

A Foucauldian Analysis of Money in George Eliot's *Silas Marner*

Alireza Farahbakhsh¹, Zohreh Ahmadi²

¹Ph.D. in English Literature, University of Guilan, Iran

²M. A. in English Literature, University of Guilan, Iran
Farahbakhsh200@yahoo.com, Virginia.ahmadi@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The present article aims to offer a New Historicist reading of George Eliot's 1861 novel, Silas Marner based on Foucault's theories. This article presents two central questions: Are Foucauldian concepts of power and discourse traceable in George Eliot's Silas Marner and how characters' actions in Silas Marner demonstrate George Eliot's view on Victorian era's dominant view including money. To answer these questions, the researchers do a careful observation of Silas Marner considering Foucault's discourse of power. In other words, the manifestation of the concepts is explored in Silas Marner through tracing them in the actions and behaviors of the major characters (Silas Marner, Godfrey and Dunstan Cass). The present article reveals monetary system, social class, and capitalist society of Victorian time through the events of the mentioned novel. Also the article shows that Silas's power in discourse of money and the Cass brothers' resistance toward him.*

Keywords: *New Historicist Criticism, Michel Foucault, George Eliot, Discourse and Power*

1. INTRODUCTION

New Historicism is a literary theory that came into being in 1980 as a new theory focusing on how power relations within and through human culture in a society can affect a literary text. Klaus L. Berghahn explains Greenblatt's opinion who coined the term New Historicism in 1982, this new method would ground the study of literature in its historical context, or more precisely within the different discourses of the time.^[1] As a whole, a great number of theoretical concepts have been emerged in this field. Also, these principles have been developed by a number of different critics. For instance, Mukesh Williams says from Foucault's viewpoint, history moves through a series of structures that shape not only thinking but culture itself which is a source of inspiration for critics of New Historicism.^[2]

Foucault, an influential thinker of 20th century, was born on 15 October 1926 in Poitiers, France. He graduated in Philosophy from Saint-Stanislas school. Following his own interests, Foucault developed an early taste for Psychology and received the equivalent of a B.A. degree in Psychopathology in 1947. In 1948, he received another B.A. degree in Philosophy, worked in psychiatric hospital, and taught French at the University of Uppsala in Sweden during 1950. On the Whole, Foucault evolved into the head of the Philosophy departments at the University of Clermont-Ferrand and dedicated himself to Philosophy and human studies. He has been also the author of several notable works on madness, health, and mental illness such as *Mental Illness and Personality* (1954), *Mental Illness and Psychology* (1966), *Dream and Existence* (1954), and *Madness and Unreason: Madness and Civilization* (1961). As a whole, Chris Barker introduces Foucault who focused on a social reality at a particular historical moment by use of discourse. For this reason, cultural studies practitioners are more often using the concept of discourse in a more technical way that derives from the works of Foucault.^[3] Furthermore, Paul Fry claims that Foucault's writing concerns the circulation through social orders that he calls power. He also believes that the notion of power is one of the reasons which lead Foucault into being an influential theorist of New Historicist criticism. Fry asserts that following Foucault, New Historicists are interested in the distribution of power and the study of history undertaken by this school of thought in part to reveal systems of power which demonstrates a dominant culture during history.^[4] Harold Aram Veaser states from Greenblatt's opinion, new historicists not only have reopened Marx but also they have embraced Michel Foucault (the deeper theoretical influence on their work), and his effect is traced everywhere in the coded term power.^[5] Jonathan Gil Harris says the analysis of Foucault's power relation is different from Marxist critics'

conception of power. Marxists regard power as a commodity, the means of production which in capitalism is the property of bourgeoisie. For this reason, Greenblatt replaces Marxist conceptions of history and power with perceptions inflected by the work of Michel Foucault in particular.^[6]

As already mentioned, the present article aims to trace and utilize Foucault's notions of power and discourse in George Eliot's *Silas Marner*. Accordingly, a few points about Eliot are presented. Mary Ann Evans, Known as George Eliot, was born in England in 1819. She was the youngest child of an extended family with Robert and Fanny, coming from her father's first marriage and her real parents were Robert Evans and Christiana Pearson Evans. She grew up in Griff House where her father was a skillful estate manager. Likewise, Jan Jedrzejewski says the essential peace and security of the domestic environment of Mary Anne's childhood helped to create, in the future's writer imagination.^[7] Through meandering road of becoming a writer, she had aptly high education and kept an extensive program of reading and self-education. For this reason, Eliot became one of the most popular writers during the nineteenth century. To write her fictions, she took advantage of experiences of her childhood as well as her adulthood. For example, Eliot's full-length novel, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) is composed of her personal memories and emotions. As well as, her novels *Romola* (1862), *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866) and her greatest novel *Middlemarch* seems to be structured in the same way like her previous novels. As to Eliot's authorship, Harry E. Shaw declares that Eliot critiques forms of abstraction and objective social sciences, promoting in sociology and aesthetic realism, both of which are seen to capture the lived experience of ordinary people in a society. As a matter of fact, she considered struggle with the very project of imagining her philosophical views as a way of life, a struggle that shapes her realism.^[8] For instance, her second novel *Adam Bede* (1859) took on a story of country life and honesty of the portrayal of ordinary characters. Also, her two novels *Silas Marner* (1861) and *Daniel Deronda* (1867) recount the story of their protagonists involving dominant discourses of her society and time. Likewise, Jan Jedrzejewski states that the novels of George Eliot explore the central problems of the nineteenth century sociology, the relationship between the individual and community, including the evolutionary transformation of traditional local communities, issues related to agriculture, and traditional culture into a more complex, in consequence, alienating and atomized structure of the modern urban industrial society.^[7] Therefore, Foucauldian New Historicist criticism is an appropriate literary theory to analyze Eliot's works.

Foucault's notions of power and discourse are the main argument of the present article. The purpose of the article is to illustrate the dominant discourse of money in *Silas Marner* which is formed according to power relation among the major characters Silas Marner, Godfrey and Dunstan Cass. The fact is that by tracing the mentioned discourse according to the power relation among the characters in the novel, the period in which the novel has been written will be reviewed. Eliot illustrates Victorian people's idea on material factors such as money and social class through the destiny of the abovementioned characters. Concentrating on *Silas Marner*, the study also seeks to examine Eliot's view on money in Victorian era through Foucault's discourse of power. First, a brief digest of Foucault's concepts of power, discourse, the related terms, and also a brief synopsis of *Silas Marner* which highlighted significant details are presented. Then capitalist system of Victorian society and its purposes money and social class will be described. As a whole, before tracing these concepts in the text, Victorian people's idea on money will be interpreted by critics such as Mr. Hobbes, Jevons, and Richard Whately. Also money is described by Marxist critics. Meanwhile, the researcher utilizes Marxists' ideas on money to determine power in the text. Finally, power relations within the novel are examined according to Foucault's theory of power/knowledge.

2. DISCUSSION

Paul Fry says new historicists lay so much emphasis on the idea that the relationship between literature and history is reciprocal. He supports their view on history shapes or determines what literature can say in a given epoch and their view on literature itself is like a historical agent. [4] As already mentioned, a number of different critics have developed theoretical concepts of this field. For instance, Foucault's theory of the discourse of power is the framework of the New Historical theory. Sara Mills declares that Michel Foucault's perspective on discourse is not rooted within a larger system of fully worked out theoretical ideas, but is one element in Foucault's work. [9] O'Farrell says from Foucault's view the term discourse is used to define the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation for example clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse. In the most general sense, he utilizes it to mean a certain way of speaking. [10]

According to Mills, Foucault is interested not only in the structures which could be found in cultural artifacts, such as texts, but also in the larger scale structures which could be traced in discourse itself. Thus, Mills concludes that the study of discourse is not simply the analysis of utterances; it is also a concern with the structures and rules of discourse. [9] As Diana Taylor states episteme is the first structure of the term discourse and the prevailing order of knowledge to a historical period that accounts for the understanding of how things are connected in the overall field of knowledge. [11] Central to Foucault's notion of discourse is power. Foucault asserts that discourse is indispensable for an understanding of the role of power in the production of knowledge. [12] Paul Fry says from Foucault's point of view, power is not just the power of vested authorities, of state-sanctioned violence, or of tyranny form. In Foucault's view, power is frequently much more pervasively the way in which knowledge circulates in a culture: the way what we think that it is appropriate to think. [4] Also, Foucault's concept of power is encountered with resistance or resistances. According to Barry Smart, resistance is present everywhere power is exercised, that the network of power relations is formed of multiple forms of resistance. This has been interpreted by some commentators to mean that resistance is always and already colonized by power or inscribed within it and thereby is doomed to defeat. Such an objection is anticipated in Foucault's observation that although resistances exist by virtue of the strategic field of power relations, this does not mean that they are doomed to perpetual defeat, on the contrary they constitute an irreducible opposite of power relations. In other words both power and resistance are synonymous with sociality; their respective forms may change, but a society without relations of power and therefore forms of resistance is in Foucault's view inconceivable. [13] Before tracing these concepts in *Silas Marner*, a summary of the novel is presented.

Silas Marner begins with the description of weavers in that far-off time. After the broad opening, she introduces a particular weaver or a linen-weaver, named Silas Marner who worked at his vocation in a stone cottage near the village of Raveloe, Lantern Yard. His best friend William Dane is a young man who betrays Silas. Because of the treachery Silas departs from the town. He leaves his own country, people, and settles in old Raveloe.

Over there he meets different people like Squire Cass and his sons Godfrey and Dunstan or Dunsey, and Miss Nancy Lammeter. Squire Cass is the greatest man in Raveloe who lives in the large Red house. His second son Dunsey is bad natured and calls him a spiteful jeering fellow. He enters Silas's cottage and steals his coins and gold. After robbery, Dunstan never comes back home. Alongside Dunstan's wickedness, Eliot points to Godfrey's goals or thoughts. He thinks about his hidden marriage to drunken Molly Farren. Meanwhile, Squire Cass knows nothing about his marriage and speaks to Mr. Lammeter about his beautiful daughter Nancy. While Godfrey is forgetting his first marriage, his unwanted wife Molly heads toward the Red House. On the road she walks more sleepily and lazily under the breaking snow and clutches her sleeping baby at her bosom. But she dies on the way to the Red House. The little one rises on its legs, toddles through the snow straight into an open door of Silas's cottage. When Silas looks the baby, he holds the lost child in his arms. Indeed, Silas decides to keep the orphan child. Godfrey recognizes his own child and promises himself to provide money for her secretly.

Now Eliot portrays sixteenth years later. Eliot pictures Eppie and Silas who lives together. Meanwhile, the story moves back to Godfrey's world. Although Godfrey and Nancy are content with together during their life, they suffer from not childbearing. She also portrays Godfrey's his brother's skeleton which is lost sixteenth years ago. Godfrey's unloved brother Dunstan falls in the Stone pit and compacts between two great stones. There is all of the weaver's money with him. After disclosure of the theft Godfrey decides to say his secret to his wife. When Nancy understands, she offers to adopt Eppie. Godfrey also suggests Silas to keep or adopt Eppie. Even Godfrey is forced to tell the truth or the secret but Silas and Eppie do not accept this suggestion. Eppie says that she could not be happy without father Silas. With regard to Eppie's response, Godfrey becomes disappointed from Eppie's coming back home. In the end Eliot portrays Eppie's wedding party and her marriage with Aaron who is one of their neighbors' sons.

2.1. Topic of Money in Victorian Era

Tim Dolin states one of the certain subjects which *Silas Marner* represents is social and economic relations in mid-Victorian Britain. [14] In order to discover these reflections in the novel, it should be better to examine monetary system of Victorian society which forms a part of economic relations of that time. Francis O'Gorman asserts that money turned into a certain material factor in Victorian era

which is related to economic issues of that time. [15] As discussed earlier, the counterpart of New Historicism is Cultural Materialism which has Marxist roots in its theories. Peter Brooker states that Cultural Materialism considers culture in a society as a set of material practices. [16] Thus, the topic of money in Victorian era is a dominant discourse in Britain which has been reflected in Victorian literary works in forms of material matter. To sum up, Chris Snodgrass states that Victorians offer an explanation for success in life by two separate properties class and money. He says that in Victorian capitalist society the elite upper classes were naturally born to rule and to set the standard, in both gentility and political leadership, for the rest of society. He goes on to say the effects of Industrial Revolution on economic relationships of that time bring into economic problems. Snodgrass discusses due to the Industrial Revolution, the late eighteenth century was an age of expansion and went to a modern industrial culture through the nineteenth century. The fact is that the modern industrial culture creates industrial capitalism and principle of laissez-faire in the nineteenth century. [17] Chris Barker states that capitalism within cultural studies has come from the nineteenth century writings of a Marxist theorist Karl Marx. He says from Marx's view class conflict is a marker of capitalism whose fundamental division is between those who own the means of production, the bourgeoisie (upper class, aristocratic), and a working class (lower class) who must sell their labor to survive. Indeed, the value of the labor taken to produce goods, which become the property of the bourgeoisie, is more than the worker receives for it. [3] Louis Tyson states from Marxists' point of view all human activities are in term of distribution and dynamics of power. He believes that Marxists investigate human events and productions by focusing on relationships among socioeconomic classes, both within a society and among societies. [18]

Thus, capitalist system and its purpose which is success by money and social class is a part of history of Victorian society and are traced in the novel according to the Victorian era. Likewise, Foucault states that there can be no question of interpreting discourses with a view to writing a history of the referent. [19] Alan Sinfield also asserts that a literary work has a role in cultural production or it is a cultural apparatus because it produces culture of a period in which it has been written. [20]

2.2. Capital as Repressive Power

Eliot demonstrates the Cass family as the greatest family in the community of Raveloe. The greatest man in Raveloe was Squire Cass who lived in the large Red house with the handsome flight of stone steps in front and the high stables behind it, nearly opposite the church. It was thought a weakness in the Squire that he had kept all his sons Godfrey and Dunstan at home in idleness; and though some license was to be allowed to the young men whose fathers could afford it. [21] As a matter of fact, the Cass sons have no particular work to do and their credit is due to their father's capital in Raveloe. Dunstan Cass is one of the sons who seems bad natured during the novel, because he violates ethical value for money. Dunstan's older brother Godfrey also marries a pretty young woman called Molly Farren without telling his father Squire Cass. Unlike Dunstan, he was a good young man but he could not distinguish well from bad. In one part of the novel Dunstan appealed for money from his brother Godfrey. Godfrey said savagely, he must hand over the rent of Fowler's house to their father and doesn't have a shilling to bless himself with. But to get the money from Godfery, Dunstan even threatened Godfrey to tell their father his secret marriage to Molly. Dunstan also suggested his bother Godfrey to sell his horse Wildfire to pay his debt. Horse dealing is only one of many human transactions carried on in this ingenious manner in that time. Despite Godfrey's opposition to sell his horse, he decided to sell it. But before getting money through dealing Wildfire with traders Bryce and Keating, the horse ended up dead suddenly. He was confused and did not know how to tell his brother the story. On the way back home he realized Silas's cottage which was not locked. He could enter in the cottage and steal Silas's coin. [21] The fact is that to get money, Dunstan betrayed his brother by not telling him about dealing his horse and Silas by stealing his coins. He betrayed them, because money was his purpose in his life. Tim Dolin says laissez-faire economics theorists believe that Victorians' purpose the pursuit of wealth degraded and dehumanized individuals. They were driven by an intense individualism and believe that the welfare of individual surpassed any consideration. [14] Like Dunstan, Godfrey is one of the characters in the novel who emphasizes money and social class in his life to succeed. For example, Godfrey decided to forget his hidden marriage to Molly Farren because she became miser due to her addiction to opium. Squire Cass knew nothing about Godfrey's marriage and spoke to Mr. Lammeter about Godfrey's proposal for his daughter Nancy. Godfrey had also desire for Nancy Lammeter who was daughter of another important family in Raveloe. She was also upper class like Godfrey.

Miss Nancy's lace and silk were very costly. She should be brought up in utter ignorance and vulgarity. She actually said mate for meat, appen for perhaps, and oss for horse, which, to young ladies living in good Lytherly society, which habitually said orse even in domestic privacy, and only said appen on the right conscious, was necessarily shocking. Yet she had the essential attributes of a lady high veracity, delicate honor in her dealings, and deference to others.^[21]

Thus, even Nancy's behavior is different from others in Raveloe because she was upper class. In general, Dunstan's robbery from Silas for his own sake, Squire Cass and Godfrey's emphasis on upper class family for Godfrey's marriage show their purposes that are money and elite social class. O'Gorman considers critics' beliefs such as Richard Whately, W.S. Jevons, Mr. Hobbes, and Smith on the perception of money in Victorian period. Whately deplored the continuing tendency to use the words wealth and money as synonymous in Victorian age. Mr. Hobbes discusses the wealth is power. Furthermore, Jevons identifies the roles of money as a measure of value, a standard of value from time to time, and a store of value. [15] Indeed, the Cass family was power in that community due to their wealth or their social class. O'Gorman concludes that wealth obviously parallel the Marxian view on capitalist society, also developing in the period, of money as oppressive force. [15] Thus, the capitalist system of Raveloe community and its purposes money and social class which are motive for people of that community to achieve are ways of knowing or informing about a part of history of Victorian society. Peter Brooker states from Foucault's view one of structures of the concept of discourse is episteme which denotes a historical epoch or an intellectual era. Indeed, episteme is ways of knowing and criteria that characterize systematic form of an era. [16]

2.3. Capital as Productive Power

Brooker also states from Foucault's perspective the exercise of power constitutes as it simultaneously controls the certain subjects in forms of discourses.[16] Barker states from Foucault's view knowledge is formed within the context of the relationships and practices of power and subsequently contributes to the development, refinement, and proliferation of new techniques of power. [3] By knowledge Foucault means awareness and thinking positively about the discourse which is going to be examined. Therefore, a person chooses a right way to earn money or to live happily in his or her life is power or the discourse carrier in *Silas Marner*.

Apart from the Cass family who were upper class in Raveloe, Eliot describes Silas who was lower class in that community. He was not idle like the Cass brothers and worked hard to make money through weaving. Harold Bloom states that weaving was the most important English industry in the period of transition to capitalism in Victorian era. [22] For example, Eliot narrates different types of coins that Silas toils to earn them through weaving. Silas tries to solve the problem of keeping himself strong enough to work sixteen hours a day on as small an outlay as possible. He had taken up some bricks in his floor beneath his loom, and here he had made a hole in which he set the iron pot that contained his guineas, crowns, half-crowns, silver coin covering the bricks with sand whenever he replaced them. [21] In fact, working hard to survive is the main characteristics of lower classes. To earn money and become successful through it in his life, he tries honestly and works hard. Eliot gives description of the weaver's hands which had known the touch of hard-won money even before the palm had grown to its full breadth; for twenty years, mysterious money had stood to him as the symbol of earthly good, and the immediate object of toil. [21] Therefore, Silas also considered money to be successful in his life. But he didn't violate ethical values for money like the Cass brothers. Indeed, he didn't accept each way to earn money. Dolin also asserts that Silas is unworldly and unmaterialistic. For instance, his responsibility concerned his refusal to enter into any kind of relationship at all, so that the coins do not stand in for anything that they could be exchanged for possessions, status and greater wealth. [14] By greater wealth, Dolin means the lost child Eppie. Silas considered her instead of coins which have been stolen by Dunstan. The fact is he decided to raise her like a real father, because money didn't have material value for Silas like his neighbors. Finally, Eppie and Silas felt happiness together forever. Therefore, the reason for earning money correctly and not considering it materially leads Silas to be successful in his life. One of his successes is that Eppie accepted him as her real father not Godfrey. When Godfrey confessed that he has been Eppie's real father, Eppie dropped a low curtsy, first to Mrs. Cass and then to Mr. Cass, and said—Thank you, ma'am—thank you, sir. But I can't leave my father, nor own anybody, nearer than him. And I don't want to be a lady—thank you all the same. I couldn't give up the folks I've been used to. [21] The event proves that Silas is a discourse carrier or power about monetary issues, because his appropriate beliefs on the

issues or his right description of money and social class led him to be happy in his life.

One of other events that demonstrate Silas's success due to not considering money materially is to find Dunstan's dead body along with Silas's coins after sixteen years in the Stone-pit. Godfrey describes the scene found his brother's dead body for Nancy.

The Stone-pit has gone dry suddenly from the draining, I suppose; and there he lies—has lain for sixteen years, wedged between two great stones. There's his watch and seals, and there's my gold my gold handled hunting-whip, with my name on: he took it away, without my knowing, the day he went hunting on wildfire, the last time he was seen. "O Godfrey" Nancy said, with compassion in her tone, for she had immediately reflected that the dishonor must be felt still more keenly by her husband. There was the money in the pit; he continued the entire weaver's money. [21]

The scene cleared Dunstan's betrayal to Silas. The betrayal is due to his view on money or earning money. Indeed, Dunstan's robbery from Silas proves his materialist view on money. As discussed above he ignored moral issues by robbery from Silas, because he wanted to be successful by earning money incorrectly. The event proved Dunstan is resistant or direct opposite to Silas who is power. Brooker asserts from Foucault's view power is dispersed and clearly affects forms of resistance to it. [16] Dunstan's materialistic idea on money is a resistance to Silas's view on money which is unmaterialistic. In fact, found money along with him ruined Dunstan's apparent victory in the novel and demonstrated Silas's power.

Like Dunstan, Godfrey is also resistant to Silas who carries discourse of money. As well as, He preferred money, wealth, and elite social class to marry. He loved Nancy who was upper class. In fact, he preferred to be happy with her rather than to raise his daughter Eppie who had been found by Silas. In fact, Godfrey's decision to marry to Nancy who was upper class has distanced him from his daughter for many years. The event cleared that the two characters' view to continue life is different. Silas's view on money is not material like Godfrey, because he decided to keep Eppie to succeed in his life. Likewise, Bloom states that Eliot shows gold hoard give way to the child, and through the child, to the web of community. [22] Finally, Godfrey regrets for the decision and realized his material ways of knowing about life were not correct. For example, he said Nancy Eppie's rejecting me as a father is a part of my punishment. [21] Here his resistance to Silas's unmaterialistic ideas ended up.

3. CONCLUSION

It can be said that *Silas Marner* is a novel which deals with Victorian society in which it has been written. Therefore, it is suitable to analyze through Foucault's New Historicist criticism. As observed, in this article the actions, behaviors and interactions of the characters were explored based on Foucault's concepts of power and discourse. In point of fact, the events of the novel, the characters' ideas on money, and their destiny at the end of the novel prove that the author has had a negative view on monetary system of Victorian capitalist society and its purposes. Likewise, Regenia Gagnier states that apart from George Eliot, there were the writers in that time such as Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Kingsley, and Charlotte Bronte who wrote not only to call attention to the suffering caused by the development of capitalist Victorian society, but also to spur action to alleviate it. The fact is that they try to criticize widely varied aspects of an English society which is transformed by capitalism. [23]

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AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY



Alireza Farahbakhsh, from Iran. I am an associate professor at, and a member of the board of education, of University of Guilan, Iran. I received my Ph D in English Literature from the University of Sussex, England, in 2004. I have published numerous translated articles in domestic journals as well as several books on English language and literature including *Literary Schools and Movements for the Students of English Literature* (2012), *A Handbook of Critical Approaches* (translation, 2008), *Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* (translation, 2008), *British Drama for Students of English Literature* (2008), *A Short History of Literary Criticism: Plato to Derrida* (2006), *Passage Through Life* (two volumes, translation, 2006), and *Robinson Crusoe* (translation, 1995). I have also supervised quite a few successful M. A. and Ph D dissertations.



Zohreh Ahmadi, from Iran. I passed the Iranian National University Entrance Exam with the ranking of 900 in 2009. I received her B.A. degree in English Language and Literature from University of Golestan, Gorgan, Iran in 2013. I was awarded University Honor of Study for the M. A. at Guilan University without taking the Iranian National University Entrance Exam. I started studying M. A. in English Language and Literature at Guilan University in 2013 and currently I am writing my master's thesis on the applicability of Foucauldian discourse of power to George Eliot's selected novels.