Power and Resistance: A New-Historicist Reading of Foucault's Power Relations in John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt: A Parable*

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Abstract

Many studies have introduced John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt: A Parable* (2005) from different perspectives; however, reading the play from the New-Historicist approach properly serves the main purpose of the paper which is to highlight the reciprocal relationship between history and the literary text. Therefore, the literary text is not a self-contained entity but rather a culturally and historically-oriented product. Investigated from the New-Historicist approach, specifically focusing on Michel Foucault who has had a wide-range impact on the development of New Historicism through his power relations conception, Shanley's *Doubt* is seen as an "allegorical" portrayal of a crucial historical event: the United States' invasion of Iraq (2003), by implicitly depicting factual historical characters as well as juxtaposing them with historical, social and cultural factors (Cullingford 258). In this respect, this paper explores Shanley's play not as a referential context of the "power of individuals" but of the "power of institutions" run by individuals, in Foucault's terms.

Keywords: New Historicism, Michel Foucault, power relations, John Patrick Shanley, *Doubt: A Parable*

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Introduction

New Historicism is a critical theory that explores the mutual relationship between history and a literary text. It reads a literary text through its communally-shared practices of a society: cultural, social and political. It endows a balanced privilege to "the textuality of history" and "the historicity of a text" (Montorse 20). Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, particularly his concept of power/resistance, managed him to carve a niche as an efficient French philosopher and literary critic. His theory reflects power relations in a society at the levels of individuals and institutions through two main poles: power and resistance. Shanley's *Doubt* is a good example of this kind of power relations. The conflict among characters in the play denotes not a conflict of dramatic characters but of institutions run by individuals: the American government, on one side, and the Iraqi government, on the other.

Many studies tackled Shanley's *Doubt* from various perspectives to provide strong bases for their purposes. Selectively, some of them focused on the issue of morality and how it is related to the concept of doubt. In "Self-doubt: One Moral of the Story" (2014), for instance, Susan Verducci argues that self-doubt encourages and extends moral inquiry. She shows how self-doubt is valuable in moral education, revolutionizing the concepts associated with doubt, including danger and risk. For her, doubt can impose a sense of positivity instead. She asserts that doubt embeds moral values such as humility, temperance and the moderation of our ego by assuming the principle of "I may be wrong," hence, the avoidance of harming others (616).

Some other studies paid attention to the theme of ambiguity in the play. In "Evil, Sin, or Doubt?: The Dramas of Clerical Child Abuse" (2010), for example, Elizabeth Cullingford reveals how the play foregrounds the gap between the preacher's words and his actions, a matter that increases the ambiguity of who is the true guilty in the play: Sister Aloysius or Father Flynn. What is real and what is ideal remain far-fetched entities. Martha Greene Eads also in her article, "A Church of One's Own" (2013), sees how ambiguity is the suitable interpretation the play can present. She praises the play for its whodunit quality that accepts all interpretations.

Other scholars focused on the reproduction of the play through theatre and film. In *Millennial Stages: Essays and Reviews, 2001-2005* (2006), Robert Brustein emphasizes the ambiguous atmosphere of determining the main guilty in the play, referring to the power of the theatrical performance on stage and the precision of direction by Doug Hughes (157). In "Uncertain Sympathies: John Patrick Shanley's 'Doubt'" (2009), Michael V. Tueth refers to the film of *Doubt* and how Shanley added several scenes, locales and characters to his Broadway script, increasing the ambiguity of the plot. On the one hand, he emphasizes the tyrannical demonic character of Aloysius through some additional scenes such as scolding students for their small infractions, overseeing the convent meals grimly and sarcastically and commenting on other nuns' conversations with ridicule. On the other hand, he adds some scenes that confirm Flynn's involvement in pedophilic behavior such as embracing Donald after he is bullied by another student, returning mysteriously Donald's undershirt to his

locker, and calling Donald out of a class for a private conversation in the rectory.

George P. Castellitto, in his article "Connections Between Modern American Drama and Contemporary Drama: Sociological and Metaphysical Correlations" (2010), takes the analysis of the play a step further. He comparatively sees a strong connection between the literary work, referring to Shanley's *Doubt* as an example, and the surrounding circumstances. Regarding *Doubt* as a contemporary dramatic piece, Castellitto introduces uncertainty as its dominant atmosphere. He confirms that these issues are traced in *Doubt* to evoke different interpretations and ultimately, to find a way out (21-22).

Based on the debate on *Doubt* from different perspectives, it is found that there is a lack of scholarship on the study of the play from a New-Historicist perspective. Therefore, this paper takes Shanley's *Doubt* as a case in point from the New-Historicist approach, specifically Foucault's conception of power relations, as a methodology for analysis, adding a new dimension to the interpretation of the play from a different viewpoint.

New Historicism and Foucault's Theory of Power Relations

In widespread use, the term New Historicism was closely associated with the American critic Stephen Greenblatt who refers to it as "cultural poetics" (Veenstra 174) and whose book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980) is considered as its beginning (Barry 166). It is a critical approach to literature that investigates the combined relationship between history and a literary text. It maintains that various forms of discourse whether artistic or documentary, common or elites, interact with and set by other discourses and institutional practices at a certain historical moment (Shea 125). It reads a work of art within its historical context: social, political and cultural factors in which it originates. More importantly, it juxtaposes the literary text within the frame of its historical context and vice versa. It is, as the American critic Louis A. Montrose puts it, a kind of mutual interest in "the textuality of history, the historicity of texts" (20). It is to read literature "within this archival continuum" (Wilson 8). Therefore, the New Historicist does not endorse "'historicity' or 'textuality' to the exclusion of either" (Shea 126). Greenblatt remarks that the work of art is the result of a negotiation between its creator, supplied with a complicated, collectively shared repertoire of norms on one hand, and the social institutions and practices on the other ("Towards a poetics of culture" 12). For New Historicists, a literary text cannot be actualized and interpreted in historical vacuity. Greenblatt in his introduction to *Learning to Curse* (2007) states that it is a "shift away from a criticism centered on 'verbal icons' toward a criticism centered on cultural artifact" (3). Simply defined, New Historicism is "a method based on the *parallel* reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period. . . . it envisages and practices a mode of study in which literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other" (Barry 166).

In this regard, one main difference between New Historicism and Old Historicism is that New Historicism gives an "equal weighting" to the literary and non-literary texts while Old Historicism is unilateral (examines the influence of history upon literary texts) (Mambrol). Put differently, while Old Historicism is interested in "the 'world' of the past," New Historicism reconsiders "the 'word' of the past" (Mambrol). Accordingly, New Historicism comes as a wider reaction against twentieth-century various critical theories and movements such as New Criticism, Formalism, Structuralism and Deconstruction because they do not go beyond the text itself; thus, they are

concerned with "one side of the coin" (Sharma 2). In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2001), Chris Baldick gives a noteworthy definition of New Historicism as a term that makes new connections between the literary and non-literary texts, shattering the accustomed distinction between a text and its historical "background" as perceived in traditional historical forms of criticisms, as a part of a broader response against purely formal or linguistic critical approaches (171).

Michel Foucault's theoretical understanding of history has had a wide-range impact on the development of New Historicism as a literary school that evolved in North America in the later part of the twentieth century (Faysal and Rahman 9). Foucault rejects the traditional historian's tendency of reading history as a line of outright historical narratives. He argues that as long as history changes, a work of art should not be seen within a frame of "stable" interpretation (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 3). Instead of giving "a monolithic version" of a certain period, history must receive different interpretations as an entity of discontinuity (Felluga 17).

To characterize his approach to historical investigation, Foucault coins the term archaeology to oppose the traditional perspective of history as a "grand narrative," i.e. "a single overarching rubric" to explain the past's relation to the present (Felluga 12, 122). For Foucault, history is not static or accumulated but discontinuous and disjunctive, i.e. each period has its disparate discourse, its distinct rules and strategies and archaeology's main function is to "show in what way the set of rules that [discourses] put into operation is irreducible to any other" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 139).

Power is a key concept to Foucault's philosophical thinking of history, regarding the relations between individuals and institutions in a society. It witnesses an evolution from his early work as shown in *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973) and *Discipline and Punish* (1995) and his later work as shown in his article "The Subject and Power" (1983). In his early works, Foucault explores power as inherent in the institutions themselves rather than in the individuals who run them. Central to this sense, he shows how modern disciplines of control and order such as prison, school and factory tend to "disindividualize" power (Felluga 238). Foucault takes Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon (meaning "all seeing") (Briskin 77) as a model for his conception of the power of institutions to show how power lies "in the machine itself (the "panoptic machine") not in its operator" (Felluga 239). Foucault refers to the Panopticon as a significant mechanism because it "automatizes and disindiviualizes" power. For Foucault, power is not latent in a person as much as in a certain harmonious distribution of bodies, gazes, lights and surfaces. It is an internal mechanism that shows how individuals are controlled (*Discipline and Punish* 202).

However, in his later work "The Subject and Power" (1983), another tone is heard. Foucault changes his earlier perspective to declare that power lies in individuals who are responsible for making actions, including even those under control. Power does not inhere in the universal institutional meaning but in the hands of those who make actions, i.e. the individuals. Foucault explains that what is called Power, whether capitalized or not, is not supposed to exist in a generally concentrated or dispersed form; rather it only occurs when it is implemented (219). In this regard, power is not a means of repressing freedom or converting rights, but it is in the hands of the few, i.e. the individuals. Foucault makes clear that power "is not a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights, the power of each and delegated to a few" ("The Subject and Power" 220).

Appropriately, power does not mean "a relationship of violence" because the opposite pole of violence is "passivity" and submission. By contrast, a real power relationship can be defined by two substantial elements: the other (the one who is under power) and the whole group of possible reactions and responses that may result. For Foucault, power is "a total structure of actions brought to be upon possible actions" ("The Subject and Power" 220). As a result, Foucault turns to use the concept of "government" in order to distinguish the later meaning of power from the earlier one. This concept of "government" let Foucault to include the other face of power: freedom or resistance (Felluga 239). Power is exercised on those who have the ability to resist, so they are free. Thus, for Foucault, slavery is not considered a power relationship when man is fettered ("The Subject and Power" 221). Basically, persistence becomes a constitutive part of the power relationship: "At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (Foucault, "The Subject and Power" 221-22). This really constitutes a stark opposition to his previous concept of power which strictly confines itself to such repressive, coercive and suppressive relations. Strictly speaking, Foucault changes one's view of power from *power over* to *power to*. The effects of power, in this sense, cannot be referred to as negative but as something positive in societies (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 194).

For Foucault, resistance is a correlative and inevitable element to power. They are interdependent and co-existent. This is what makes Foucault announce his famous dictum: "where there is power there is resistance" (*The History of Sexuality* 95). However, this does not mean that resistance is just "a reaction or rebound" of power, but rather it is "a lure or promise that is of necessity betrayed" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 96). Power is not a reductive concept that simply refers to master/slave or oppressor/oppressed relationship, but it is "a system" or a network of relations a society (Mills 35). For Foucault, as demonstrated by Sara Mills, "[i]n order for there to be a relation where power is exercised, there has to be someone who resists" (40). Kevin Jon Heller also comments that there is never going to be a complete social structure in which only power exists (99). Practically, the main aim of Foucauldian analysis is to depict the way resistance works as an integral aspect of power (Kendall and Wickham 5). Power is no longer considered a unitary, stable force that emerges from a specific social class or institution; rather, it is a complex, "more tenuous 'fabric of hegemonic forms'" (Constable 12). Foucault expounds this line of thinking on the notion of "agonism," showing that freedom is an intrinsic element in power relations. It is a mutual contention that it is considered a more constant provocation than a face-to-face confrontation ("The Subject and Power" 222).

Central to this sense, Foucault's conception of power is "confrontational" to some conventional views of power relations (Maze 122) such as Marxism that considers institutions as possessors of powers of oppression and constrain against individuals and groups (Bălan 56). Foucault sees power positively as a generator of a counter-power called resistance, represented by the "counter-discourses" of those the power is exerted upon (Jimménez-Anca 39). Power relations mean a conflict between "*both* hegemonic and counter-hegemonic subject-positions" (Heller 95). Consequently, Foucault's conception of power is no longer "a one-way traffic" agent, from "the top downwards," but a "bottom-up model of power" that allows an analysis which focuses on individuals as active subjects rather than negative idiots (Mills 34). For Foucault, as Mills puts it, power is not "unitary and

unidirectional (48). It occurs in all social existence that a society without dynamic power relations is an "abstraction" (Foucault "The Subject and Power" 222-23). As T. J. Berard states, power works on "the ubiquity principle" that according to Foucault's logic, if power is everywhere, then so the possibility of resistance (211). Scott L. Pratt remarks that resistance is "a part of a system of power not as a single locus, but as points distributed" (79). For Foucault, power encompasses and surrounds everything. It is pervasive; it is "not localized" (Chokr). Foucault explains that resistances are essentials to power relations; they are formed and shaped directly wherever power exists; thus, resistance, like power, is multifaceted and can be incorporated into global plans (*Power/Knowledge* 142). Christensen points out that power cannot be conventionally conceived in terms of hierarchical, top-down pattern; rather, it must be viewed as a multifaceted phenomenon that can be distributed, examined and generated from below (2).

In this respect, resistance and power are joint terms. They are no more than distinct names Foucault uses to describe the same capacity—the capacity to make a social change. For further clarification of Foucault's viewpoint, Heller takes, as an example, the relation between X and Y: X uses power to adjust the actions of Y; Y uses power to adjust the actions of X. In this dialectical situation, X's and Y's actions can be called "resistance" according to the power relation between them. Thus, for Foucault, power and resistance are "ontologically correlative." However, Foucault uses the term resistance to refer to some subject-categories that have less power than their contenders—the power exercised by workers, students, intimates, the "perverse," and so on. These forms of power are, for Foucault, resistances not because they are powerless but because they are lesser forms of power. That is why power is privileged, in Foucault's theory, over resistance (Heller 99). Nicos Poulantazes comments, for Foucault, power is "essentialized and absolutized" (150). Frank Lentricchia says that it "courts a monolithic determinism" (70). Gary Wickham remarks that it "is essentialist . . . in that it is formed against and relates to a unified and seemingly determining power" (164).

Concerning this point, in an interview with Michael Bess, Foucault outlines the nature of power as a bunch of relations. For him, power does not work in the material or physical sense as, for example, to take a tape recorder and throw it hard on the ground. Such an act will not be labeled power unless it pressures and stirs you to have a resistant stance. Power depends on the behavior of the other's free will. It occurs when there is a relation between two free subjects; therefore, "power is not always repressive" (Foucault, "Power, Moral Values, and the Intellectual" 2). It is "a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 19). Heller notes that power is, for Foucault, neither essentially positive nor negative—power is plainly the potential to generate social change (87).

Accordingly, Foucault describes power relations as "intentional and non-subjective" (*The History of Sexuality* 94). They are "intelligible" because power always intends to achieve a set of objectives or aims (54-55). The individuals are the ones who achieve these aims; so individuals are not only *objects* (receiving power), but also *subjects* (exercising power). In his emphasis on "the intentionality of power" (Heller 81), Foucault shows that individuals "are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising . . . power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also its articulation" (*Power/Knowledge* 98). Mark G. E. Kelly exquisitely encapsulates Foucault's view on power in five main features: first, "the

impersonality, or subjectivelessness of power," meaning that it is not directed by the volition of individual subjects; second, "the relationality of power," meaning that power is always a matter of power *relations* between people, as opposed to a quantum possessed by people; third, "the decentredness of power," meaning that it is not limited to a single individual or class; fourth, "the multidirectionality of power," meaning that it does not flow only from the more to the less powerful, but rather "comes from below," even if it is nevertheless "nonegalitarian"; fifth, "the *strategic* nature of power," meaning that it has its own dynamic, is "intentional" (37-38).

Quite strikingly, Foucault's work on power has an efficient role in the New Historicist accounts. It has a more tangible perspective of the text than an imaginative one (Shimal and Hanif 510). This fact is also illustrated by Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickham who claim that "the Foucauldian method's use of history . . . involves histories that never stop; . . . [it] is referred to as the history of the present" (4). It is a matter of fact that other critics such as Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh remark that his writings have constantly demonstrated how ostensibly objective historical interpretations are always results of a will to power provoked through knowledge formations inside certain institutions. For them Foucault's "histories" resist the allurement of "total theories," which provide comprehensive narratives, and instead focus on the "other," who is excluded from and formed by such accounts (253-54).

Power Relations in Shanley's *Doubt*

John Patrick Shanley (1950-) is an American playwright, screenwriter and director. He is the author of more than 23 plays, which have been translated and staged around the world. *Doubt: A Parable* (2005) is one of his most important works that won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the 2005 Tony Award for Best Play.

Foucault's power relations conception is very clear in *Doubt*. It is a good example of misuse of power through the agon between the two superpowers of the play: Sister Aloysius Beauvier, an old conservative nun, and Father Flynn, a youthful priest who is a new comer to the Bronx St. Nicholas Parish School. Taking advantage of her powerful position as a principal of the school, Aloysius convicts Flynn of pedophilia without any clear substantial evidence of this shameful incident except her suspicions, based on what has been told by Sister James. From a new-historicist lens, this is exactly what has been done when George W. Bush announces his intention of the military intervention in Iraq, claiming Saddam's possession of mass destruction weapons (MDWs) without any tangible evidence. Thus, the play represents two poles of power relations, in Foucault's terms: Bush who exercises power represented by Aloysius and Saddam, the recipient of power represented by Flynn (the resistant). On that account, *Doubt* is not a mere conflict of dramatic characters; rather, it is a conflict of institutions run by individuals: the American government, on one side, and the Iraqi government, on the other. This reveals *Doubt* within the context of the "power of institutions" not the "power of individuals" and proves Foucault's tendency to "disindividualize" power.

One day, during an educational talk about the conditions of students, particularly Donald Muller, a twelve-year-old African-American boy, Sister James tells Aloysius that this boy has no friends, but he considers Flynn as his protector who takes interest in him ever since joining the altar boys. Feeling uncomfortable, Aloysius forces Sister James to suspect Flynn and to tell more about this. Sister James says that Donald comes to the class worried and frightened

with smell of alcohol on his breath after spending a time alone with Father Flynn in the rectory. Hearing this, Aloysius builds her suspicions and decides to hound the perpetrator to drive him out of the parish.

Exercising power as a principal, Aloysius does her best to condemn Flynn of child molestation: she forces Sister James to suspect him; calls Flynn himself to her office to investigate such an odious incident, and finally; calls Mrs. Muller, Donald's mother, to tell her and take an action. However, all her trials fail and this proves Foucault's claim that the resistant element in a power relation is also strong. The resistant is not, in Foucault's terms, passive or powerless, but rather powerful.

When Aloysius hears Sister James's story about Donald's secret meeting with Flynn, she feels that something wrong is happening, forcing Sister James to emphasize such suspicions. But, Sister James refuses to affirm this. "I don't know that anything's wrong," she says (Shanley, *Doubt* 25). Besides, she shows that suspecting people without a basis of little evidence is like a false witness that hurts one's relation to God: "it's so unsettling to look at things and people with suspicions. It feels as if I'm less close to God" (Shanley, *Doubt* 24). In actuality, Sister James represents UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who states in a BBC interview that the war on Iraq is "illegal" and is not sanctioned by the UN secretary Council (Kellner 96). In addition, when Aloysius asks Sister James to confront Flynn with what she saw, Sister James says that she is not sure and that her judgment is just an "impression" and not a fact (Shanley, *Doubt* 31-32). Sister James also confesses to Flynn that the reason for embedding such a bad idea in her mind is Aloysius. In a repentant tone, Sister James says to Flynn:

> SISTER JAMES. I wish I knew nothing whatever about it. I wish the idea had never entered my mind.
>
> FLYNN. How did it enter your mind?
>
> SISTER JAMES. Sister Aloysius. (Shanley, *Doubt* 37)

To confirm her unwavering doubts, Aloysius summons Flynn to her office to discuss the matter. Flynn assured that the groundskeeper, Mr. McGinn, caught Donald drinking altar wine; so he had to talk with the boy in order to protect him and not to be removed from the altar boys. Because Donald is the only black student at school, he upholds; he decides not to divulge the secret. Aloysius did not believe the story and she began to practice all kinds of pressures to make Flynn admit the incident, but she failed. Along the play, Flynn did not admit guilt. She threatens him to talk to Mr. McGinn, but he tells her to do what she wants: "Talk to Mr. McGinn by all means. But now that the boy's secret's out" (Shanley, *Doubt* 33).

Flynn tries hard to resist Aloysius's charges to vindicate himself. He objects to her tone, describing such accusations as "outrageous" (Shanley, *Doubt* 32). He also tells her that if she suspects his story, she can bring the matter up to the senior of the papal court. He says confidently, "I don't wish to continue this conversation at all further. And if you are dissatisfied with that, I suggest you speak to Monsignor Benedict" (Shanley, *Doubt* 33). In spite of her provocative style, Flynn does not relent. In a talk with Sister James, Flynn repeats again, "I've done nothing. There's no substance to any of this. The most innocent actions can appear sinister to the poisoned mind" (Shanley, *Doubt* 38). He describes Aloysius's doubts with "unfounded suspicions," asking her to ask Mrs. Muller, the boy's mother and even the boy himself, but it is in vain (Shanley, *Doubt* 46). Really, it is the same way when Saddam does his best in all his political speeches to deny the charge of supporting terrorism, but to no avail.

When her trials with Sister James and Flynn fail, Aloysius decides to play with the last card to assure her personal convictions: Mrs. Muller. However, she loses this card too. She wants Donald's mother to escalate the issue, but before she discusses the matter with her, she is shocked that Mrs. Muller knows the incident and how the boy is punished severely. "His father beat the hell out of him over that wine," Mrs. Muller narrates (Shanley, *Doubt* 41). That is why he is taken off the altar boys. She also describes how Donald considers Flynn as his protector because he is the only colored boy in the school. Flynn is the only one who is good to her son and she thanks God that he finds care and kindness from such an educated man and this is what all her son needs: time and containment. At this moment, Aloysius decides to confront her with her suspicions, but Aloysius's lack of evidence on her slanders makes Mrs. Muller not care:

> SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'm concerned, to be frank, that Father Flynn may have made advances on your son.
>
> MRS. MULLER. *May* have made.
>
> SISTER ALOYSIUS. I can't be certain.
>
> MRS. MULLER. No evidence?
>
> SISTER ALOYSIUS. No.
>
> MRS. MULLER. Then maybe there's nothing to it?
>
> SISTER ALOYSIUS. I think there is something to it.
>
> MRS. MULLER. Well, I would prefer not to see it that way if you don't mind. (Shanley, *Doubt* 42)

Perhaps, Aloysius's insistence to accuse Flynn of pedophilia may either return back to more than one reason. On the one hand, it may be a result of her hidden racism. As Donald is the only African-American boy in the school and Flynn is the only teacher who supports him, Aloysius wants to get rid of them both by slandering them. Thereby, she can kill two birds with the same stone. And this is the same way President Bush does. He wants to save the sovereignty of the American people by disarming MDWs from an Arab country, while at the same time, seizing this country's petroleum resources as a hidden reason of Iraqi's invasion. On the other hand, Aloysius may really want to maintain the school's good fame as an educational and moral edifice even this is at the expense of the distortion of others' fame. Likewise, President Bush justifies his invasion of Iraq as a means of devastating what threatens America's security and stability at the expense of both peoples: the Iraqi and the American.

Frustrated by Mrs. Muller's reaction, Aloysius's tone changes from doubt into certainty. She wants the boy's mother to take an action away from her as a principal of the school. Yet, Mrs. Muller feels that there may be a secret and it is her own son that will pay the price. Aloysius wants to condemn Flynn at all costs. "Why you need to know something like that for sure when you don't? Please, Sister. You got some kind a righteous cause going with this priest, and now you want to drag my son into it," Mrs. Muller says to Aloysius (Shanley, *Doubt* 44). In front of Mrs. Muller's determination about Flynn's integrity, Aloysius threatens trouble for the boy, but Mrs. Muller discloses the main reason beyond this arbitrariness that Aloysius wants to tarnish Flynn's reputation at the expense of her child's welfare:

> SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'll throw your son out of this school. Make no mistake.
>
> MRS. MULLER. But why would you do that? If nothing started with him?

> SISTER ALOYSIUS. Because I will stop this whatever way I must.
>
> MRS. MULLER. You'd hurt my son to get your way? (Shanley, *Doubt* 45)

From the foregoing, it is clear that Aloysius's evidence against Flynn "is exiguous" (Cullingford 227) and her campaign to slander his reputation is nothing but a malicious complaint. But, what is the main reason beyond her hostility against Flynn? It is grudge and professional jealousy. Father Flynn, with his progressive pedagogical ideas, threatens her "authority" (Verducci 616) and "the stability in her world" (Leach 119). Perhaps, one of the important reasons that makes Aloysius condemn Flynn is her refusal of the patriarchal control over school. "Here, . . . men run everything," Aloysius says to Sister James (Shanley, *Doubt* 25-26). It is precisely as Bush's malevolence of the possibility of having an Arab country of MDWs, a matter that supports the sovereignty of the Arab powers over the Western ones. This emphasizes veritably Foucault's idea that power is intentional. Aloysius's target is not to get rid of Flynn as a person but as an intruder that threatens her authority. Elizabeth Cullingford remarks that *Doubt* "refuses all documentary certainties" (225). If she has strong evidence, she can not hesitate to escalate the issue to the parish. When Sister James suggests reporting her suspicions to the monsignor, Aloysius argues that he is a "guileless" person. He will be satisfied with Flynn's rebuttal and the matter will be suppressed, or he may also think that the matter is settled (Shanley, *Doubt* 26).

Truly, Aloysius and Flynn are two completely different characters. On the personal and professional levels, Aloysius is stern, reserved, unsentimental and disciplinarian who measures everything with reason. There is no place for feelings and emotions in her life. Students are always terrified of her. She prevents students from using ballpoint pens in school. She prefers the traditional way of studying subjects. She is against innovation or enthusiasm. When Sister James tells her that she tries to teach students with enthusiasm, she scolds her, saying: "No. Give them their History without putting sugar all over it" (Shanley, *Doubt* 16). She always invokes James to keep formality and not to dissolve boundaries with her students. "I'm telling you here and now, I want to see the starch in your character cultivated. If you are looking for reassurance, you can be fooled," Aloysius induces Sister James (Shanley, *Doubt* 20). Additionally, for her, dance, music and studying art are just a "waste of time" (Shanley, *Doubt* 14, 19). There is a big gap between her and school students.

Moreover, Aloysius is a naturally suspicious person. When Sister James asks her about William London, a boy in school who has a nose bleeding, Aloysius suspects that it may be self-induced, describing the student as a "fidgety" and "rowdy" boy (Shanley, *Doubt* 15). She also chides Sister James for being so innocent that she is easily deceived by clever students, urging her to be always attentive. "Don't be charmed by cleverness. Not theirs. And not yours," she advises Sister James (Shanley, *Doubt* 17). She also notes, "[i]nnocence is a form of laziness. Innocent teachers are easily duped. You must be canny, Sister James" (Shanley, *Doubt* 18). For her, "[s]atisfaction is a vice" (Shanley, *Doubt* 18) and man should not be content with data, but he should have doubt about everything. Here, Aloysius advises Sister James to be a good teacher, according to her viewpoint: "be skeptical. Don't let a little blood fuddle your judgment. God have you a brain and a heart. The heart is warm, but your wits must be cold. Liars should be frightened to lie to you. They should be uncomfortable in your presence. I doubt they are" (Shanley, *Doubt* 18).

Indeed, Aloysius is an exact model of Bentham's Panopticon that Foucault borrows to refer to the system of control and surveillance over others. As a principal, she is like the watchtower that controls and constantly inspects all members of the school: teachers and students. She disparages Sister James's amicable relationship with students, criticizes the naïve character of Monsignor Benedict, judges Flynn as a pedophile, censures Donald's delinquency and rebukes Mrs. Muller as a conspirator with Flynn to protect her son. She even supervises the educational strategies used, rejecting, for instance, the kind of secular songs presented in the school Christmas pageant. Similarly, the US is a replica of the idea of the Panopticon as the supreme state that controls and manages the destiny of the whole world, especially the Arab ones.

In stark contrast to Aloysius, Flynn is an active and concerned teacher who is close to students at the two levels: human and professional. He gives them weekly poetic sermons and lessons in basketball. He is interested in art, music and hymns. Besides, he has progressive educational ideas like suggesting including secular songs such as "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" and "Frosty the Snowman" in Christmas pageant as a jolly break and taking boys on a camping trip, a matter that Aloysius totally rejected (Shanley, *Doubt* 30). "We should be friendlier. The children and the parents should see us as members of their family rather than emissaries from Rome," Flynn says to Aloysius (Shanley, *Doubt* 31). Furthermore, he listens to his students, keeps their secrets and sympathizes with them. All these features are enough for Aloysius to persecute Flynn. Richard Brustein charges Aloysius of "systematically destroy[ing Flynn's] reputation, not to mention his love of teaching and perhaps of the church" (157). In a talk about Aloysius, Flynn confides to Sister James that

> [s]he's like a block of ice! Children need warmth, kindness, understanding! What does she give them? Rules. . . . She sees me talk in a human way to these children and she immediately assumes there must be something wrong with it. Something dirty. Well, I'm not going to let her keep this parish in the Dark Ages! Well, I'm not going to let her destroy my spirit of compassion! (Shanley, *Doubt* 38)

For Aloysius, Flynn's educational strategies that enhance the patriarchal hegemony over the school are devastating tools like such MDWs that Bush charges Saddam of having them. That is why Sister Aloysius tenaciously insists to destroy Flynn and to drive him out of the parish. In a talk with Sister James, she swears to destroy him while Sister James confronts her with the true reason of her hatred to Flynn that he is a completely different character from her:

> SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'll bring him down. With or without your help.
>
> SISTER JAMES. How can you be so sure he's lying?
>
> SISTER ALOYSIUS. Experience.
>
> SISTER JAMES. You just don't like him! You don't like it that he uses a ballpoint pen. You don't like it that he takes three lumps of sugar in his tea. You don't like it that he likes "Frosty the Snowman." And you're letting that convince you of something terrible, just terrible! Well, I like "Frosty the Snowman"! And it would be nice if this school weren't run like a prison! (Shanley, *Doubt* 34-35)

Indeed, Flynn is "a victim of character assassination" by a villain nun (Leach 117) and his resignation comes as a

result of Aloysius's insistence to defame him and his inability to withstand more than this (Cullingford 262). However, despite Aloysius's baseless insistence on Flynn's wrongdoing, Flynn's resistance is what wins the battle at the end. Flynn is gone to another school and is appointed as the pastor of St. Jerome. He becomes in charge of an entire school and this is a promotion. Aloysius bitterly tells Sister James, "[t]he bishop appointed Father Flynn the pastor of St. Jerome church and school. It's a promotion" (Shanley, *Doubt* 51). If Aloysius was right in her allegations about Flynn's infringements, she would pursue the issue and ask for his dismissal from all parishes in order not to corrupt students in other schools. If her aim was noble, she would not give up the matter. She prefers cover-up the matter to prosecution. The play ends with a scene of Aloysius's cry in a tone of remorse, telling Sister James "I have doubts! I have such doubts!" (Shanley, *Doubt* 52).

Indubitably, Foucault's five main features of power relations, as explained earlier by Kelly, are fully achieved in *Doubt*. First, "the impersonality, or subjectivelessness of power": Aloysius's power is not directed to Flynn as a person but to a non-subjective objective which is to prevent the patriarchal hegemony over school. Wickham comments that Foucault's power revolves around "subject-less" objectives. So the direct subjects of power are not individuals—individuals can only be said to be "implicated" in power" (154-55). Second, "the relationality of power": *Doubt* is a play of power *relations*, regardless of the quantum possessed by people. It is not a power relation of an individual against other, but a matrix of relations. Aloysius exercises power not only against Flynn but also against Donald's mother, Sister James and Monsignor Benedict who take the side of Flynn. Third, "the decenterdness of power": Aloysius's power is not centered on Flynn alone as a single individual but against the whole patriarchal control. Fourth, "the multidirectionality of power": power does not flow from Aloysius (the more powerful) to Flynn (the less powerful) but from below which is still powerful and wins such a dirty battle at the end. Fifth, "the *strategic* nature of power": Aloysius has her own dynamic or tactics and does her best to trap Flynn to achieve her intention of excluding him out of the school.

According to Foucault's power relations, *Doubt* seems to be a mere conflict of dramatic characters, but rather it is a conflict of institutions run by individuals. Written in 2005, two years after the US war on Iraq, the play is a conflict between two institutions/governments: the American's and Iraqi's governments headed by George W. Bush and his counterpart Saddam Hussein, respectively. It is an "allegorical" portrait of US preemptive strike against Iraq in 2003. Sister Aloysius, with her flimsy uncertainties, reflects President Bush's alleged claims of Hussein's possession of MDWs, and Father Flynn, with his refuting position, represents Hussein's resistant stance against Bush's assumptions. Aloysius wants to smear Flynn at Donald's expense as Bush wants to destroy Hussein under the rubric of liberating Iraq of the iron grip on his people, dragging Iraq into unjustifiable war from which both peoples suffer until now. Therefore, the play is critical of the idea of "rushing to judgment," based on "over-certainty" (Eads). Bruce Hornby notes that *Doubt* "depicts the way that a prosecutorial mentality can run amok" (469). In one of his interviews with the television host Charlie Rose, Shanley himself acknowledges that *Doubt* originated during the debates surrounding the US invasion of Iraq, demonstrating that this historical event was undoubtedly a motive ("John Patrick Shanley; Ramsey Clark").

Conclusion

Ultimately, with the New-Historicist reading of Shanley's *Doubt*, it becomes perspicuous that it is an "allegorical" reading of an important historical event that cannot be put in the sidelines of its interpretation. On the contrary, it can be viewed as a thriller of a hidden political plot: the US invasion of Iraq. In addition, Foucault's theory of power relations, specifically that of power/resistance conception, imparts a deep understanding of the play in terms of the conflict of individuals and institutions. Superficially, *Doubt* seems to be a mere conflict of dramatic characters; but in fact, it is representative of a conflict of institutions or governments run by individuals: the American government on one side and the Iraqi government on the other. Thus, there are two poles of power relations in the play: one who exercises power and the other who reacts against such power (the resistant) and that seems to be less in power, but rather it is still powerful. This emphasizes Foucault's dictum that "where there is power there is resistance." Power relation is not a relation between the powerful and powerless (oppressor/oppressed relation) but between the agent of power and the resistant of such power. Any power relation is between two free subjects because, without resistance, it becomes a trail of imagination. It is a system and a network of relations in Mills terms. To sum up, Shanley's *Doubt* is an ideal example of Foucault's theory of power relations and New-Historicism is a good instrumental tool in understanding history as it reveals the cultural, social and political norms of a period as depicted in a literary text. This proves the symbiotic and reciprocal relationship between history and a literary text. A literary text is not a bleakly monochromatic discourse, in New-Historicist terms.

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