



Imposed Identity through Foucauldian Panopticism and Released Identity through Deleuzian Ressentiment in Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*

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Abstract

The despotic society of classical era, run by a despot, who had “the right to decide life and death” of the dominated subjects (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* Vol. I 135), had indeed the system of observance and surveillance of Foucauldian panoptical system. The present paper scrutinizes the Happy Valley of Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, as the symbolic representation of a panoptical structure in which dominant discourses are institutionalized in the captives and inmates of the Happy Valley. In essence, the central theme of Foucault's theories of power is “the methods with which modern civilization creates and controls human subjects, through institutions” (Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism* 766) as well as discourses. The present paper contends that such institutions and discourses also existed in classical era and in the despotic society run by the despot, seemed to be the focal point or the center of power, but who indeed remained ineffective without discourses and institutions which dispersed his power.

Keywords: lines of flight, panopticism, despot, despotic society, Deleuzian positive difference, ressentiment

1. Introduction

Imposed identity becomes effective by a dominant, through exercising power, on a dominated. The dominant is a despot whose omnipresent, all-inclusive, permanent and repetitious power is exercised over subjects through institutions and discourses. Imposed identities are, in essence, homogeneous identities which act as apparatus of dominant power to make the act of controlling the subjects easier.

Imposed identity is evident in gender construction in patriarchal societies and particularly in traditional societies where male and female are expected to behave within defined conventional frameworks. Genders are essentially constructed within such frameworks in a way that Femininity and Masculinity have clear-cut definitions and cause certain expectations. However, it is quite possible that subjects rebel against their imposed identity. *Lines of flight* and *ressentiment* are Deleuze and Guattari's technical terms to suggest escape from pre-given definitions, frameworks and the trap of institutions which cause imposed identities. Released identity can occur once one is released from the confinement of a panoptical system of surveillance and observance.

In the followings, first a technical definition of the despot and the kind of society run by the despot are presented. Next, through Foucault's theories of power, the inevitability of imposed identity is discussed. The construction of imposed identities and the characters' *flight* from such subjectivity are studied in Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*. The final aim is to bring awareness to political and ideological objectification of power relations to subvert dominant discursive institutions.

2. The Despot and the Despotic Society

According to the philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and the psychoanalyst Félix Guattari (1930-1992), in a despotic society a dominant despot rules over the subjects in a way that the “social dynamics” of the subjects are under the control of the despot (*Anti-Oedipus* qtd. in Holland 74) who through force and power imposes a hierarchical system on the subordinated dominated subjects.

The despot exercises effective power by promulgating a series of principles as the legal codes in order to organize the state and govern his dominated people. This figure governs the conscious and unconscious of the subjects by controlling the meanings and significance which circulate in the society. According to Foucault, the “despot is “the monarch of the things that I have said” whose “eminent sovereignty” (M xxxviii) held sway over the meanings he intended to convey” (Huffer 237). The despot is not attached to a certain tribe or family, rather the subject-people as an “undifferentiated mass” are linked to the despot and owe him their lives and deaths, for the despot is the absolute powerful to take the life and death of his state people in his hand and impose his absolute domination over them. This is what Foucault refers to in the last part of his book, *History of Sexuality* Vol. I, under the title “Right of Death and Power over Life”. In this part he explains about the despot's right over the disposal of the lives' of subjects:

For a long time, one of the characteristic privileges of sovereign power was the right to decide life and death. In a formal sense, it derived no doubt from the ancient *patria potestas* that granted the father of the Roman family the right to “dispose” of the life of his children and his slaves; just as he had given them life, so he could take it away. (135)

The right formulated as the “power of life and death” is in essence the right to take the lives of the dominated subjects or the right to let them live; the right exercised by the despot of the despotic society. Such absolute power over the lives and deaths of the subjects instigated the first level of the pacification of the dominated (Holland 74). In essence, the despot whose “transcendent position” was enviable,” imposed his domination over his realm and the subjects lost their “self-determination” due to the over-coding system imposed on them (*Anti-Oedipus* qtd. in Holland 76).

In despotic societies determining *the good* and *the evil* involves the interest of the dominant power. Essentially, the dominant power uses the concepts of *good* and *bad* to inject its own ideology in the subjects and to normalize its actions (Buchanan 83). According to Jameson, ideology uses ethics as a means through which the power legitimates its structure and domination (Buchanan 84). The despot’s desire imposed on the individuals, through ethics or the constructed concepts of good and bad, causes the second level of pacification.

Under such conditions, the subject-people no longer desire objects of the real world, but desire whatever the despot desires. In other words, in a despotic society, subjects’ desires are suppressed. Subjects have no longer any desire of their own, do not act independent of the desire of the despot and do not behave to disturb the status quo or the interest of the despot. That is to say, the very *subjectivity* of the individuals is imposed by the dominant power of the despot and through power relations of the despotic society.

This is the reason in nation states, in order to release from the excessive domination of the despot and consequent subordination to his rules, the subjects secure themselves by a “counter-power”. “Counter-power” causes the imposed desire turn reactive. Nietzsche calls the reactive desire of the subjects -caused by “counter-power”- resentment (Holland 78). Resentment “is a means of coding the ‘flow’ of the revolutionary impulse so that it appears self-discrediting” (Buchanan 85).

However, the despotism of the classical age seemed to be replaced by the *panopticism* of modern era which in the same way governs the body, the conscious and the unconscious of the subjects on the one hand and causes the pacification, subordination and regulation of the subjects on the other hand. As far as Michel Foucault has the most salient theories on power, the following section elaborates Foucault’s theorization of power and the impact of power relations in imposing the kind of identity on subjects of the despotic society, which preserve the status quo, mostly through the internalization of surveillance and panopticism.

3. Foucauldian Power and the Imposition of Subjectivity

Power is one of the most significant concepts defined and analyzed by the French philosopher and cultural historian, Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Foucault’s theories of power are in direct contrast with the traditional liberal and Marxist theories of power. In traditional view, power is exercised from top to bottom and is just focused on possession:

Power is often conceptualized as the capacity of powerful agents to realize their will over the will of powerless people, and the ability to force them to do things which they do not wish to do. Power is also often seen as a possession – something which is held onto by those in power and which those who are powerless try to wrest from their control (Milles 34).

In the second chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault elaborates his theories of power: “power ... was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it” (136). Though such definition of power echoes the absolute power of the despot in the despotic society who had the “power of life and death” over the subjects (135), Foucauldian power has drastic differences with the despotic power exercised from a dominant point. In the first place, for Foucault, power is omnipresent:

Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And “Power,” insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement.” (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 93)

Foucauldian power is omnipresent, all-inclusive, “permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing” (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 93). In essence, “Foucault’s theory of power suggests that power is omnipresent, that is, power can be found in all social interactions” (Taylor 15). According to Foucault, power is present everywhere, penetrates all social relations, and dominates all institutions. Hence, no doubt as far as subjects live in a power state run by a despot, their identity is formed via power relations. That is their identity is imposed on them via institutions, mechanisms, general systems of domination and modes of subjugation which are the terminal forms of power.

Second Foucauldian power can be viewed as the multiplicity of immanent force relations embodied in the state apparatus. Such power is exercised from diverse and more often than not hidden points: “Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable

points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (*History of Sexuality* 94). According to Sara Milles, "Foucault tends to see power less as something which is possessed but rather as a strategy," and also "he argues that power is a set of relations which are dispersed throughout society rather than being located within particular institutions such as the State or the government" (35). In one of his lectures, in 1976, Foucault claims that "power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization" (Gordon 98). In Foucault's view, power has a net-like structure.

Foucault's theories of power led to a shift in the concept of power "from a system where the king or queen is seen as the embodiment of the nation and power is dispensed from above, to a system where power is exercised within the social body" (Milles 43). Foucault does not view power as something which operates from top to bottom in a hierarchical structure, rather he views power "as an aspect of an inter-relationship or interaction between human beings" (Oliver 44). It seems that power defines people's interactions within a society.

As the point of fact, the central theme of most of Foucault's works is "the methods with which modern civilization creates and controls human subjects, through institutions such as hospitals, prisons, education, and knowledge," (Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism* 766) as well as discourses. Foucault defines the **discourse** as "the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 80) and by such definition means to question the "self-evident nature of disciplines such as sociology and psychology" (Mills 69). For example, he "traces the way that madness has been constructed in different forms and judged in different ways throughout history (Mills 99). Investigating 'sex' and 'sexuality', Foucault theorizes that 'sex' is also a construction:

The notion of 'sex' made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning: sex. Was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified. (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1980, p. 154)

Following such statements, Foucault explicates that feminist emancipatory models should consider "how the category of sex and sexual differences are constructed within discourse" (Butler, *Gender Troubles* 96). Henceforth, for Foucault it is not only madness, sex and numerous other concepts which are discursively constructed but also and above all identity, subjectivity or the very individuality are discursively constructed.

According to Michel Foucault subjects, who are subjugated to the dominant power, have in essence no subjectivity, no individuality, no self, and no identity. They are comparable to sheer *fabula rosa* on which power relations write through discourses. Such discourses are institutionalized in the subjects through the governing system of observation and control; that is the *panoptic system*.

Foucault's theories and ideas of panopticism not only indicate the conditions of being controlled and dominated by authorities, but also refer to the idea that this system of control and observation can persuade the individuals act and behave according to the observer's intention and expectations:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 202-203)

Indeed, the one who is being observed, by knowing that he is under surveillance, forces himself undergo a set of assignments, particular duties, and responsibilities. This is the main reason for Foucault to consider panopticon as "a laboratory; [that] could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behavior, to train or correct individuals," or as "a privileged place for experiments on men, and for analyzing with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 203-204). Implied in Foucault's theories of panopticism is the fact that individual's behavior, conscious and unconscious are subjugated to the dominant power. That is the subjectivity, the very individuality and identity are regulated through constant observation, surveillance and control effected by the dominant power. Foucault states:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself It is indeed the case that the gaze has had great importance among the techniques of power developed in the modern era, but, as I have said, it is far from being the only or even the principal system employed. (Gordon 155)

Foucault theorizes that the panoptic system "is a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised" (Gordon 156). Therefore, according to Foucault, no one, neither the observer nor the observed, can escape from this very system: "it is difficult to avoid this incessant monitoring of our bodies and

minds” in the modern world (Oliver 41). In other respect, every subject in the despotic society or in the nation state is entangled in power relations which impose him his identity.

4. Imposed Identity in Samuel Johnson’s *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*

Samuel Johnson’s apologue *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759) is composed of two opposing worlds: the world inside the Happy Valley and the world outside the Happy Valley. In the Happy Valley, which has indeed a disciplinary structure suggestive of panopticism, through the rule of the king, the symbol of a despot, subjects are imposed by identities, quite different from what they show once released from the confinements of power relations; that is when they are outside the Happy Valley and are free. Inside the Valley the subject’s identity is imposed by the despot via exercising power relations and institutionalizing dominant discourses in the individuals.

The effective discourses in constructing Rasselas’s identity are Imlac’s narration of the world, the sages’ pre-coded instructions and above all the King’s power. Such narrations educate Imlac and the rest of the characters and form their knowledge of the world: “modern civilization creates and controls human subjects, through institutions such as hospitals, prisons, education, and knowledge,” (Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism* 766). Rasselas is indeed the symbol of *the observed* in Foucauldian panopticism. Foucault theorizes that the panoptic system is a system in which the one “should be constantly observed” by an observer, and also the observed “knows himself to be observed” although he does not know when he is being observed (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 200-201). Rasselas is identified as an obedient subject until the moment he realizes his confinement to the valley. Essentially, inside the Happy Valley docile submissive dominated subjects like Rasselas are constructed, through the absolute power of the king who is the symbol of a dominant power or a despot. Inside the Happy Valley, Rasselas becomes a subject whose potentialities are replaced with despair and illusion.

The prince is the son of the despot who due to the law of the despot, or Father-king, is confined in a “private palace” in the Happy Valley. The Happy Valley has the disciplinary structure of panopticism, in which the hierarchical power relations are established to take the individuality of the individuals. The shattering of subjectivity has caused a permanent slavery of the individuals, having no way to escape from their determined destiny and their determined imposed subjectivity:

This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead — all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism.(Foucault, *The Birth of Prison* 197)

What happens in panoptical system is the seclusion of the individuals and the loss of subjectivity. Disorder, confusion, chaos and riot which disturb the status quo of the governments are stifled in panoptical system:

The plague-stricken town, traversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing; the town immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies - this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city. The plague (envisaged as a possibility at least) is the trial in the course of which one may define ideally the exercise of disciplinary power. In order to make rights and laws function according to pure theory, the jurists place themselves in imagination in the state of nature; in order to see perfect disciplines functioning, rulers dreamt of the state of plague. Underlying disciplinary projects the image of the plague stands for all forms of confusion and disorder; just as the image of the leper, cut off from all human contact, underlies projects of exclusion. (Foucault, *The Birth of Prison* 198)

The medium through which all the surroundings can be observed and controlled, is the best possible way of establishing power over others: “The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power” (Foucault, *The Birth of Prison* 202).

Rasselas, the protagonist and the prince of Abyssinia, is not a free and independent individual, rather his identity is constructed under the authority and the domination of his father. The domination of the father as the symbol of an absolute power or despot can be traced in this extract: “Rasselas was the fourth son of the mighty emperor in whose dominions the Father of Waters begins his course; whose bounty pours down the steams of plenty, and scatters over half the world the harvest of Egypt” (Abrams 1142). In this extract, the “Father of Waters” symbolizes absolute power. The “Father of Waters” as the Nile spreading all over Egypt (Abrams 1142), implies that like the Nile running all around Egypt, the Law of the Father/king dominates both his family and the society.

The despot’s absolute power and control is evident through the fact that the king has confined the prince, the other sons and the daughters of the royal family – the dominated ones- in the valley: “According to the custom which was descended from age to age among the monarchs of the torrid zone, Rasselas was confined in a private palace, with the other sons and daughters of Abyssinian royalty, till the order of succession should call him to the throne” (Abrams 1142). Through exercising the archaic forms of control such as captivity, the king father tries to make sure of his absolute domination and his subjects’ subjugation, submission and pacification. Symbolically, the father’s dominance over the subjects and his influence in constructing their identity are implied in the dominance of tall mountains over the Happy Valley and their role in constructing the nature of the valley:

From the mountains on every side rivulets descended that filled all valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle, inhabited by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. This lake discharged its superfluities by a stream, which entered a dark cleft of on the mountain on the northern side, and fell with dreadful noise from precipice to precipice till it was heard no more. (Abrams 1142)

Running a secluded life and becoming fatigue, Rasselas' conflict between his unconscious desire to escape and his submission to the law of the father begins to appear in the second chapter in the form of being discontent with all available joys around him. Rasselas becomes so discontent that he avoids associating with people and spends his time in isolation. He refuses "his attendants" and their "invitations" and instead:

spent day after day on the banks of rivulets sheltered with trees, where he sometimes listened to the birds in branches, sometimes observed the fish playing in the stream, and anon cast his eyes upon the pastures and mountains filled with animals, of which some were biting the herbage, and some sleeping among the bushes" (Abrams 1144).

He compares their lives with that of his own and finds no intensity in his life: "I can discover within me no power of perception which is not glutted with its proper pleasure, yet I do not feel myself delighted" (Abrams 1144). Nature for Rasselas is the place where he relieves the despair and boredom of life. It is the place where he sees some elements in nature such as domestic animals, trees, birds, rivulet, moon, and sun which are permeated with a life of their own. Hence, he comes to ponder that there is something more immense, more inspiring and more moving in natures; something on the order of the Cosmos. That is nature for him is the place "to free life from where it's trapped" and "to trace lines of flight" (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 141).

Suffering from his conditions, Rasselas thinks of leaving the Happy Valley "finding a way out" (Johnson, *Rasselas* 110) and finding what Deleuze and Guattari call "a line of flight". When Rasselas and his fellow travelers manage to escape from the confinement of the Happy Valley, they indeed form a desiring-machine through the synthesis of connection and establish a body capable to experience the flow of life and a sense of freedom. In other words, they experience the flight from the imposition of imperial law of the despot and their imposed identity.

In Johnson's *Rasselas*, quite along with Rasselas, Nekayah and Pekuah also suffer from imposed identity. Inside the Happy Valley, Nekayah's and Pekuah's identities are constructed in subordination to the patriarchal relations of the despotic society. Socially, women are constructed as less intelligent, less sociable and less knowledgeable. In *Rasselas*, Imlac expresses his discontent with Nekayah and Pekuah's demand to visit the astronomer, since "the philosopher had never received visits from women" (Abrams 1199). Imlac tries to convince Pekuah, believing the astronomer would probably be weary of her vocation soon, for she is not intelligent enough to converse with him (1200).

In *Rasselas* women are constructed "as irrationally fearful" which is in contrast to the "more courageous behavior of men" (Acker 24). This occurs, as an illustration, when the adventurers leave the Happy Valley and encounter the world outside for the first time and the princess expresses her threat and worries. Rasselas has the same feeling too, yet "he thought it more manly to conceal them" (Abrams 1162).

As another case in point, it is mentioned in *Rasselas* that women are responsible for the happiness of men. This can be seen in Rasselas's words discussing the marriage of his sister: "I shall for the future think it dangerous to connect my interest with that of another, lest I should be unhappy by my partner's fault" (Abrams 1174). Or "whenever I shall seek a wife, it shall be my first question whether she be willing to be led by reason" (1178). In this case, Acker argues that "In essence, men should carefully choose women who perfectly complement them because, in eighteenth-century culture, women are responsible for men's happiness" (25). She also states that Johnson regarded the universe as having a "hierarchical structure, with God at the top and animals at the bottom." Therefore, men and women are two parts of this chain, placing men over women and consequently constructing a community in which "male-oriented" culture is prominent and women owning less importance in such a hierarchy are subordinated to men (7). But the characters' reactive desires or resentments help them break away with the confinements of the panoptical system of the despotic society.

5. Released Identity

Released identity or the identity formed when one is released from the domination of power relations is evident when Rasselas and his company leave the Happy Valley. The last chapter of *Rasselas* entitled "The Conclusion, in Which Nothing Is Concluded" depicts the characters thinking and planning what they would do in the future; that is the time released from power relations of the despotic community in which they were under constant surveillance and control due to the constraints of the panoptic system.

Foucault's theories and ideas of 'panopticism' not only indicate the conditions of being controlled and dominated by authorities, but also refer to the idea that this system of control and observation can persuade the individuals act and behave according to the observer's intention and expectations; "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 202-203). Indeed, the one who is being observed, by knowing that he is under surveillance, forces himself undergo a set of assignments, particular duties, and responsibilities.

The second world in Johnson's text is the world outside the Happy Valley where Rasselas breaks the confinements of the despotic world, governed through panoptical system, in which he lived all his life. Rasselas's anxieties and repressed desire which appear "in the twenty-sixth year of his age" (Abrams 1144) are metaphorically represented in a quest for happiness, and this pursuit becomes a quest for his own identity. For finding his true self, Rasselas initiates associating with others and with the events of the world outside. In other words, at this point, "the assemblage" that "establishes connections between certain multiplicities" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 23) happen for Rasselas. Rasselas through his interaction with different subjects such as a youth, a sage, a single, a married, an old man and ... releases himself from the bondages of the despotic society and the panoptic system. Rasselas begins the quest for a true identity different from what has been so far imposed on him in order "to bring something to life, to free life from where it's trapped, to trace lines of flight" (Deleuze *Difference and Repetition* 141).

Rasselas, accompanied with his fellow travelers, releases himself from the very subjectivity imposed on him by the king and comes to experience life from anew. In the world outside the valley, the royalties are stripped of their labels; they are no longer prince, princess, mentor, and maiden, but simply strangers who partake in the outside world series of events. Rasselas who turns back to the Happy Valley near the end of the tale is a prosperous liberated subject with a new identity. He has released himself from what was formerly imposed on him.

Diverse discourses surrounding the subjects construct their identities. One of these discourses is the social hierarchical patriarchal discourse based on which hierarchical subordination of female by male happens. Following such hierarchical subordination subjects come to believe in the imposed images of femininity and masculinity. As in case of Johnson's *Rasselas*, timidity, submissiveness, domesticity, virtuosity and other mild -and at times negative- attributes are imposed on the female through the imposed images of femininity. Images of femininity are constructed and imposed in subordination with the images of masculinity. For example, the irrational fearful Nekayah is contrasted with courageous Rasselas:

Femininity is produced through differentiating system, and because of these differentiating systems social meanings are produced. There is nothing essential that precedes these systems. Difference is an ideological imposition and ideology creates the supposed 'real' upon which it is imposed. (Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze* 42-43)

Clair Colebrook theorizes that the individuality becomes possible through the ideology imposed on subjects by the dominant power in the sense that the subjects identify by means of the images imposed on them through the ideology of the dominant power.

Released from the imposed identity of the Happy Valley, Nekayah opens a close relationship with Rasselas who: "discoursed more frequently and freely with her sister, who had yet the same hope with himself, and always assisted him to give some reason why, though he had been hitherto frustrated, he might succeed at last" (Abrams 1171). Released from her imposed identity, Nekayah finds an opportunity to show her own self-constructed and self-desired identity as she can now help Rasselas both in his thinking and in giving reason. In the opening chapters, Rasselas has no close relations with his sister, however, as the narrative directs to its end their relationship undergoes a profound change; that is released from the imposed images of the Happy Valley, symbol of a territory run by despotism and panopticism, both male and female act differently.

Outside the Happy Valley, women are free to associate and communicate. Pekuah's knowledge makes the astronomer so pleased that he looks upon her "as a prodigy of genius, and entreated he not to desist from a study which she had so happily begun" (Abrams 1200). Moreover, the astronomer informs Imlac of his relaxed mind because of Nekayah and Pekuah's nurture. He maintains that the "irresistible violence" of his thought "are soon disentangled by the princess' conversation, and instantaneously released at the entrance of Pekuah" (Abrams 1201).

The hierarchical system which constructs female identity in subordination to male gives meaning to binaries such as fearfulness/courage, femininity/masculinity, and emotion/logic. Otherwise such concepts are meaningless and apolitical by themselves; they are given meaning through political ends, such as domination or superiority of men over women. According to Deleuze, true identity, or the identity which is not constructed under the influence of a dominant power, originates from a desire, and "desire is originally productive, connective and intensive, the investment in qualities that are neither masculine nor feminine but singular" (Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze* 45).

Deleuzian *positive difference* is a way to resist the imposed images and by implication imposed identities. Positive difference begins with "multiplicity of differences" (Colebrook 38) which are not linguistic differences in which language renders us different words, rather multiplicity of differences includes "genetic, geographical and microscopic or imperceptible differences" (ibid). Gender construction happens not because of the imposition of difference, but because of the "reduction" of the endless array of differences, in order to achieve meaningful identities.

Released from "the principle of her own subjection", Pekuah thinks "she was weary of expectation and disgust, and would gladly be fixed in some unvariable [invariable] state." The princess decides that "she desired first to learn all sciences, and then purposed to found a college of learned women." Released from all imposed assignments, particular duties, and responsibilities of the Happy Valley, Rasselas "desired a little kingdom, in which he might administer justice in his own person, and see all the parts of government with his own eyes; but he could never fix the limits of his dominion, and was always adding to the number of his subjects." The final decision made by the characters is the permutation of "It's me, and so it's mine," (Abrams 1198), which is the outcome of identity quest instigated once they released themselves from surveillance of panopticism of the Happy Valley.

The characters' final decision is their unconscious attempt to reconcile the tension between two states of desire (free and fixed) or two different forms of identity; imposed identity and released identity or the identity formed once they are released from the power relations of the despotic Happy Valley:

At this point what is merely a recording-surface henceforth appears to be the source of what gets recognized in the constitution of the subject in connective synthesis. Finally, the subject in turn claims mastery or ownership of the body-without-organs- or of its products: consummate experience, intensities-when it is in fact merely derivative of them. The subject as product claims as its own the very process that constitutes it as subject. (Holland 34)

Jeffrey Barnouw's in *The Cambridge History of English Literature (1660-1780)* states that "Rasselas and other characters in Johnson's moral fable do not return to Abyssinia or anywhere; they 'deliberated' and 'resolved' to return ..." (441). Imlac and the astronomer "were contented to be driven along the stream of life, without directing their course to any particular port" (Abrams 1206). "Other characters" referred to by Jeffrey Barnouw include above all Nekayah, and Pekuah as their identities are as well discursively constructed by dominant power relations exercised through the panoptical system of the Happy Valley.

Rasselas, Imlac, Nekayah, and Pekuah are intrinsically potential to generate and innovate once they no longer desire what the monarch desires. They long for innovating and creating a world other than where they live. They long for another way of life, a new subjectivity and new connections. They assume that such world and way of life are likely to happen. What propels them to innovate and regenerate is their reactive desire or resentment using Deleuze and Guattari's technical term. The royalties' reactive desire caused by their "counter-power" or their *ressentiment* as "a means of coding the 'flow' of the revolutionary impulse" (Buchanan 85) becomes the effective force in forming their new identity.

Their *ressentiment* also signals their lines of flight, flight from all pre-coded existence, flight from social convictions, and flight from familial orientation. It is through desire and lines of flight that Deleuze and Guattari attempt to open up various and more liberated ways of living. Leaving the Happy Valley, the characters refuse to be trapped, once again, in set categories and pre-given definitions. That is the reason they decide to go to nowhere and choose *nomadism*.

6. Conclusion

Foucault is one of the most salient voices among power theorists. He theorizes that "Since the classical age the West has undergone a very profound transformation of these mechanisms of power" (*The History of Sexuality* 136). And by "these mechanisms of power" he means "the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it" (ibid) or the absolute localized power of the despot made effective through "deduction" (ibid). However, this paper intended to contend that the modern mechanism of power, panopticism, was also effective in classical era. As a case in point, in Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, the characters' knowledge of the world is controlled through Imlac's narration of the world and the sages' pre-coded instructions. The very means are called the institution of education by Foucault. In other words, discourses and institutions were also effective means of imposing identities in classical era.

Imposed identity makes subjects objects of surveillance, analysis, modification, medical treatment, psychiatric treatment and political power to preserve the status quo. However, Deleuzian *positive difference* is a way to resist the imposed images which construct imposed identities. In *Rasselas*, the royalties' resentment or reactive desire, caused by their "counter-power" becomes the effective force in forming their new released identity.

Introducing the imposed identity, the paper meant to elucidate the way human beings are exploited by power states, no matter in what era they live. The paper intended to bring awareness to the political and ideological objectification of such exploitation. Such awareness may truly subvert dominant power, dominant discursive institutions and dominant apparatus of power. The paper aims to suggest further investigations regarding new forms of political power which are taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species.

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