Mr. Esfandi must not speak without permission reinforces the hierarchical structure of authority and the sanctioned flow of discourse. This control over speech is a form of exercising power by delineating the boundaries of acceptable behavior and communication. The significance of Mr. Esfandi's name being noted down is deeply tied to Foucault's idea of the documentation as a tool of power which is related to the concept

of *examination*. Foucault asserts that the examination process creates detailed *documentation*, generating archives centered on individuals' physical and temporal specifics. This system subjects individuals to surveillance and incorporates them into extensive written records, intensifying registration and document accumulation (Foucault 189). In Foucault's idea, his power of writing became essential to discipline, adopting traditional administrative methods but introducing unique techniques for identification and description. Here, documentation creates a record that can be used to control and discipline individuals further. It implies a future consequence and serves as a reminder of the individual's subjugation to the rules. This act of recording is not just about the immediate reprimand but also about maintaining a system of surveillance that perpetuates power relation.

These micro-penalties, particularly micro-penalties pertaining to time, are not only imposed by Mr. Dabbagh upon the students but also upon the teachers and himself. By ensuring punctuality among the teachers, Mr. Dabbagh enforces a norm of discipline that permeates the entire institution. Mr. Esmaeili, one of the former teachers describes his memories as follows:

> There was never a teacher who would come to school late. One day, I was 5 minutes late, and Mr. Dabbagh grabbed me and said you were 3 hours and 25 minutes late. I said, 'Sir, I was only 5 minutes late. He responded, 'You are the math teacher, you have 41 students, and you owe each of them 5 minutes. It adds up to 3 hours and 25 minutes.' Dabbagh was unparalleled in his insistence on discipline (Moradi Kermani 2011: 19).

Besides serving as the headmaster, Mr. Dabbagh taught history. On a particular day, the father of one of his students caused him to arrive at class approximately seven minutes late. Seizing the opportunity, a naughty student writes on the board, proclaiming that "order commences with punctuality" (24). Mr. Dabbagh, acknowledging the truth in the statement, addresses the class with humility, acknowledging his own lack of punctuality. Subsequently, he decides to uphold the principle of order by refusing to teach the class, despite the students' pleas and insistence. Instead, he closes the class, highlighting the importance of punctuality as the foundation of order.

The formation of docile bodies extends beyond the educational institution, with the family playing a significant and accomplice role alongside the school in this process. An example of this complicity occurs as follows:

> During the years Mr. Dabbagh was the school headmaster, some cultural authorities wanted him to resign, but he managed to hold his ground. There was one incident, for instance, when he had severely beaten the son of the local governor in the garden, and despite the governor himself remaining silent, his wife went to the Office of Education. Eventually, things escalated to the point where Mr. Dabbagh didn't come to school for three days. The whole town was in chaos ;all the parents and children gathered at the Office of Education they staged a food strike ,demanding that Dabbagh must come to his school ,and

> said" Anyone who has a spoiled and cute child should take them away from this school .We want our children to have a future ,to become someone ".It was strange that even the children themselves were crying and pleading for Mr. Dabbagh to come because the school had fallen apart.(24-25)

In this scenario, the parents and children, through their advocacy for the reinstatement of Mr. Dabbagh, may be implicitly validating the disciplinary framework and its authority. The community's response to Mr. Dabbagh's temporary absence, characterized by protests and calls for his return, serves to underscore the extent of their endorsement of his disciplinary methodologies. Parents and students alike acknowledge his pivotal role in molding and rehabilitating the students, akin to society's acknowledgment of the indispensability of disciplinary measures for societal order.

In this story, the depiction of disciplinary power is not just shown through the experiences of the fictional characters but is also closely tied to the symbols and proper names. The school's name, "Talash" (Endeavour), encapsulates the concept of continuous effort towards improvement and achievement. It signifies the objective of cultivating individuals who are not merely well-behaved but also highly functional and capable of maximizing their potential. Within Foucault's framework, the school's name symbolizes the broader educational objective of producing bodies that are efficient and productive. Through rigorous training, surveillance, and normalization, the institution endeavors to mold students into individuals who can effectively fulfill their roles within the social and economic order. The underlying notion is to equip students not only to comply with societal norms but to excel and contribute significantly to the productivity of society.

Mr. Dabbagh, whose name means *tanner* metaphorically represents the application of disciplinary methods to his pupils. Tanning, or *dabbaghi*, is the process of converting animal hides into leather, wherein the tanner must soften the hides through drying, salting, and removing hair, waste, and other extraneous elements. This process transforms raw hides into valuable and functional material. Similarly, Mr. Dabbagh aims to shape his pupils into productive, well-adjusted members of society. To achieve this transformation, akin to a tanner; he must eliminate the "waste" that impedes their development—namely, the childish playfulness that obstructs discipline. Dr. Mehrava, now in adulthood, refers to the superfluous nature of childhood playfulness and expresses gratitude to Mr. Dabbagh for eradicating this playfulness from him. Dr. Mehrava's statement implicitly conveys those disciplinary methods aim to eliminate playfulness of childhood. In this process, the child must swiftly adopt the norms of the adult world and mature into an adult. In other words, tannery allegorically functions as childhood tannery, the most important component of which is playfulness.

The story takes a pivotal turn as the recollections of Mr. Dabbagh's former

students, who nostalgically praise the school's stringent disciplinary system, are disrupted by an unexpected event. This disruption is brought about by a young boy named Farid, whose bold questioning of the established discipline system:

> The former students of Talash School had turned the hall into a bustling scene. Suddenly, a young boy, Farid, who had climbed up one of the pomegranate trees plucked a few fruits and stood on the table. Holding a smiling pomegranate in one hand and the bastinado in the other, he said: "Dear elders, I have plucked the school's pomegranates without permission, I have not studied diligently this year and as a result, I have failed two subjects. I shattered the window in the neighbor's room and increased the tape recorder's volume to such an extent that it disturbed and agitated everyone. I dislike homemade food; kashk and eggplant dip (Kashk-e-Bademjan) and broth are not to my taste. Beat me. I yearn to taste the flavor of discipline." No one knew what to say. Some shed tears as Farid slowly backed away, inching towards the backstage door. Mr. Sepehri yelled, "Where? Where are you taking the bastinado?" The crowd saw through the window that Farid dashed out of the school holding the bastinado (Moradi Kermani 2011: 39-40).

This event constitutes a critical turning point in the story, presenting an antithesis to Mr. Dabbagh's disciplinary approach. In removing the bastinado from the school and fleeing the scene, Farid not only rejects Mr. Dabbagh's methods but also embodies a broader resistance to oppressive systems of control. His actions signify a shift towards self-determination and autonomy, as he refuses to passively accept the dictates of authority figures. Furthermore, Farid's departure from the hall prompts introspection among the spectators, who are left grappling with their own complicity in perpetuating systems of discipline. Some shed tears, perhaps recognizing the emotional toll of conformity and the courage required to challenge it. Farid emerges as a symbol of hope and resilience, challenging the status quo and inspiring others to envision alternative pathways towards personal and collective liberation.

If interpreting Farid's actions through the lens of Foucauldian analysis, one may argue that his actions align with Foucault's perspective on resistance in that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault 1978: 95). Foucault views resistance as an integral aspect of power, inherently interconnected and mutually dependent; resistance as *the other of* power. Farid's removal of the bastinado from the school, therefore might be as manifestation of resistance against the disciplinary power structures embedded within the institution. In line with Foucault's assertion, Farid's resistance is not positioned as an external force opposing power but rather emerges as an intrinsic element of the power relations at play. This means that any form of resistance is shaped by the very structures of power it opposes, and conversely, power is defined and maintained through the presence of resistance.

The idea that resistance is seen as an intrinsic effect of power, or as power's means of self-subversion has led some commentators to assert that the technologies of power, which create and shape forms of subjectivity, are never entirely successful. As Oksala (2014) asserts, Judith Butler, for example, argues that in Foucault's view, resistance inevitably arises during the process of subjectification, which surpasses the normalizing objectives that drive it or intersects with other discursive regimes. This inadvertently produced discursive complexity disrupts the teleological goals of normalization. Since power always inadvertently generates resistance, even the most disciplined subject can engage in resistance (433). Thus, in elucidating the concept of resistance from Foucault's perspective, Oksala raises the question: if, as some commentators suggest, resistance arises spontaneously in Foucault's view, then how can the subject deliberately form resistance? In response, he refers to Foucault's later writings, wherein Foucault distinguishes between power and domination stating that it is impossible to completely escape the social field structured by power relations, it is possible to bring about changes within it. We can liberate subjects from states of domination—situations where the subject cannot overturn or reverse the power relation—and instead place them in contexts where power relations are interchangeable, variable, and open to strategies for change. Foucault explicitly sets this as an objective. In Foucault's view therefore, while a complete liberation from power is unattainable, it is both possible and necessary to achieve specific emancipations from various systems of domination: from oppressive power relations and the consequences of certain normalizing techniques.

Farid's initiative to remove the bastinado from the school constitutes a subversive act, similar to a praxis aimed at subvert disciplinary structures entirely. This resistance by Farid places him beyond the confines of the Foucauldian paradigm, where the subject wields power within the field of power relation. As articulated by Foucault, the prospect of liberation existing outside power dynamics is rendered implausible. Instead, the avenue for liberation entails strategic engagement within the realm of power, with the objective of *mitigating* domination. In this connection, Foucault contents that

> I do not think that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others. The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible. (Foucault 1997: 298).

Even if we agree with Foucault's assertion that "where there is power, there is resistance" Farid's actions do not align seamlessly with a Foucauldian framework of resistance. This is to say that Farid's resistance is not the type that occurs within the existing power relations; rather, he seeks to entirely dismantle the continuous

power relations that Mr. Dabbagh has transmitted to the former students, who, in turn, aim to perpetuate this system to the next generation. Farid's action constitutes a complete overthrow of this system which connects it more closely to anarchist and radical critical theory frameworks. These theories advocate for the dismantling of established power structures and the creation of fundamentally new systems of organization and governance. Farid's actions reflect a desire to break free from the cyclical perpetuation of oppressive power relations, envisioning a rupture rather than a reform or negotiation within the existing system.

In certain works, by Houshang Moradi Kermani falling within the genre of school story or having school as central setting, an interplay regarding the dynamic between prevailing disciplinary authority and the acts of resistance directed towards it emerges. However, it becomes apparent that Moradi Kermani's approaches this interplay with a discernibly varied perspective throughout his literary oeuvre. Negin Binazir (2018) examining Moradi Kermani's *Majid's Tales* through a Foucauldian lens, suggests that the subject (Majid) is not completely subjugated by disciplinary technology, but he shows resistance at some points. He praises and flatters Mesh Reza, for instance, to reduce the severity of whipping and corporal punishment. Or he asks his grandmother to apply henna on the soles of his feet because henna thickens the skin and this reduces the pain of corporal punishment. These instances, which Binazir deems illustrative of Majid's acts of resistance can be construed as a manifestation of resistance, as articulated by Foucault, wherein alterations within the prevailing power dynamics occur. It is characterized by a manipulation of power structures with the intent of effecting change and enhancing its circumstances rather than a direct attempt to dismantle the existing status quo. But Farid's form of resistance, as depicted in "The Smile of the Pomegranate" seeks not to modify and ameliorate one's circumstances within the existing power structure, but rather, deconstructing authoritarian educational system. Farid's actions embrace not only a displacement of power dynamics within the educational framework but displacement of the conventional hierarchy between child and adult.

This shift in Moradi Kermani's conceptualization of resistance between *Majid's Tales* (written in 1979) and "The Smile of the Pomegranate" (written in 1999) reflects broader socio-cultural and political changes both in Iran and globally. These changes encompass shifts in educational discourses, cultural and societal attitudes towards authority and children's agency. The evolution of Moradi Kermani's perspective on the concept of resistance should also be contextualized within the broader framework of his shifting views on childhood discourse. Kheradkhord et al. (2016), in their exploration of Houshang Moradi Kermani's stories from the 1940s to the 2000s, note a progressive evolution in the portrayal of childhood. As the stories transition towards the contemporary decades of the 1980s and 2000, a notable transformation occurs wherein children are depicted as increasingly independent entities endowed with the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas openly. This contrasts with earlier

narratives, where the primary focus lies in the expression of the author's personal tribulations and emotional states.

Conclusion

Despite the historical presence of school stories in Iranian children's and young adult literature, this genre has yet to be recognized as an independent category. To facilitate its recognition, it is crucial to undertake rigorous studies of these stories, with a focus on their themes. Regarding this significance, in this article I have investigated Houshang Moradi Kermani's "The Smile of the Pomegranate" through the lens of Foucault's theories on power relations and disciplinary practices, given the significant power dynamics between children and adults in both school stories and real-life contexts.

The findings of this research suggest that "The Smile of the Pomegranate" carries Foucault's ideas in *Discipline and Punish*. It portrays how the institution of school works to mold individuals into docile bodies, through disciplinary acts of surveillance, normalization, documentation and micro-penalties. School aims to regulate behavior and produce obedient subjects who internalize and uphold prevailing social orders through systematic control and regulation. These finding resembles to Louis Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatuses. According to Althusser (1971) ISAs are institutions such as schools, churches, media, and family that propagate ideology and maintain the power of the ruling class. Unlike Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), which use force, ISAs function primarily through ideology and cultural norms to shape individuals' beliefs and ensure social conformity. These institutions instill societal norms, values, and beliefs that align with the dominant ideology, thereby ensuring the reproduction of social relations essential for sustaining capitalist structures. Althusser's focus lies in how ISAs shape individuals' consciousness, molding them to accept and perpetuate existing power structures. Within the context of the school narrative, Althusser would view the institution not only as an educational entity but also as a pivotal site for ideological indoctrination, preparing students to fulfill predefined societal roles that maintain the status quo.

Together, Foucault and Althusser offer complementary insights into the mechanisms through which institutions like school influences individuals and uphold societal norms. Foucault's emphasis on disciplinary power enriches our understanding of how institutions regulate behavior and produce conformity, while Althusser's analysis highlights the broader ideological functions of institutions in maintaining social order and reinforcing dominant power relations. In analyzing the school named *Talash* in this story, both perspectives would recognize its dual role in educating and socializing students to fit into and perpetuate existing societal structures, whether through disciplinary control or ideological influence.

This story reveals not only the prevalent disciplinary mechanisms that reflect

Foucault's theories on discipline and punishment but also uncovers a profound narrative of resistance that challenges the very foundations of authority. This narrative embodies a symbolic rejection of institutionalized norms, signaling a call for transformative change. The act of resistance portrayed in this story aligns closely with Markland's scholarly investigation, which asserts that "through the resistance of fictional students [in school stories] these narratives recommend to child and youth readers non-conformist and even revolutionary attitudes that imagine students as the means of achieving changes to their various hegemonic societies" (Markland 2019: ii).

In this vein ,the transition from submission to defiance is illustrated in the story's depiction of Mr .Dabbagh's tannery .While the former students proudly bore the' tanned 'discipline that meticulously stripped away their childhood playfulness, Farid ,represents a new generation that stands in stark defiance .No longer content with the leathered conformity of the past ,he boldly challenges the metaphorical tannery itself .Farid's resistance transforms the narrative from one of submission and pride in being' tanned 'to one of rebellion against the process .The title of the story" ,The Smile of the Pomegranate "also seems to serves as a metaphor for such a shift .Historically ,Mr .Dabbagh employed pomegranate sticks as instruments of punishment ,enforcing a regime of fear and pain among the students .However ,with the decisive actions of Farid ,this punitive system has been effectively dismantled, bringing an end to the violent use of pomegranate's parts .In this context ,the smile of pomegranate becomes emblematic of liberation ,as if its expression embodies a gentle breeze of freedom from the formerly rigid and punitive order .It symbolizes the cessation of disciplinary practices and the ushering in of an era characterized by emancipation and relief from suffering.

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Endnotes

This verse is located in Saʿdi's *Golestān,* in the eighth chapter on the *dar ādāb-e ṣoḥbat*.

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